About the Cover

This original piece of art explores the human quest to design better futures. A surreal composition of water, bark, moss and wind are woven together with steel, glass and fabric which surrounds a person, looking ahead with optimism. It reflects the interdependency between natural and human-made elements. Montaging a blend of photography and rendering, this art was created by Steelcase art directors, graphic designers and digital artists.

About the Paper

Work Better magazine and the Steelcase Impact Report are printed on paper made of 100% sustainable recycled fiber. The stock is fully recyclable and the sheet dictates both the size of our magazine and our Impact Report to minimize scrap.

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WB

Design. Insights. Research.
Fall 2023

Designing Better Futures

People and *places* making a difference

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Design. Insights. Research.
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Inside This Issue

The Future Is Here

Workplace trends are rarely surprising. It's not that things don't change. But they're usually pretty easy to see coming if you pay attention. I mean, was anyone really surprised people wanted more flexibility at work after all the pre-pandemic office complaints?

Amy Willard, WorkSpace Futures manager, shares leaders' emerging priorities with Chris.

We've tracked attitudes about the workplace and what's most important to employees and leaders for years, and they told us about specific products, solutions and priorities for the office.

But when our teammates in WorkSpace Futures research shared the results of their latest study of global leaders my first reaction was "wow."

Leaders said the top issues they think will be more important this year are: employee wellbeing, diversity, equity and inclusion, and sustainability.

These topics are hardly new. But they always lived further down the list of choices leaders need to make – things that were important, but not as urgent. Now that's changed.

Three years ago our researchers used a methodology called "foresight" that's a regular part of their practice, this time specifically exploring people and planet issues. They scan the horizon for lots of signals that might seem insignificant at first, but patterns emerge and get synthesized into "forces" that are translated into possible future scenarios. It's a way of planning for the future to make the right choices before these changes are upon us. Our researchers identified that climate change and employee wellbeing were issues that would have greater impact on organizations' strategic choices in the near future — things such as planning for extreme weather events and prioritizing long-term employee wellbeing over short-term organizational gains.

We saw this shift in priorities coming, along with others who've been on the forefront advocating for change. And now that future is here.

The sentiment that emerged in our leader study (see page 2) offers hope and a signal it's gaining momentum. This issue of Work Better is focused on helping to build that momentum even more. We hope to inspire you with new ways of thinking about product and space design, and about how to make learning spaces truly people-centered. We share ideas for designing spaces that are inclusive for everyone and celebrate those who are designing better futures for people and the planet — **we fundamentally believe organizations can have a bigger impact if we collectively take action.**

We have decided to include our annual Impact Report for 2023, Our Work Toward Better Futures, which details the goals we've set and the progress we're making for the wellbeing of people and the planet. We are working towards meeting more ambitious carbon reduction goals at a greater global scale than anyone in our industry and sharing the details to foster open and honest conversations about our choices and the challenges we face so we can make progress — together.

Because better is possible.

Chris Congdon
Editor in Chief, Work Better Magazine

What Leaders Say Is Important Now

A new set of priorities is gaining traction with business leaders around the world – people and the planet.

Priorities: People + Planet

We asked leaders what workspace issues they think will be more important in the next year and new perspectives are gaining momentum.

Employee wellbeing tops the list and has been considered important for years. Now sustainability, followed closely by diversity, equity and inclusion, have emerged as top issues, signaling a shift in leaders' perspectives. In 2020 infection control dominated conversations along with greater privacy and while they are still important, a new set of priorities is clearly emerging.

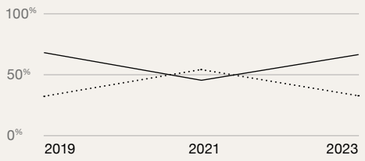
About the Research

Steelcase WorkSpace Futures regularly conducts primary research with global leaders to learn what issues they're struggling with and what direction they're taking. Researchers Sarah Johnson and Amy Willard fielded the study in Spring 2023 in 11 countries. The research included leaders from diverse industries, cities and organizational sizes to get a well-rounded view on their perspectives about where work is going.

Leaders expect mostly in-office work to return to pre-pandemic levels.

