

BRAVER NEW WORLD

JUNE 10 2020

IA INTERIOR ARCHITECTS

Braver New World: The Future of the Resilient Workplace

OVERVIEW

Braver New World: The Future of the Resilient Workplace

At IA, our firm philosophy and mission is to constantly ideate and innovate. We view challenges as inspiration—an opportunity to explore the unknown and to question the status quo. We continually flex our creative muscles to foster change and progress, even in times of crisis and distress. Here is one example of that thinking: an aspirational design our team hypothesized to address some of the most pressing needs presented by our current cultural moment.

Brave New Workplace is a collection of conceptual ideas—some easily implementable, others a bit more blue-sky—that explore and envision a hypothetical version of the future office. Given the ever-changing landscape brought on by an increasingly agile and remote workforce, new technology and teaming

innovations, and a recent focus on critical health and wellness, a team of IA’s designers set out to design a prototype space that pushes the boundaries of the traditional office environment.

The mission of this exercise was to propel the conversation forward by bringing to life—through floor plans, renderings, and sketches—one viable and exciting proposal for tomorrow’s workplace. This option, one of many that we as a firm are ideating on, reflects a concept for a bright and hopeful future. The result is a scalable and flexible workplace concept able to creatively address our clients’ goals.

KEY CONTRIBUTORS

Steven Glowczewski • Senior Designer, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

Michelle deBrestian, IIDA • Senior Designer, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

Aaron Wong, AIA LEED AP • Design Director, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

Amy Groome • Designer, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

Sophie Kreitman, WELL AP • Designer, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

Heidi Matthews • Designer, IA Interior Architects • San Francisco CA

01 CREATE

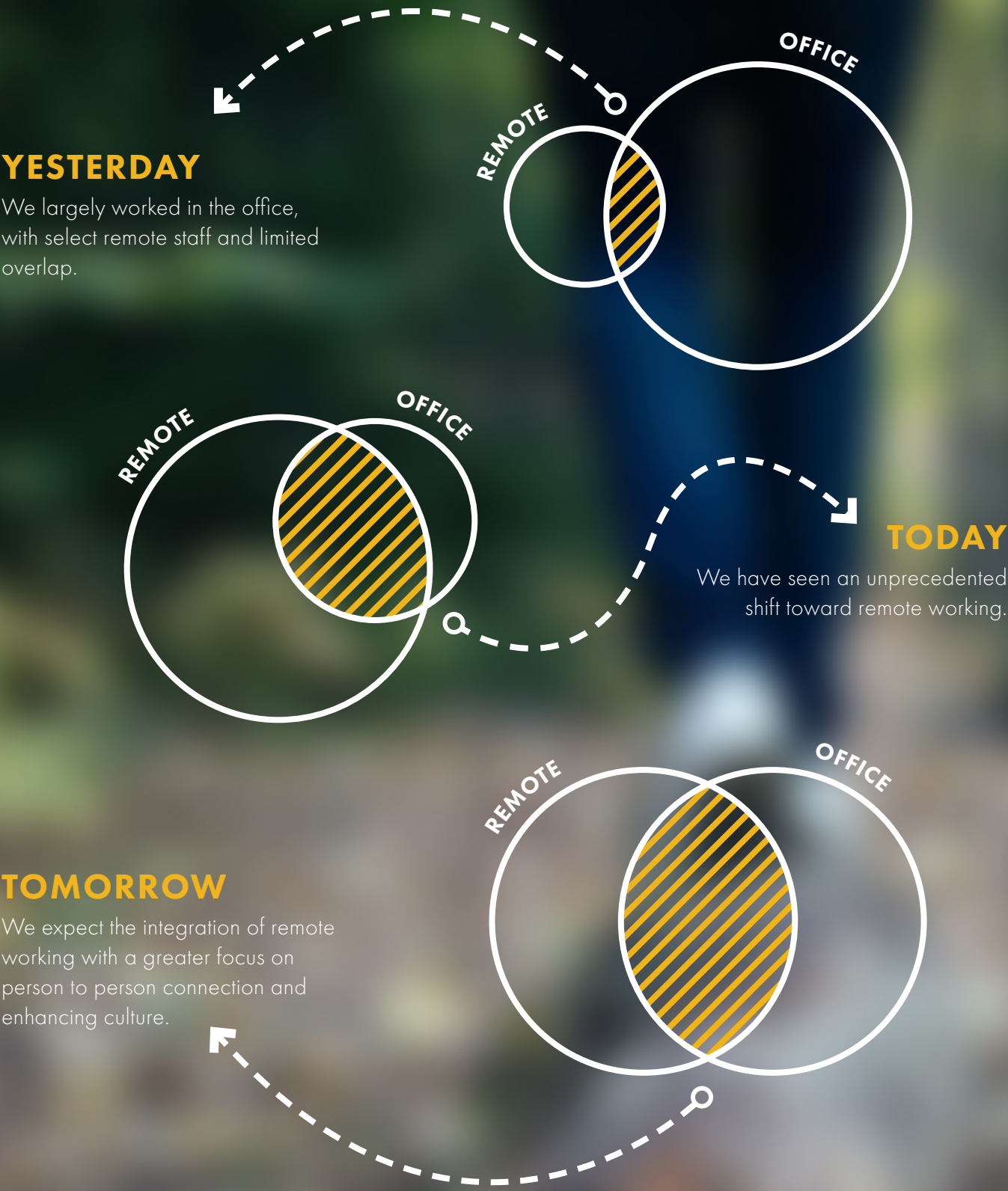
The Value of the Physical Office Environment

