

# G A T E W A Y **M** E T R O

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## C E N T E R



## Gateway Metro Center thrives

By Kevin Smith, Staff Writer  
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PASADENA - Gateway Metro Center is not your father's office building.

Owned by real estate investment company Pacific Starr Pasadena LLC, the 121,462-square-foot high-rise offers something others do not - a strong sense of community.

And it didn't happen by accident.

"We used to own the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sacramento, a five-star business-travel hotel," Pacific Starr co-owner Betty Ma said. "We did very well in that hotel and we saw how service was something that's very important. So when we bought this building in 2006, we realized that we're really filling it up with guests - they just have a longer-term tenancy."

With that in mind, Pacific Starr has worked to create an internal sense of community for the 50 office tenants at Gateway, which is located at 3452 E. Foothill Blvd. in Pasadena. "We have role-playing sessions with our employees on how to address tenant concerns," Ma said. "We do that over lunch meetings."

Pacific Starr has also hosted a variety of tenant events, including a Christmas "Shop Till You Drop" event, a UCLA-sponsored blood drive, a Hawaii getaway luncheon and a Vroman's book fair.

The building even publishes its own quarterly newsletter for tenants. But Ma said the service really starts with the small things. "It's evolved slowly," she said. "When you greet someone in the elevator in the morning, there's a sense of engagement there ... you feel that this is not just a place where you come to work."

The management group has also forged alliances with neighborhood businesses. Gateway recently hosted a promotion for Islands Restaurant, offering a 20 percent discount for all Gateway tenants that buy takeout dinners from the eatery. The building's tenants also receive a 10 percent discount at the Panda Inn restaurant next door.

Pacific Starr co-owner John Pipia said his company's management style is not exactly common. "Many large office buildings tend to be owned by institutions and are managed at a distance," he said. "They don't have this kind of personal value. We believe that you need to reach out to the business community and make as many connections as possible to differentiate yourself in the market."

Pacific Starr spent \$1 million renovating the building, which now has new granite tile for the front and rear entrances, new paint, new lighting for the building's exterior and lobby, and new landscaping.

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