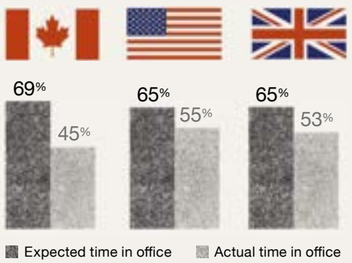
While remote work gained traction during the pandemic, sentiments have shifted about the best places for work and most leaders now expect most employees to be in the office three or more days a week.

Percent of employees expected to be mostly in-office or mostly remote.



Employees continue to work in the office less often than leaders expect in Canada, the U.S. and UK.

These tensions motivate leaders to make workplace improvements. In other countries leaders and employees are more aligned, with many employees exceeding leader expectations.



Of Interest

Munich

New Steelcase spaces in Munich, Sydney and Shenzhen feature a fresh take on hybrid work. Newly-designed team neighborhoods help build culture and community, balance spaces for privacy and collaboration, and showcase how the latest designs and technology help more equitably connect remote teammates.

Read the case study online

Shenzhen

Sydney

CECP: Inclusion Makes Progress

Steelcase recently sponsored research on disability inclusion in the workplace with Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose® (CECP). The research shows leading companies are strategically integrating and dedicating resources to their policies, practices and culture around disability inclusion and workplace design, with 67% of participants describing their maturity in disability inclusion as intermediate or advanced. Recently, Steelcase President and CEO Sara Armbruster joined the CEO-led coalition's Board of Directors to further support this work. See pg. 24 for ideas on how to create inclusive workplaces.

Closing the Loop

The installation "Closing the Loop" by Steelcase (see picture on p. 22) was custom-made for the DLD Circular Conference, which took place in Munich on September 6, 2023. Made of textile and plastic waste, recycled yarn and the new Gabriel Loop fabric, it showcases circularity principles in action. The Gabriel Loop material is made entirely of recycled and textile waste – including material scraps from Steelcase's plant in France – which then can be recycled endlessly, thus, closing the circle (see pp. 20–22).

The Art of Upcycling

The annual IIDA Sustainable Quilt Auction brings together designers to create quilted works of art using upcycled commercial fabrics. Steelcase team members collaborated with designers to create a quilt inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's Tree of Life stained glass window, sewn from 1000 pieces of fabric. The 2023 Auction, hosted at our WorkLife New York, saved 227 kg of waste from going into landfills and raised $10,000 for Free Arts NYC, which empowers youth from underserved communities.

The Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired quilt was purchased by Steelcase and is displayed on the Steelcase campus in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Quilters: Kait Kennedy - Steelcase, Meghan Hennigan - Signify, Grazyna Pilatowicz - Fashion Institute of Technology, Caitlin Hucks - Maharam Textiles, Corinna D'Ambrosio - Ware Malcomb, Lisa Blesser - Momentum Textiles

Feel Good Spaces

Queer Eye designer focuses on wellbeing

On Netflix's reality show Queer Eye, designer Bobby Berk creates custom, jaw-dropping (often tear-jerking) spaces where people feel right at home, no matter who they are. On and off the show, Berk wants to inspire people to live with clarity and mental wellbeing in the spaces they choose to spend time in. He carried that mission into his latest design challenge – working with Steelcase to turn an entire L.A. home into his full-service interior design firm's new headquarters.

Berk wanted a versatile, comfortable and multi-functional office. A need for a spot to take more video meetings led to a private call room with a bold background. Big enough for four people, his team can also gather around to just chill and chat.

"Interior design isn't just about buying pretty things. It should be about bringing things into your spaces that bring you peace and joy."

Bobby Berk
Design expert, author and Emmy-nominated TV host

This all-in-one conference space (Left) is a place for Berk's team to meet, eat and create.

This is where Berk's team gets down to business (Right). Anyone can grab a seat in Steelcase Karman® chairs — described by his team as sleek and simple — "not too officey."