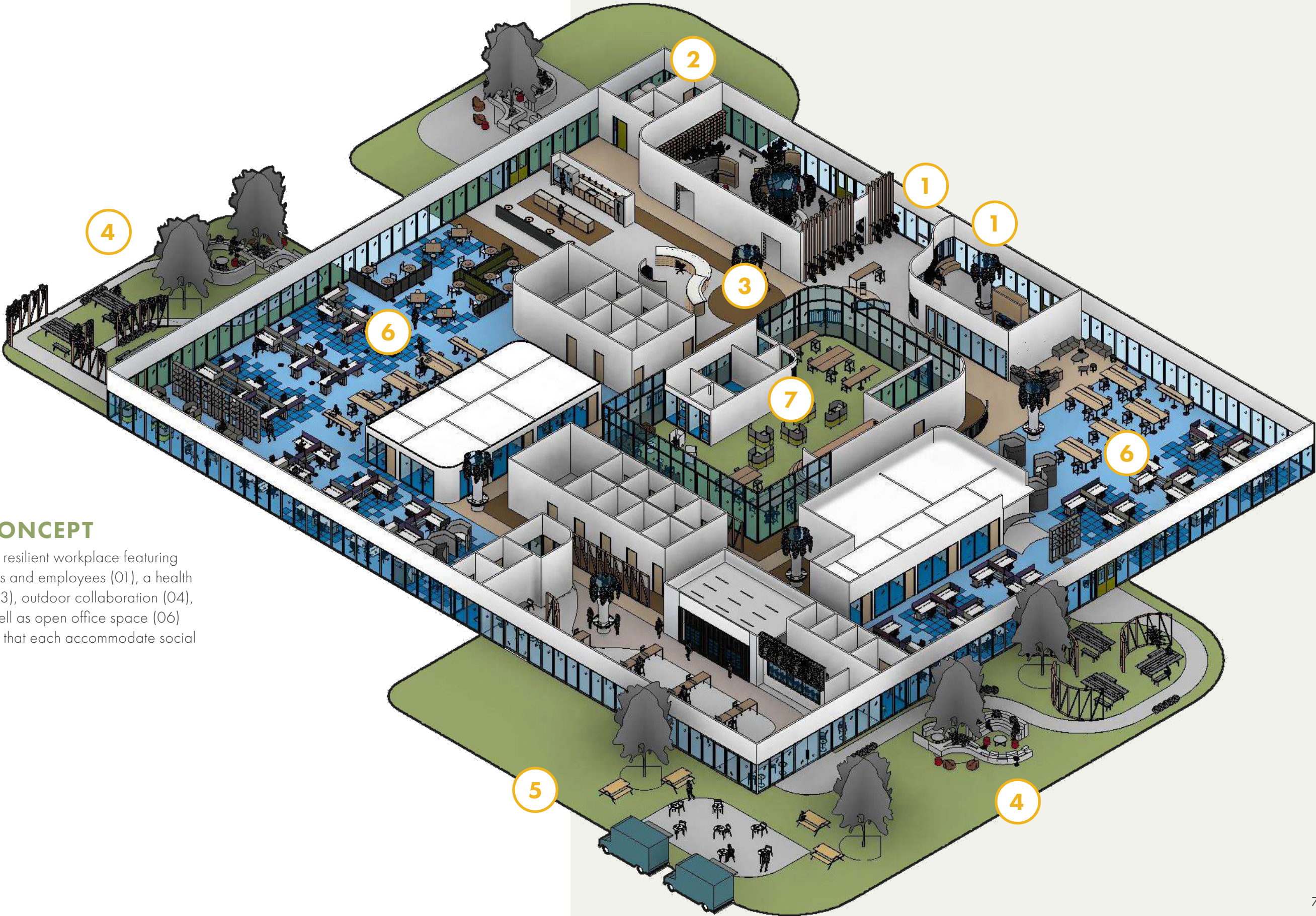
The first step in re-envisioning the workplace was to assess its value, particularly as office-to-remote ratios have changed over time (and in accelerated fashion in the last few months). What benefits do we derive from physically convening in an office versus working remotely and connecting via digital tools? Why is the office so necessary, as recent events have reinforced?

Employers and employees may have different opinions on the topic, and varying drivers for going to the office. For instance, managers are often greatly concerned about maximizing productivity, while employees tend to be motivated by human connection. Next, we established a series of project goals and desired features, outlined to the right, to guide the design.

Also important was that the space feel imaginative but still familiar. Our scheme incorporates all the spaces and elements one would expect in a typical office, as well as some novel and whimsical features. Additionally, we wanted to acknowledge that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to today's complex challenges. Therefore, we created a design specific and detailed enough that one could get a strong sense of the space from renderings, but also malleable enough that any client could project their own reality onto it.

- 01 An arrival sequence that feels welcoming and safe and that provides cleansing opportunities to support the street-to-office transition.
- 02 Enclosed meeting spaces that have the flexibility to be reconfigured, offering a variety of seating choices to support social distancing measures.
- 03 Open-office workpoints that accommodate fluctuations in the number of workers on-site.
- 04 Abundant wellness opportunities including enhanced connection to medical providers, visibility and inclusion of office cleansing staff, and increased access to daylight and fresh air.





WORKPLACE CONCEPT

A workplace concept for the resilient workplace featuring separate entrances for visitors and employees (01), a health clinic (02), a wellness bar (03), outdoor collaboration (04), virtual food trucks (05), as well as open office space (06) and an all hands space (07) that each accommodate social distancing protocols.

02 ARRIVE

A Welcoming Transition: The Arrival Sequence

The future workplace presents an opportunity to imbue the arrival sequence with new meaning and new roles. Biophilic touches, including access to natural light, will establish and convey a spa-like sense of calm and welcome that abets the physical and mental transition from street-to-space.

