

# CRAIN'S

## CHICAGO BUSINESS.

30 MARCH 19, 2007 • CRAIN'S CHICAGO BUSINESS

FOCUS COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

## I don't wanna grow up

**RADIO FLYER INC.** Location: 6515 W. Grand Ave. Designer: Gensler Architecture Design & Planning P.C.; Steven Meier, lead project director, Genoveva Carmona de Salamanca, designer Size: 18,000 square feet Employees: 50

**WHAT MAKES IT COOL** When the interior designers began working on plans to renovate Radio Flyer's office on the West Side, they asked the head of the toy company what impression he wanted to leave in the minds of visitors.

"You know Willy Wonka?" President and CEO Robert Pasin replied, referring to the candy maker in Roald Dahl's book.

That Mr. Pasin wanted to make use of a popular childhood memory wasn't a surprise. Nostalgia, especially for the company's best-known product, the little red wagon, is Radio Flyer's greatest asset.

The result? An office design that makes adults feel like children again.

**OUTDOOR SHOT** Bringing out the inner child in adults took a few design changes, starting with a 9-foot-high fence around the property, a towering intercom and a two-story red wagon near the entrance.

**INTERIOR ENTRANCE** The mural at the entrance features Radio Flyer's exhibit at the 1933 World's Fair, which included a 45-foot-high statue of the company mascot, Coaster Boy, sitting atop a Radio Flyer store. Advertisements from the 1940s and 1950s are used to decorate the walls outside the executive offices.

"People have an emotional attachment to our brand," Mr. Pasin says. "Our goal was to make the space live and breathe the brand."

**CAFETERIA** The little red wagon is the central theme of the 2,100-square-foot break room. Wheels cover the ceiling while exposed, vertical pipes painted red, blue, yellow, green and gray

run through the room. The windows looking into the attached warehouse are port-holes. "If you were building a clubhouse, wouldn't you want your clubhouse windows to be round?" Steven Meier, the project director, says.

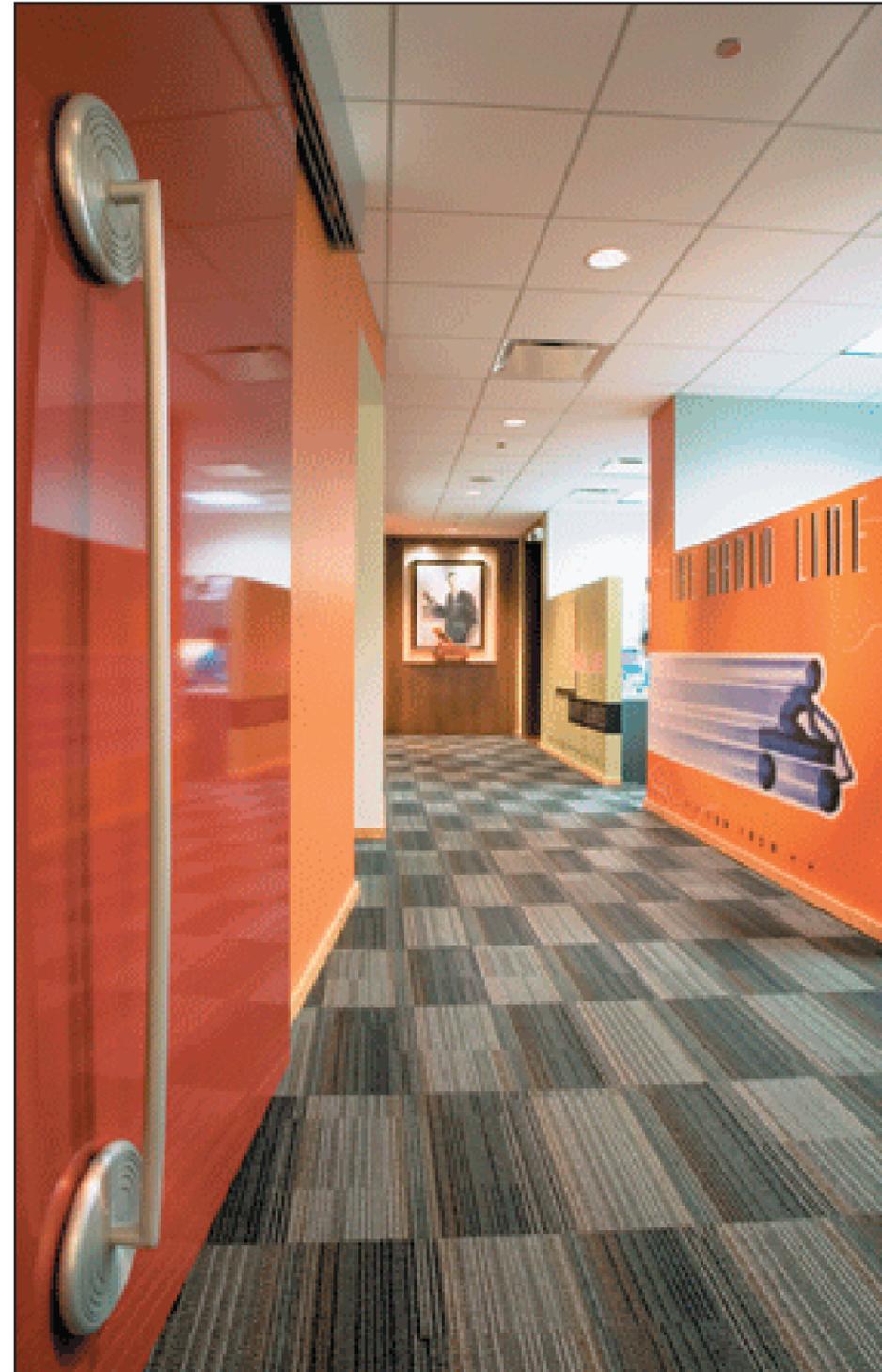
**SHOWROOM** Anyone attending a meeting at Radio Flyer would have a hard time resisting the lure of the showroom, which is up a few stairs but within sight of the conference room. Radio Flyer's showroom has nearly every toy model the company sells, including a souped-up red wagon with cup holders, seat belts and cushions. There's also the vintage red-and-white tricycle that everyone swears they had. In fact, they didn't. Radio Flyer only began making them eight years ago.

**OFFICE SHOT** Mr. Pasin occupies the same office his grandfather, the company's founder, did in the 1940s. The designers preserved the style of that era by keeping the ceiling soffits with recessed lighting and adding a curved desk and chairs, which fit the period.



### SPECIAL FEATURE:

What do you get when you cross Willy Wonka with RadioFlyer? Red M&Ms in the CEO's office



The big idea behind Radio Flyer's offices at 6515 W. Grand Ave. is to make grown-ups feel like kids again