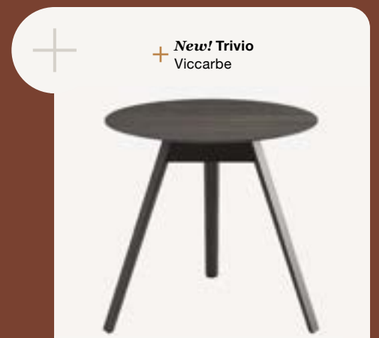
More Ideas for Feel Good Spaces

+ **Zoco**
Viccarbe

+ ***New!*** **Island**
Established & Sons

+ **Cambio**
Viccarbe

+ **Sully**
Orangebox



***New!* Trivio**
Viccarbe

Lares
Steelcase

Refined, yet relaxed: Steelcase provided Bobby's team with renderings of their spaces so they could see how their ideas could come to life. This included helping to select pieces and finishes that would seamlessly integrate and function well in the space — adding storage and surface areas to work and display design materials. The result: an office that felt more like home and would also stand up over time.

***New!* Steelcase Karman**
Steelcase

"We're on a mission to help everyone discover that good design is good for the mind. We want to design spaces that make you feel good when you're there."

Bobby Berk

Photos credit: Sara Ligorria Tramp

Design With Conscience

Designers and architects know the places they build have an impact on the people who live and work in them, as well as their communities.

Recognizing how great a responsibility this is, the design community has taken a leadership role and is taking collective action to create places that have a positive impact on people and the planet. Read how six firms are using the power of design to help create better futures.

ARP Astrance

French design firm ARP Astrance has a bold raison d'être: "To create real estate and cities with a positive impact." As the first design and architectural firm to become B-Corp certified in France, ARP Astrance has been working with clients for more than 30 years to help them create sustainable, healthy workplaces through biophilic design and circular economy principles, while reducing carbon and designing for the overall wellbeing of people.

"Social responsibility and environmental protection are at the heart of our DNA," says Gwennaële Chabroullet, deputy managing director, Sustainable Strategies and Environmental Transition Division. "We integrate social and ecological concerns into all our activities and into our relationships with our customers, employees and partners."

ARP Astrance recently reinvented their own workplace in Paris, which has been certified by CERTIVEA (France's leading certification body for sustainable living environments) and awarded its OsmoZ label. The new space was designed to maximize flexibility, reuse existing furniture and carpet and include biophilic elements everywhere to enhance the wellbeing of people and reduce carbon by more than 75%. The space is also in the process of receiving the Circolab® Label, the first Label that promotes circular economy real estate projects in France. "This project proves that it's possible to do this, within a realistic budget and timing," says Chabroullet.

"Our vision goes beyond the simple idea of risk reduction to creating places which are beneficial to us — regenerative places."

Gwennaële Chabroullet
Deputy Managing Director
Sustainable Strategies + Environment
Transition Division

ARP Astrance Offices, Paris, France

Lemay

Canadian architecture firm Lemay believes thoughtful design can transform the world and create meaningful spaces for people and their communities, and they are making it happen through their rigorous Net Positive™ framework.

"Net Positive™ is our core ESG initiative centered on the scalable development of sustainable built environments, as well as holistic behavioral changes in users today and their resilient futures tomorrow," explains Hugo Lafrance, director of Sustainability at Lemay.

Lemay client Nortera Head Office, Montreal, Quebec

The firm uses its own office, the Phénix, as a testing ground for its Net Positive strategies, which focus on health and wellbeing, the environment and reducing carbon emissions. Transforming a neglected 1950s-era warehouse in Montreal's South-West borough into a unique work environment, the Phénix is part of its community's revitalization and has prevented 12,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions that would have been produced by the construction of a new building. The space features biophilic elements such as a living green wall and climbing plant modules to improve indoor air quality, balance humidity and maintain a connection to nature. All office areas have access to daylight and views, reducing the need for artificial lighting — all of which has enabled the Phénix to achieve a rare 3-star Fitwel rating, Zero Carbon Building Standard and LEED Platinum certifications.

"Net Positive™ not only refocuses and upcycles the macro levels of buildings and neighborhood masterplans, but those of interiors as well," says Lafrance. "The result is a set of cascading benefits that extend from the improvement of public perception and employee attraction and retention to providing quantifiable degrees of user fulfillment alongside reduced operations costs and better ROIs."