We envision automated elements and touchless technologies that provide more control over one’s environment becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the workplace—and especially in lobbies, which can be equipped with app-accessible features

like storage lockers and hands-free vending machines for purchasing company-branded PPE provisions.

The Brave New Workplace proposes separate entrances and thus slightly different experiences for visitors and employees, for security reasons and to address each populace’s unique entry rituals. Guests require receiving and waiting areas, while employees need access to storage for bikes and personal items—especially if they’ll likely be bringing their own keyboard and mouse to work or stashing them in a locker.



BELOW

Visitors Lobby: Vending machines are in place to supply branded PPE provisions. Staff and visitors interact with the vending using touchless technology.

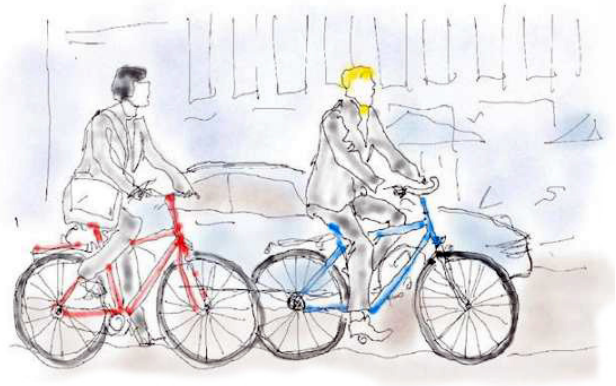




Visitors will be greeted by a virtual receptionist, a built-in safety feature that nonetheless establishes vital human connection. The waiting area incorporates subtle social distancing cues—executed with a design eye but data-backed and science-supported—such as grooves on seating to indicate 6-foot spacing increments. A centerpiece of both lobbies is a handwashing station, conceived as sculptural, ethereal element akin to a tranquil water feature. (These can be repeated at strategic intervals throughout the floor plate.)

Also positioned in the arrival sequence is a “wellness bar,” a concept modeled on IT and HR help desks. This concierge-style portal, designed to provide easy access to PPE and green-cleaning supplies (so employees can wipe down desks upon arrival and departure) better integrates the cleaning

engineers into the staff proper, rendering them more approachable and enhancing occupants’ sense of comfort and safety, which will help mitigate re-entry anxiety. Like all features in the Brave New Workplace, this one is multipurpose: when social distancing starts to relax, this station could be transformed into a coffee bar or alternative work space.



OPPOSITE

Visitors Lobby: A calm and welcoming environment including a virtual receptionist, touchless technology throughout, and a handwashing station that doubles as a sculptural feature.

BELOW

Visitors Lobby: A Spacious lobby and seating area allows for adequate social distancing. Bike racks enable employees to explore alternate transit options.



03 WORK

The Hyper-Flexible (and Intuitively Engaging) Work Environment

As employees and employers alike have gotten more comfortable with remote working and are incentivized to continue it, clients will possibly be leasing less square footage—meaning office spaces will have to work twice as hard and thus be very flexible. An attribute of the Brave New Workplace is a modular, reconfigurable floor plan that can easily and elegantly transition from a socially distanced arrangement to a denser scheme as occupancy increases.

Adopting a clean-desk, bring-your-own-devices policy will be advantageous in such a scenario, as will embracing the concept of “workpoints,” in which employees are not tethered to a desk but rather have more freedom of choice to craft their own office experience. Having fewer assigned desking seats while increasing seating in other space types can help reduce the overall footprint of an office while providing enough space for all workers to engage with the office environment.

