

**/ How to Select Your
Next Workplace /**

/ Introduction /

The modern workplace is a strategic, competitive advantage.

Now more than ever, the way we work contributes to the success of businesses and individuals. The modern workplace is no longer a “cost of doing business.” When thoughtfully planned, it is a strategic competitive advantage.

Today’s workplace must be a unique reflection of your company’s values, culture, brand and goals. It must serve as a vital tool for recruiting and retaining top talent. And it must be carefully designed to maximize the collaboration and productivity that propels your business forward. But with myriad layouts to choose from and competing design philosophies, finding the ideal workplace for your company’s needs can be challenging.

Whether your company is embracing the open workspace trend or opting for a more traditional office layout, four essential design elements – floor plating, daylighting, outdoor space and sustainability – require careful consideration. Understanding how these elements impact everything from employee wellness to business growth will ensure you select the right workplace for your company’s future success.

“Leading-edge businesses must be intentional in their workplace selection, considering how the workplace they choose will foster collaboration, productivity and growth.”

– *Doug Holte,*
President, Irvine Company Office

/ Floor Plating /

Layout flexibility matters more than square footage costs.

For decades, the cost-per-square foot has been the most important metric when selecting a workplace. However, relying solely on this metric discounts critical floor plate variables like space design and layout.

No two spaces with the same square footage are equal. The floor plate is the key differentiating factor that dictates your workplace layout and design options. The more flexibility you have within a floor plate, the easier it is for your business to customize a workspace that's conducive to employee success.

For example, rectangular floor plates maximize usable space and allow for easy scalability should your company need to reorganize teams or move workstations. Conversely, while floor plates with rounded edges or cutouts may foster more creative workspace environments, these do offer fewer configuration options such as restricting future expansion and contraction.

“It's easy for companies to focus on square footage counts and overlook the importance of floor plates,” says Roger DeWames, Vice President Development. “When comparing options, companies must look beyond the numbers and consider how the floor plate is constructed. While some elements like exterior walls can't be changed, the floor plate itself can either support or restrict your layout options.”

Today's leading companies understand that a workplace's layout and design are just as important for ROI as the cost-per-square foot. One way to maximize workplace ROI is to choose a rectangular floor plate, which can be easily modified to provide employees with flexible work environments.

“Employees need control and flexibility over their work environment,” says Mike Bennett, Senior Vice President, Operations. “While being connected to the workplace community is important, so too are opportunities for privacy. Consider whether the floor plate will be able to meet these varied needs as your company grows.”

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Senior Vice President, Operations

/ What your business needs to know /



Evaluate employee-per-square-foot counts.

As a general rule of thumb, allocate at least 125 to 225 usable square feet of space per employee. Ensure your floor plate will allow for a balance of open and quiet space. At a minimum, allocate one, 100-s.f. quiet space for every 10 open space workstations.



Minimize columns.

Consider the flexibility options within the current floor plate. The most flexible and utilitarian floor plates will have fewer columns, which allows for multiple layouts as company needs evolve.



Build in room for growth.

If you are a full floor tenant, ensure that you will have additional expansion capacity upon move-in. Otherwise you risk splitting your team between multiple floors during periods of expansion. Additionally, should your business need to downsize its footprint, consider whether your current floor plate can easily be modified to accommodate additional tenants.



Maximize shared space utility.

If you are a smaller company that will be sharing floor space with other tenants, ensure the floor plate you choose can be easily subdivided without detrimentally impacting the utility of your space. A properly designed floor plate will be able to accommodate the needs of all individual tenants without compromising important design elements like daylighting or access to shared outdoor spaces.



Allocate at least 125 to 225 usable square feet of space per employee and one, 100-s.f. quiet space for every 10 open space workstations.

/ Daylighting /

Strategic daylighting drives employee engagement.

Daylighting – the architectural term for how natural light enters and diffuses through a workspace – is a design imperative for every leading-edge company.

In traditional office layouts, however, the prime spaces for maximum daylight – offices with windows – are typically allocated to senior management. This leaves entry-level and even some mid-level employees working in artificially lit environments, which can lower morale and diminish productivity.

“Equitable daylight sharing fosters a more democratic workplace that promotes productivity, strengthens employee engagement and boosts creativity,” says Tom Sullivan, Group Senior Vice President Development & Construction. “Daylighting can also soften the psychological impact of today’s smaller workspaces on employees. Brighter, lighter workspaces feel less physically confining.”

