

# WORK HEALTHY: How To Create Healthy Hybrid Spaces



THE REPUBLIC, Photo by Duda/Paine

*Increasing social interaction  
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advance emotional wellbeing.*

With flexible work dominating the workplace, employees and business owners alike are searching for ways to create healthy collaboration. The great resignation and the downsize of departments have given employers pause to consider what the future looks like when not all departments are in the same location.

According to the International *WELL Building Institute*, the physical workplace is one of the top three factors affecting job performance and satisfaction. In response, companies are seeking ways to invest in their most important asset: people.

Let's take a look at the top three elements needed to create a healthy workplace for your people:

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

Collaborative, experiential work environments provide spaces to share ideas, offer support, and build community.

Feeling connected continues to challenge, with some positions remaining remote. Increasing social interaction across digital platforms among employees can satisfy the need for community and emotional wellbeing at work. But the lure back to work needs more.

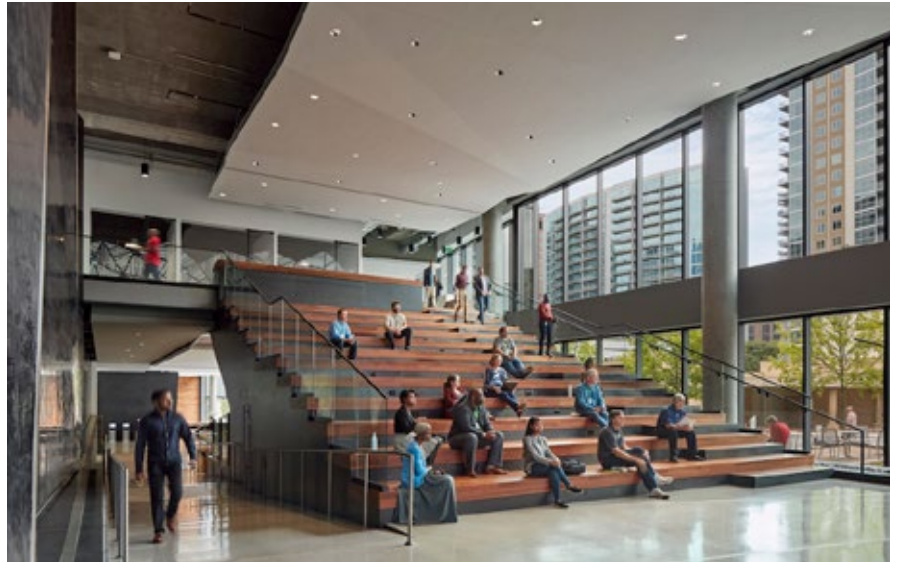
Dedicated rooms for meetings, conferences and training have become more integrated spaces within the flexible work model. Allowing for more options both inside and outside the domain of the office environment.

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Focus on creating colorful, inviting spaces with a more *residential feeling*, but don't lose your brand ethos. Create a signature style and infuse it into:

- Unique *huddle spaces* for team collaboration
- Comfortable *cafe style lounge areas*
- Extend your reach to *outdoor terraces*
- Strive for balance between team + solo focus zones
- Incorporate stepped seating as a unique vehicle for meetings

*Share your space with nearby businesses by becoming a draw for lectures addressing innovation, technology and the evolution of the changing business climate.*



Stepped seating can become a microclimate for your teams to experience a new way of brainstorming and storytelling. They can also become a vehicle for other nearby businesses to utilize your space as they adapt to the future of work.

Recognize the importance of acoustics and lighting in these spaces so they can adapt to various functions as your meeting and collaboration needs continue to evolve.

Transparent glass façades that reveal interior activities across all levels to pedestrians passing by can showcase progressive thinking. Many small businesses are struggling to address the future of work. By sharing your space with nearby businesses, you become a draw for lectures addressing innovation, technology and the evolution of a changing business climate.

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Interconnecting employees of all disciplines remains important. Office designs that foster a sense of belonging and encourage social engagement will continue to be significant:

- Increase free address workstations
- Integrate *height adjustable desks*
- Create transitional spaces with *mobile workstations*
- Allow departments to form their own hives

Technology, flexibility and individualization create a powerful benefit in defining the new way of working with mental, emotional and social wellness imbedded into the design.

## ACCESS TO NATURE

A growing body of research supports the success of biophilic design for improving overall well-being. Outdoor spaces, elevated gardens and interior greenery can contribute to greater productivity, decreased absenteeism and better employee engagement.

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Community networks of walking and biking trails encourage movement for large corporate campuses. Employees can socialize away from work or take a moment for themselves while taking a lap around the nearby lakes. Natural lighting, warm interior finishes and views of the outdoors can provide further connections to nature in a healthy work experience.

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*Outdoor spaces offer possibilities for flexible programming that extends the work environment and culture outside to sustain social interaction.*



Outdoor spaces offer possibilities for flexible programming that extends the work environment and culture outside. These areas can be used for ongoing activities to sustain social interactions beyond the workday, including:

- Dedicated areas for recreational activities
- Terrace environments for open meetings
- Gathering spaces for corporate or community
- Include intimate shaded niches for focused work
- Incorporate adaptable furnishings with built in power access
- Boost WIFI infrastructure to allow for seamless collaboration

Focus on finding unique ways to mitigate nature's forces like glare, temperature swings and wind to ensure outdoor spaces are safe and comfortable to use.

Garden areas with a variety of plants can reduce the heat island effect, control sound transmission and provide shade. Wind can be controlled with select plants and higher railings, windbreak structures, and step-backs from a building's edge—all features that improve users' safety and reduce the impact of high winds in tower garden terraces.

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## HEALTHY BUILDING DESIGN

There has been a rise in indoor LEED sustainable building initiatives since the pandemic forced everyone to re-examine what a healthy work environment looks like.

On the construction side, *designers* and developers are selecting materials and finishes that can be easily sanitized and are durable for common spaces like restrooms, elevators and lobbies.

To reduce the release of toxic chemicals associated with a building's lifecycle, strict restrictions have been developed on the use of lead, cadmium, and copper within building materials. Low volatile organic compounds (VOCs) throughout the built environment are being introduced in fabrics as well as furniture.

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Office furniture designers have been implementing the same research and development by producing antimicrobial products to keep you safe at work. Other updates include:

- Touchless systems to reduce the spread of illness
- Indoor greenery to purify the air.
- Higher quality indoor air filtration

Design that embraces and improves our comfort and holistic wellbeing will become vital for maintaining a healthy workplace and allowing employees to regain the benefits of being together again.

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## INCUBATORS FOR CHANGE

Austin's own contemporary office tower, The Republic, was targeted for LEED Gold. Ultraviolet light air purification in addition to MERV 13 air filtration, typically used in healthcare environments, was incorporated to reduce pollutants. Intentional placement of high-quality air filters in public areas can prevent chances of exposure outside of day-to-day interactions in the office.

Part of the multi-use workplace wellness strategy of The Republic includes outdoor spaces and more open environments, including less densely packed office space. A main terrace and greenspace atop the The Republic's podium parking provide building tenants multiple outdoor seating and social areas as well as extensive views of Republic Square Park. A sixty-foot setback allows the creation of a covered entry courtyard, a public plaza and integrated retail.

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## SUMMARY

You will notice these common trends and variations for the foreseeable future. Now that employees are transitioning between work-from-home and making their way back to the office, the workplace has to offer creature comforts and more. Providing employees with different types of workspaces and amenities allows for increased social interaction, independence and choice.