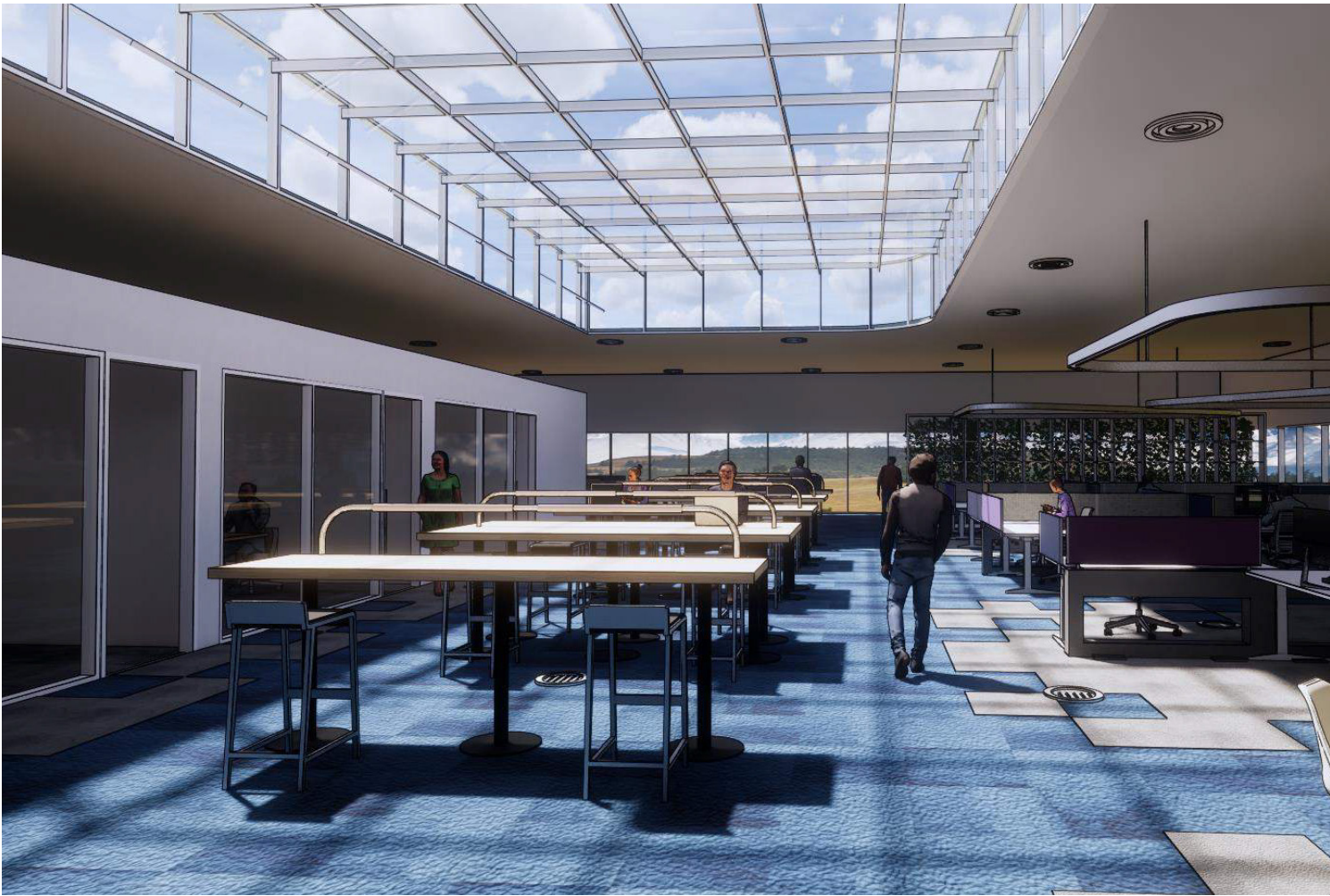


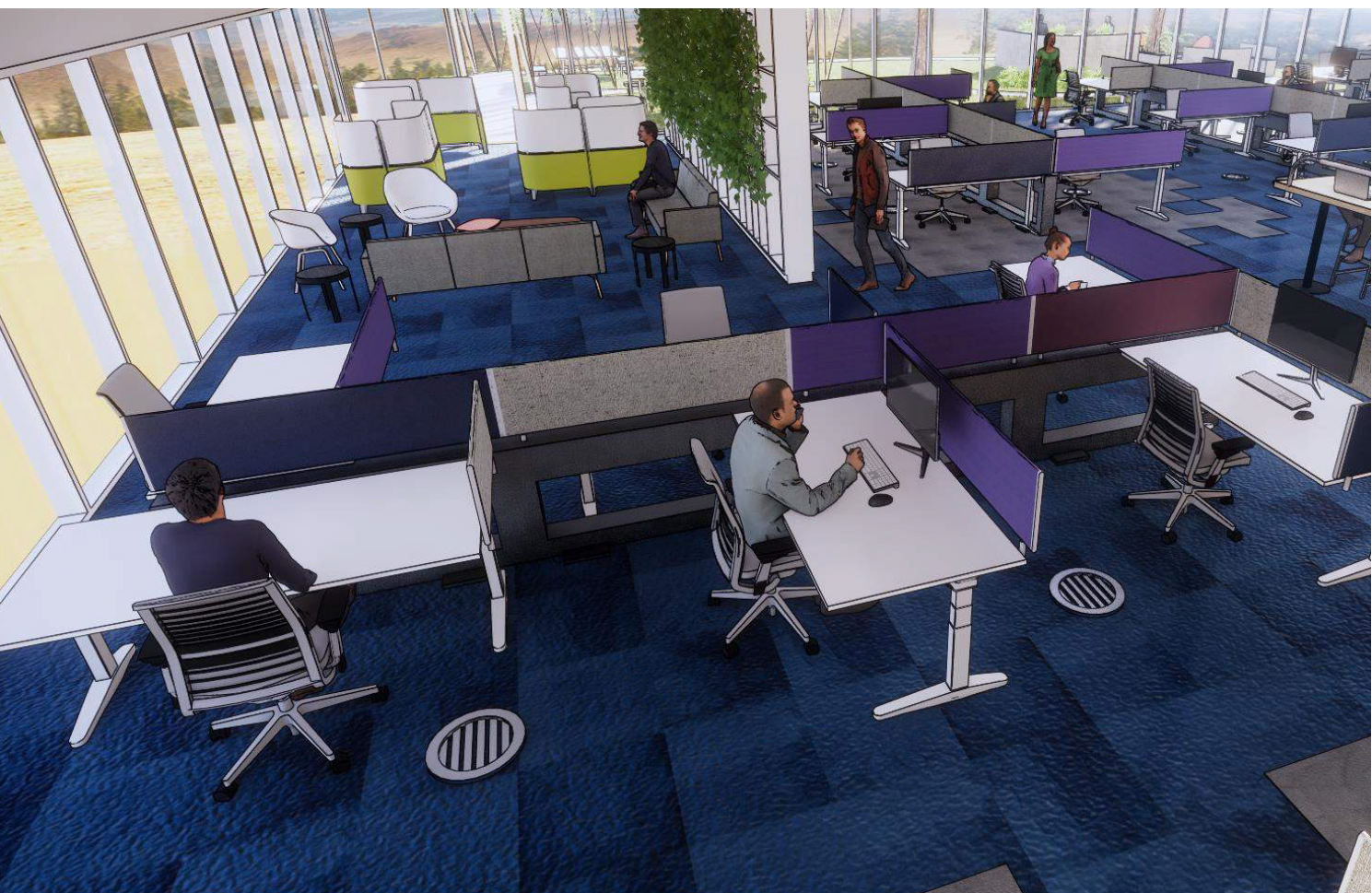
BELOW OPPOSITE

Circulation featuring wider passageways for two way traffic, floor patterns that designate ideal traffic flow in open areas, and increased access to daylight and natural UV light.