Exposure to natural light positively impacts mood and alertness while reducing the fatigue, eyestrain and headaches associated artificial light. In addition to boosting employee productivity and engagement, daylighting is also good for a business’s bottom line.

Research shows that daylighting improves a building’s energy efficiency, resulting in significant cost savings over the lifetime the lease. Electric lighting in buildings consumes more than 15 percent of all electricity generated in the United States. Utilizing natural light in place of artificial lights can reduce the energy used by electrical lighting systems between 20 and 60 percent.

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Consider core depth.

Daylight from side windows nearly vanishes more than 20 to 25 feet from the windows. Consequently, the deeper the core, the more challenging it will be to bring natural light into the center of your office. Raising the ceiling height and positioning team breakout spaces along exterior walls can improve daylight sharing. In single-floor, campus-style office buildings, the addition of skylights over the building's core can also help.



Use glass walls.

Even if your company prefers to keep prime corner office space reserved for senior employees, it's still possible to follow a more democratic approach to light sharing. The use of glass walls for exterior offices will bring more light into the core. Minimize privacy concerns by using frosted glass or installing translucent shades.



Add light shelves.

An architectural light shelf is a horizontal surface placed above eye-level that reflects daylight onto the ceiling and into the building, improving natural light penetration and distribution. In addition to the psychological benefits associated with greater natural light levels, this balanced ambient light can reduce your artificial lighting costs and earn your building points towards LEED certification requirements.



Maximize energy savings.

Consider how a building's existing daylighting infrastructure, like glass walls and light shelves, can augment or even replace artificial lights. Opting for a task lighting system ensures artificial lights are only used where absolutely needed, maximizing the energy saving benefits of daylighting.



Daylighting can reduce energy demand from electrical lighting systems between 20 and 60 percent.

/ Outdoor Workspace /

Outdoor workspace drives collaboration and innovation.

Contemporary corporate culture is undergoing a period of dramatic transformation, and nowhere is this shift more evident than the rise of the outdoor workplace. Today's leading companies recognize that access to outdoor space improves employee well being, enhances engagement and productivity, and provides opportunities for the serendipitous, face-to-face encounters that spark not just collaboration, but also drive innovation.

“Offering employees access to secondary outdoor workspace can offset indoor square footage loss and provide new opportunities for social connection that create a true sense of balance at work,” says John Koga, Vice President Planning and Design. “From quiet decompression zones to bocce ball courts, these spaces support a range of activities that positively impact physical, mental and social health.”

It's not enough to simply add a few chairs to an outdoor terrace and call it a day, however.

“Our research shows that outdoor workspace is most effective when it's designed to function as the center of a workplace community and is customized to meet the needs of that community,” says Charlie Liu, Senior Insights Director. “Companies need to consider what challenges their employees encounter in their current work environment and how outdoor space can be used to address these challenges.”

Computer programmers, for example, may use the outdoor space to take a screen break, returning to work refreshed and recharged. A senior writer may plug her computer into an outdoor outlet and quietly power through a big project away from coworker interruptions. A sales manager may use the BBQ station to host his team's quarterly sales goal kick-off. In short, to maximize the benefits of outdoor space, you must give employees clear options for how to use this space.

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Maximize utility with programmable spaces.

Look for outdoor spaces that offer a range of options for individual work and team interactions. Don't leave employees guessing how they should use these spaces. The addition of simple signage like "meet" or "play" signals how spaces should be used. These differentiated settings and cues allow employees to choose the place that best aligns with their task, work style and personal needs, maximizing outdoor space utility and improving an employee's perception of autonomy.



Diversify seating.

Different activities require different types of seating. Does the outdoor space offer comfortable lounge furniture for connecting informally with colleagues as well as sturdy tables for eating lunch or setting up a laptop? Secondly, consider how the seating layout. Are there a variety of seating arrangements including space for individual workstations, small meetings, and larger team gatherings? Can employees move and adjust seating as need?



Consider weather and seasonal concerns.

Start by evaluating sun exposure: are there options for shaded and partially shaded workspaces that prevent screen glare in addition to full sun? Next, consider the impact of seasonal climate fluctuations. If your company is located in a colder climate, can the addition of space heaters or windscreens enhance shoulder season utility? In hotter climates, can overhead fans improve airflow?



Programmable outdoor workspaces increase the chance encounters between employees that drive innovation.

/ Sustainable Design /

Real-time sustainability monitoring delivers actionable insights.