Woods Bagot

Woods Bagot, a global design firm based in Australia, believes designers "must grow alongside the complexities of this ever-changing world with a diversity of thought and inclusiveness of perspective." "If we are to make an impact beyond design, we must create a world where architecture is revered for its service more than its style," says Ray Yuen, principal at Woods Bagot. "Every person within our organization must contribute to the idea that we can shift the direction of an entire industry to appeal more to human instinct, the human condition and human sensibilities."

Among the many initiatives Woods Bagot has undertaken to achieve this goal is its commitment to promoting reconciliation and raise awareness about colonization and its ongoing effects on Indigenous people. Woods Bagot's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) demonstrates the firm's dedication to building stronger relationships with Indigenous communities through meaningful partnerships, collaborating with local Indigenous leaders, elders and organizations to ensure their voices are heard and respected in the planning and design processes.

Currently, Woods Bagot is working with Diller Scofidio + Renfro on the Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre (AACC) in Adelaide, Australia. The AACC is being built on Kaurna land and will showcase the past, present and future of Aboriginal cultures while supporting contemporary art practices and events. The design team engaged in deep conversations with members of the AACC Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) to discover the design vision. Woods Bagot principal Rosina Di Maria described the consultation process as a humbling and emotional experience.

"Our role is to listen, and translate the aspirations and ambitions of the ARG into a design response. The Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre will be a place for all Australians to remember ourselves, to learn the truth-telling of our past, and to re-imagine ourselves together to create new memories as a connected community."

Rosina Di Maria
Principal

Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre, Adelaide, Australia

Gensler Apprenticeship Program

Gensler

Following the killing of George Floyd in 2020, Gensler, a global design firm, felt a responsibility to bring intentionality to race and ethnicity at their firm, the A+D industry and the next generation of talent. The firm's Five Strategies to Fight Racism outlines key strategies to make positive and lasting change within the firm itself and its communities around the world.

A major initiative is the Gensler Apprenticeship Program (GAP) — the first of Gensler's Design Education + Employment Programs (DEEP). GAP is a two-year, paid apprenticeship that offers an alternate path into the design industry that does not require a degree. Gensler apprentices work alongside design professionals to receive real-world experience in design, construction and business through hands-on applications. The program aims to bring people with a diversity of thought, backgrounds and unique skills into the firm while empowering individuals to make a change in their life and the lives of others.

"We chose to focus on the largest disparity gaps in terms of representation in our industry — the Black population, especially Black women," says Jason Pugh, global director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Gensler. "While this was very controversial, since you run the risk of excluding other underrepresented groups, our thought process was that a rising tide lifts all ships. The relationships, the partnerships, the resources, the programs that we put into place to support and advance and help build the recruitment, retention and advancement of Black female architects will support other marginalized groups, whether that's Asians, Hispanic Latinos, the LGBQT+ community. And three years into it, our data is starting to reflect that our strategies are working."

"The relationships, the partnerships, the resources, the programs that we put into place to support and advance and help build the recruitment, retention and advancement of Black female architects will support other marginalized groups."

Jason Pugh
Global Director of Diversity, Equity + Inclusion

Corgan

Corgan, a U.S.-based global design firm, believes sustainability is an echo of performance. "Sustainability doesn't mean sacrifice; rather, it empowers better design and experience for our client's users and their industries," says Corgan Sustainability Director Varun Kohli.

Designing the first new net-positive campus for Wells Fargo in Las Colinas, Texas, Corgan delivered a facility that encourages a positive employee experience and relationship with the environment. Expected to generate more renewable energy on-site than it consumes, the project will pursue LEED Platinum certification. Achieving net-positivity with the energy demands of the Texas climate required a comprehensive approach including site planning, building massing and façade articulation, solar panels, regionally-sourced materials, lighting interventions, interstitial biophilic elements and whole lifecycle assessment (LCA) to reduce embodied carbon in materials used, especially its concrete structure.

Topping the towers and garage, three structures are completely covered in photovoltaic panels, which convert light into electricity. Hoisted in the air with a finely articulated steel canopy structure, they crown the building and are softly up-lit at night creating the illusion of a delicate floating plane—serving as a signature mark of the project and its vision.