BELOW

Open office featuring ceiling element with flexible louvers to accommodate fresh air intake, access to daylighting for mental wellbeing, and adequate air distribution and quality.



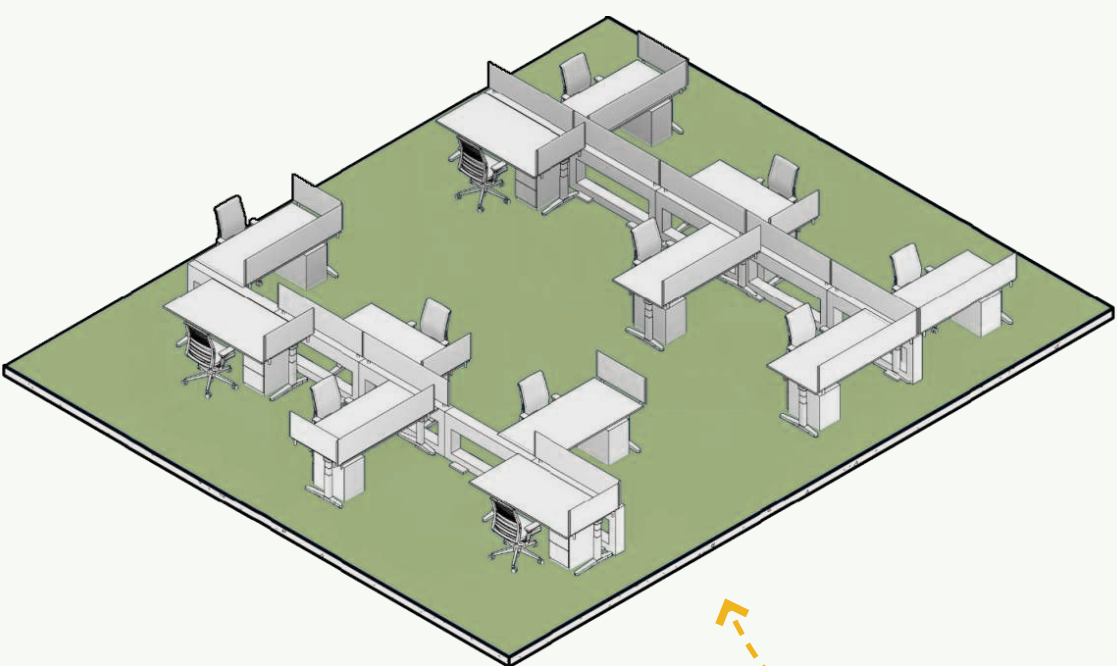


Enhanced HVAC to purify contaminated air particles are vital in the open-plan office. There are many potentially effective solutions; here, we chose one that's common in Europe and Asia but lesser known in the U.S.: underfloor air distribution paired with an overhead plenum, with registers positioned over occupants' desks, that sucks up impurities. To promote wellbeing, ceiling elements with flexible louvers allow additional fresh-air intake as well as UV-light access.

Attention must be paid to circulation routes in the open-plan office. This scheme incorporates subtle and intuitive design cues, such as tonal variations in the color and patterning of flooring to designate ideal traffic flow. Passages wide enough for socially distanced two-way circulation are integrated as well. Natural light is also marshalled to direct people through space, as are high-paneled workstations laid out in an organic fashion.

ABOVE

Open office flooring pattern directs traffic, while organic workstation layout and higher desk panels promote adequate social distancing.

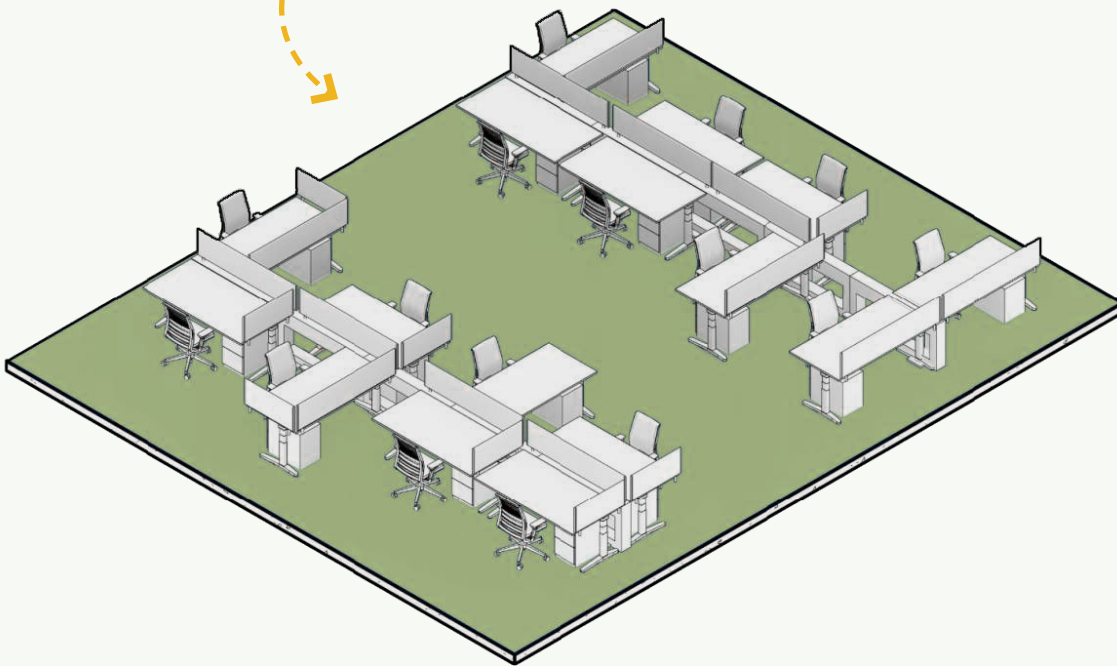


FUTURE

Flexible layout allows for the ability to densify in the future. Workstations are rearranged to accommodate additional staff.