Energy efficiency, water conservation and sustainable building design are imperatives for the modern workplace. Choosing an Energy Star and LEED certified office building is just the first step. From installing EV charging stations to actively managing energy usage, today's leading-edge companies must proactively embrace the challenge of sustainable building operations head-on.

The U.S. Green Building Council has modified its LEED program with the addition of LEED Arc, a building performance and monitoring system and annual recertification program. LEED Arc measures building performance across five categories: energy, water, waste, transportation and human experience, generating a performance score that is updated every time new data enters the platform. Buildings can benchmark against their own past performance and other similar buildings locally and globally.

“In the past, new buildings would achieve LEED certification at the time of construction, but many of the tenants were removed from the day-to-day sustainability efforts,” says Chris Popma, Vice President of Operations - NY/OC. “Now, LEED Arc monitors building performance in real-time, delivering actionable insights so tenants can see how their day-to-day energy usage is directly impacting the building's overall sustainability score. This is a unique opportunity to make meaningful improvements that conserve resources and save money.”

Factors like transportation access impact the LEED Arc score, serving as a powerful visual reminder that there's more to sustainability than just building materials.

“Leading-edge companies must also consider how their office building will be part of a larger, sustainable community ecosystem,” says Rich Bluth, Vice President Energy Management. “Sustainability extends beyond the building itself.”

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Vice President Energy Management

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Ask for LEED Arc.

LEED Arc empowers building tenants to monitor their energy usage in real-time. Performance data updates automatically, triggering the platform to recalculate the building's score. Your employees can watch how their daily behaviors, like using daylighting rather than overhead lights, impact building performance.



Go beyond the grid.

From solar panels to battery packs, innovative building design is redefining what's possible for energy conservation. For example, Irvine Company is the first major real estate company in the world to plan a fleet of hybrid-electric buildings that reduce peak energy demand by 25 percent and provide enough reserve capacity to power 10,000 homes.



Consider the community ecosystem.

Location matters for sustainability. How does the location you choose impact your employees' carbon footprint? Are residential and retail options located nearby? Which public transportation options are available, if any?



Prioritize Energy Star certification.

Annual Energy Star recertification demonstrates an ongoing commitment to energy efficient operations. Energy Star certified buildings are verified to perform in the top 25 percent of similar buildings nationwide over a specific, one-year period.



Hybrid-electric buildings can reduce peak energy demand by 25 percent and provide enough reserve capacity to power 10,000 homes.

/ Workplace Selection Checklist /

Workplace selection is a defining moment for your company. To guide your efforts, Irvine Company has prepared a comprehensive checklist. Keep the following in mind:

- ✔ **Employee square foot counts.** Allocate at least 125 to 225 usable square feet per employee.
- ✔ **Columns.** Opt for floor plates with minimal columns for maximum future layout flexibility.
- ✔ **Growth opportunities.** Ensure sufficient capacity for future expansion.
- ✔ **Shared space utility.** Assess modification ease for accommodating additional tenants in the event of contraction.
- ✔ **Glass walls.** Bring light into the core while minimizing privacy concerns with frosted glass or translucent shades.
- ✔ **Light shelves.** Improve natural light penetration and distribution while learning points towards LEED certification requirements.
- ✔ **Task lighting.** Maximize energy savings by augmenting daylighting with task lighting rather than artificial lights.
- ✔ **Outdoor space flexibility.** Look for outdoor spaces that offer a range of options for individual work and team interactions.
- ✔ **Work-ready outdoor spaces.** Confirm outdoor Wi-Fi signal strength, charging station access and AV event support.
- ✔ **Multi-season spaces.** Consider options for maximizing outdoor space utility, including sun exposure (shade, partial, full), overhead fans for airflow in warmer climates, space heaters or windscreens in colder climates.
- ✔ **LEED and Energy Star.** Opt for buildings that are LEED and Energy Star certified confirming that the location is managed with a focus on sustainability and energy efficiency.

“Workplace selection is a defining moment for your company: it’s the opportunity to choose a space that will reinforce your company’s culture and values, strengthen recruitment and retention efforts, and drive the successful collaboration that delivers high-performance.”

– *Steve Case, Executive Vice President*

About Irvine Company Office

Irvine Company Office creates Vibrant Workplace Communities™ in collaboration with forward-thinking leaders and brands to help businesses flourish. From the latest in sustainability, technology and master planning to our innovative approach to work-life balance, Irvine Company Office is redefining the contemporary office.