"I have always believed sustainability, resilience and climate-change adaptation strategies are nothing more than good design practice. But, it is only effective when we are aware of both the global environmental and micro-climatic context."

Varun Kohli
Sustainability Director

"That awareness allows us to design the built environment in harmony with the natural environment—dancing with nature, not fighting it and echoing the beauty of our planet's ecosystem," says Kohli.

Wells Fargo net-positive campus, Las Colinas, Texas

J.P. Morgan Chase, client of HOK, Houston: Photo courtesy of Michael Robinson Photography

HOK

HOK is on a mission. The global design firm is taking a leading role in educating the world about diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and demonstrating what inclusive design truly entails. "Designing beautiful spaces isn't enough. We want to make sure that every stakeholder in a project can make informed decisions, recognizing our impact on the people who inhabit our spaces," says HOK Principal/Regional Leader of WorkPlace Micki Washington.

A few years ago, HOK launched an internal Designing for Equity platform to give their design teams the framework and resources they need to create equitable solutions. "Our goal is to enlighten organizations about what they should be thinking about in the design and construction process and then equip them with the tools to put it into practice," says Washington. "We want to inspire conversations that matter around the topic of equity before our clients make critical decisions. The needs of their people need to be the main consideration. Ultimately, design can be a catalyst for change and evolution through space, opportunities and experiences."

"Designing beautiful spaces isn't enough. We want to make sure every stakeholder can make informed decisions, recognizing our impact on the people who inhabit our spaces."

Micki Washington
Principal/Regional Leader of WorkPlace

HOK's people dedicate significant time to speaking on panels, participating in industry conferences, and collaborating with strategic partners who share their passion for inclusivity. "We consistently challenge our industry at events to lock arms and be in this together. Our hope is that these ideas are adopted by our peers and partners. If, as a collective, designers ask the right questions, we can help our clients make the best decisions, not just for their real estate but for their people," says Washington.

Rethinking Design, Sustainably

Designers have an impact with the choices they make – they are inherent problem solvers who challenge perspectives and assumptions. But designing solutions that use fewer resources to limit their impact on climate change is daunting.

These complex problems require people in many different roles working together and challenging each other — rethinking traditional ways of doing things and re-examining processes to build new systems that lead to better, more sustainable futures.

IDEO, the design and innovation consultancy, inspired many design professionals with its framework for three lenses of innovation: desirability (a want or need), viability (profitability) and feasibility (a product that can be created meeting certain criteria). Today, the climate crisis calls for another lens — responsibility.

"Responsibility is our moral and ethical obligation to society, to think about the environment in everything we create, consume or use," says Michael Held, Steelcase vice president of global design. "We are constantly evolving how we develop products because there are hidden costs to us as a society behind every innovation."

Responsibility is not a new consideration in design, but adopting the practice of continuously looking at the impact of each decision – big and small – leads to new discoveries. Steelcase designers, engineers, scientists, operations and more are pushing toward continuous improvements in a sustainable product design process. As they learn, they're deeply committed to sharing new ideas or approaches that can help us collectively make a difference.

New Priorities

New Steelcase global research suggests leaders are more committed than ever to thinking differently — employee wellbeing, diversity and inclusion and sustainability are emerging as top workplace decision-making factors. These issues are all interconnected and influence the choices of employees, investors and customers. Decision makers want to work with companies that invest in strategies and technologies to not only be financially successful but also to preserve natural resources and aim to be more regenerative in their approach, including product design.

"Our overall sustainability strategy is three-pronged," says Mary Ellen Mika, Steelcase director of sustainability. "Reduce our carbon footprint, design for circularity and choose and use materials responsibly. All of the day-to-day choices we make need to be consistent with, and make progress toward these three goals."

Mika leads a team responsible for setting, measuring and achieving sustainability goals. They work cross-functionally on a long-term journey that requires weighing each design and engineering decision with robust guidelines.