TODAY

Flexible social distancing layout. Workstations are staggered and spaced six feet apart.



04 MEET

Reconfigurable Gathering and Teaming Areas that Foster Connection

Considering what gathering and collaboration might look like in a future that more deftly combines in-person and remote participants steered us toward spaces with built-in flexibility—not only in terms of the physical layout but also the technology used to allow for more integrated collaboration:

Given the likely migration toward an activity-based work style, employees will need the flexibility to reconfigure **collaboration and teaming** areas according to how they work best together. Pivoting panels, for instance, can be used to reshape meeting spaces. Adoption of voice-enabled technologies will reduce the need to touch surrounding surfaces and materials, while virtual whiteboards can enable remote teams to participate in the action.

An **all-hands atrium**, conceived as a central hub, is a centerpiece of this design and an engine of culture-

building. A social and cultural zone designed for better performance and employee engagement, it touches on the increased importance of family and social networks. Entirely reconfigurable courtesy of varied seating that can be spaciouly grouped and bleacher-style units with built-in distancing prompts, it is a truly multipurpose space. An infusion of natural light and fresh air promotes wellness and forges an indoor/outdoor connection.

We encourage companies based in more temperate climates to take advantage of any available and accessible **outdoor space**, including building-adjacent plazas, for planned and impromptu meetings. Doing so will require enhanced technological infrastructure and a furniture layout that supports the new workpoint dynamic.

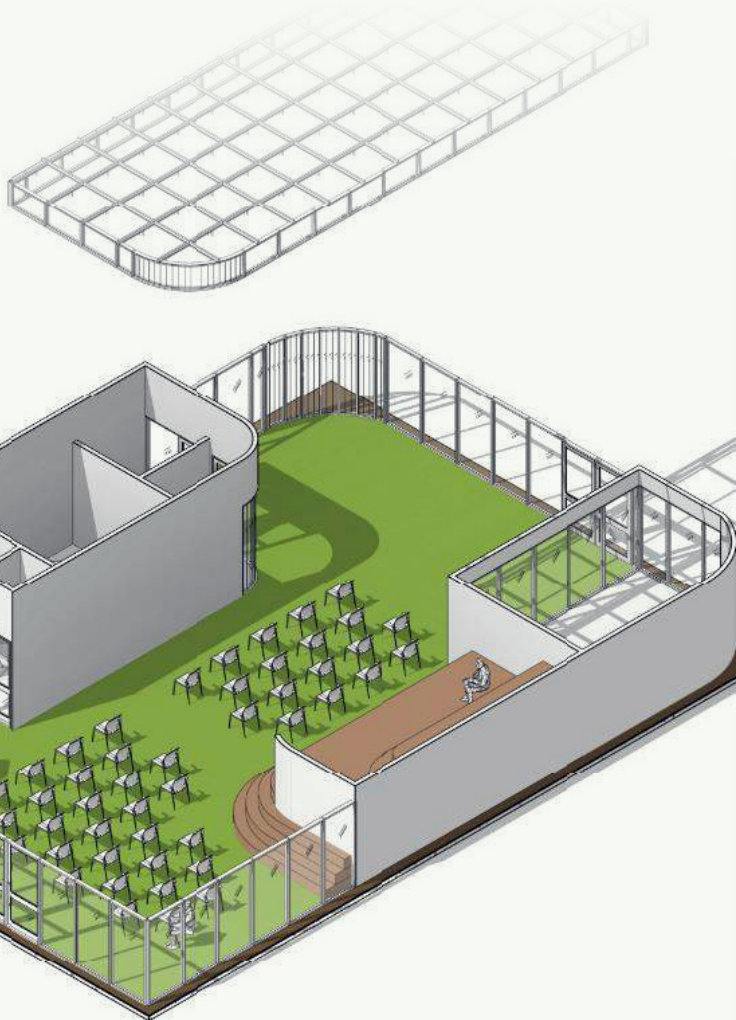
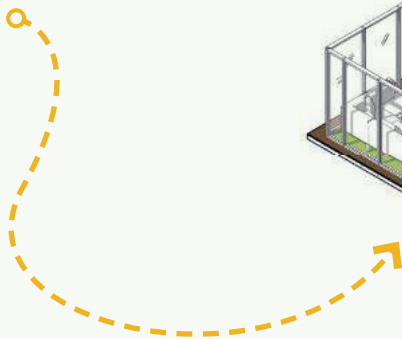


LEFT

Take It Outside: Easy access to outdoors for impromptu meetings. Playful area encourages variety of choice while promoting social distancing.

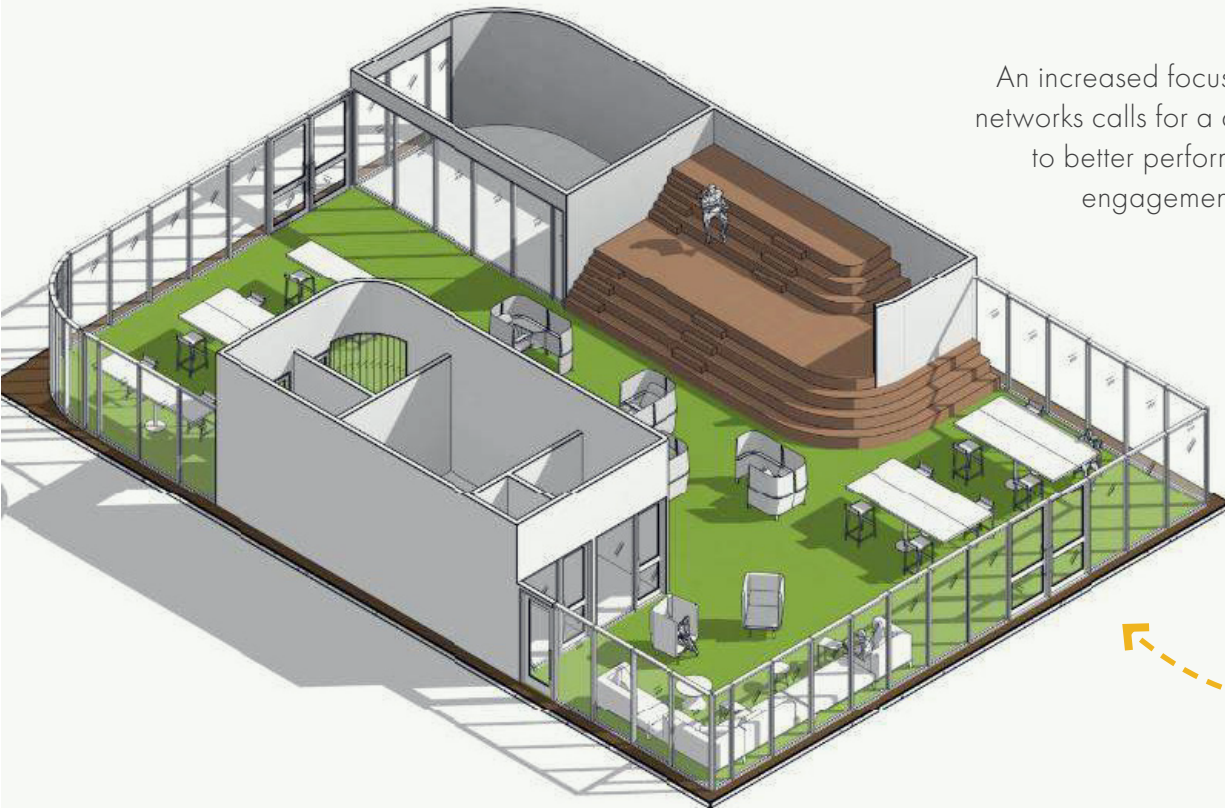
MULTI-PURPOSE

All hands atrium featuring an enclosed indoor-outdoor atrium space with access to light and fresh air promoting wellness.



CULTURE

An increased focus on family and social networks calls for a cultural zone, leading to better performance and employee engagement through technology.



05 WELL

Amenities Designed to Foster Wellness

Human beings are inherently social creatures, interaction is a top reason people come to the [workplace](#).

That is why amenity spaces, such as food-service areas, are so pivotal, and offers abundant opportunities to integrate wellness:

Food Nodes & Pantries: We rethought the design of food service and pantry spaces to ensure safety and reduce congestion. Deploying multiple pantry nodes and giving them a more open, fluid design ensures visibility from throughout the floor plate so staffers can determine an opportune time to access them.

Hands-free, contactless service will be the norm, as will prepackaged snacks and automated drink dispensers.

Café & Dining: Notable features include touchless lockers for dispensing pre-plated meals and use of glass walls between front- and back-of-house to uphold connection while ensuring safety. Furniture chosen to encourage appropriately distanced dining includes movable screens that can be arranged or removed as needed to adjust overall density.

Digital Food Trucks: Introducing whimsy and variety are automated vending stations and/or food trucks



BELOW OPPOSITE

Cafe & Dining: Touchless lockers for pre-plated meals, visual connection to back of house kitchen, and furniture that encourages dining while allowing for social distancing.

BELOW

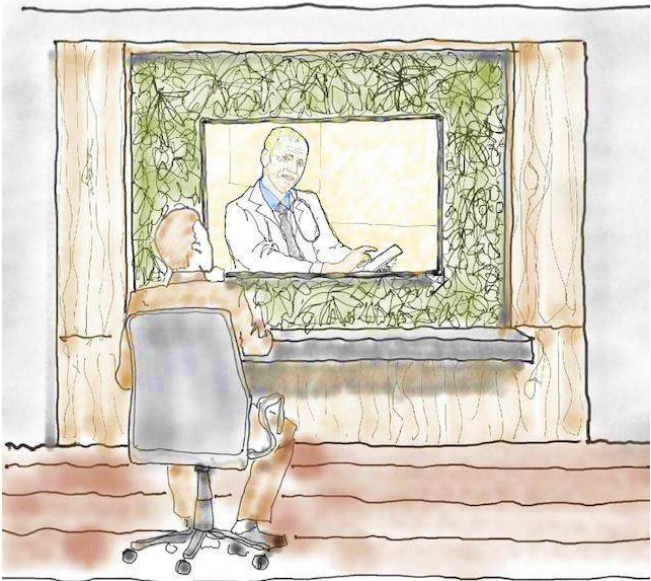
Pantry Nodes: Multiple pantry nodes throughout the workplace to prevent congestion that feature no-touch, pre-packaged snacks and automated drink dispensers.



that offer contactless pickup for a limited menu of app-ordered items (which can be regularly updated).

Well Clinic: In-office health clinics providing wellness amenities are not new, but they will become increasingly common, and more comprehensive. This design proposes an onsite nurse for consults and private booths, with self-diagnostic equipment such as thermometers, in which employees can participate in a virtual telehealth appointment with their doctor. Clean air being vital in such facilities, the HVAC system is enhanced with increased exhaust and ionization filtration. Clinics can also encompass an individual meditation and yoga room with connection to remote instructors.

Restrooms: Genderless single-occupancy restrooms are a more desirable and practical alternative to shared facilities. Arrayed in a manner to allow one-way flow of foot traffic, the bathrooms are outfitted with fully automated and touchless fixtures to reduce the amount of high-touch elements. More intensive cleansing will be routine, culminating in an end-of-day deep clean with UV-sanitation or similar advanced technology.



ABOVE

Concept: Virtual telehealth clinic incorporated into the workplace to accommodate appointments.



06 BEYOND

Functional Features that Create Opportunities for Design

Strict functional considerations do impose challenges, but they also present exciting opportunities to create architectural gestures that inspire as they solve problems.

For example, one solution we researched was a dynamic entry experience with peace of mind embedded in the design: a cleaning portal, a concept popular in Asia, that utilizes mist sanitation or a related technology as visitors and occupants arrive from the street.

Another option is a well-designed feature stair that takes social distancing into consideration—and even

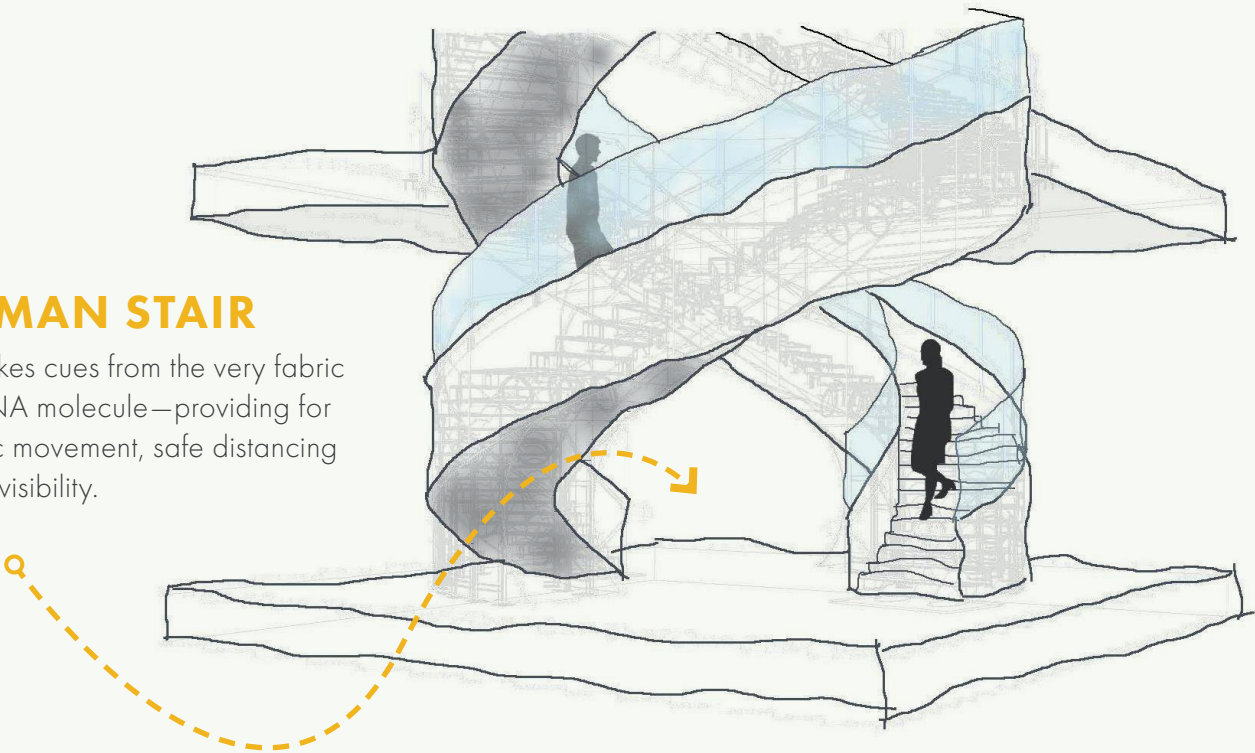
exploits such limitations for expressive purposes.

As an example, the spiraling form of this “human stair” design—actually two intertwining, single-direction staircases—derives from the very fabric of life: the DNA strand. The shape is both an intriguing sculptural element and an inviting yet safe way to move through space at a social distance yet with maximum visual connection to others.



THE HUMAN STAIR

Stair design takes cues from the very fabric of life —the DNA molecule—providing for one way traffic movement, safe distancing and maximum visibility.



BREATHE AGAIN

An enhanced HVAC model featuring return air plenum that, together with a raised floor air supply, circulates and purifies air faster.



IIDA Executive Vice President
and CEO Cheryl S. Durst,
Hon, FIIDA.

CONCLUSION

Braver New World: The Future of the
Resilient Workplace

IA constantly seeks out challenges to proactively solve our culture’s most pressing issues. The current moment presents a collision of many challenges, ones that make it very hard to convene in the office in a manner that we work best. And yet the office is the heartbeat of a company, essential to further business and connect. It’s where we come together with others who share our passion to collaborate, to knowledge

share, to form community, to strive toward a common goal, and to celebrate our success and each other. Culture-building, innovation, and creativity are organic processes that depend on physical space. Environments created to highlight and honor these values help draw talent and retain employees, and allow a company to foster its unique culture—which in turn helps them become influential.

BELOW

Walkthrough: Click below to see an animated, 3D tour of our vision for the future of the resilient workplace.



“
And for now and for next and
for always, design will always
do what design does best:
support and uplift humanity and
culture. Design is indeed the
business of life.

CHERYL S. DURST
IIDA EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
AND CEO; HON FIIDA



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