Since 1912, sustainability has been part of the foundational values at Steelcase and woven through the product development process. "Our experience is that doing good for the planet is also good for business, which is why we're sharing what we're learning with our suppliers, partners and other stakeholders," notes Allan Smith, Steelcase chief revenue officer. "It creates value through new opportunities for innovation and streams of revenue, which allows us to better serve customers making business decisions around this issue, and, at the same time, benefit the greater global community."

So, what does this look like? How are long-established processes, like those used to design products, being reimagined in the climate era?

What Is Embodied Carbon?
Embodied carbon and the carbon footprint of a product both refer to the total greenhouse gas emissions created through the entire lifecycle of a product. This includes everything from acquiring materials, manufacturing, transportation and end of use. But the largest contributor is when materials are transformed into product parts.

To understand the embodied carbon (or carbon footprint) of a product, measure the weight of each material used in a product, multiplied by its carbon intensity (carbon emissions from producing materials and transforming them into parts), then add the other embodied carbon created throughout its life.

$$\left(\begin{matrix}\text{material}\\ \text{weight}\end{matrix} \times \begin{matrix}\text{carbon}\\ \text{intensity}\end{matrix}\right) + \begin{matrix}\text{other}\\ \text{embodied}\\ \text{carbon}\end{matrix} = \begin{matrix}\text{total}\\ \text{embodied}\\ \text{carbon}\end{matrix}$$

This shows how using less new materials, more recycled content or materials with lower carbon intensity changes the math and can help reduce the overall embodied carbon of a product.

Reduce Our Carbon Footprint

"Using the least amount of material necessary is just smart design," notes Held. While many of us grew up in the age of abundance — bigger homes, cars, meals – Held points out earlier generations were more frugal because of greater scarcity. This led to innovative ways of using resources which can be applied today. "Whether it's a product, a building or even when designing a city, it takes a different mindset to create something highly functional using fewer materials or resources," says Held.

Steelcase product development teams begin by asking: How can we achieve the same or better performance than products currently on the market using less materials to reduce our carbon footprint? Held says cross-functional teams are assessing the weight of products more than ever. Steelcase Karman® is the outcome of this approach — weighing just 13 kilograms, it required new thinking – design, engineering and materiality – to create one of the lightest task chairs in the industry that's also incredibly strong. In Europe, teams working on the Migration SE height-adjustable desk figured out how to make it lighter than most other desks, yet just as durable. Each time teams innovate, they carry that learning forward to the next project and challenge others to think differently.

Less weight and fewer materials means less fuel for transport, fewer resources for production and less environmental impact. An innovation in materials science in 2018 led to the Steelcase SILQ chair which responds to movement without mechanisms. Designers used learnings from SILQ to create Steelcase Karman, which is just 13 kilograms.

Steelcase Karman is designed with the fewest components necessary to reduce its impact on the earth.

"It takes a different mindset to create something highly functional using fewer materials or resources."

Michael Held
Steelcase Vice President of Global Design

Choose + Use Materials Responsibly

The "right" material used to be mostly about purity and performance — creating a new object without flaws. "Customers and designers care about quality and durability, and also value materials with more recycled content — ones that are easily recycled and safe for people," says Mika. "So our goal of choosing and using materials responsibly means exploring options that might not have been considered or available in the past."

The Steelcase Flex Perch Stool is the outcome of exploring a new type of plastic with BASF, made from a diverted waste stream generated during electronics production. The material performs like virgin plastics, is 100% recyclable and keeps electronic waste out of landfills.

Knots, contrasting streaks and other natural markings used to be discarded. But today, more sustainable materials celebrate nature's unique "imperfections." Sustainably-sourced woods and naturally derived fabrics contribute to a more regenerative approach to making products. "Our teams are exploring fast growing natural materials such as flax and hemp combined with organic binding agents," says Held. "These fibers are inherently circular and grown without much water. By experimenting, we find new ways of creating."

Textiles and paint powder previously bound for landfills are being recovered and reused to create new finishes. Recycled scrap fabric creates the New Black collection* by Steelcase. Reclaimed paint is now applied on internal junctions of the Answer panel system*.

"Our goal of choosing and using materials responsibly means exploring a broad range of options that we might not have considered or weren't available in the past."

Mary Ellen Mika
Steelcase Director of Sustainability

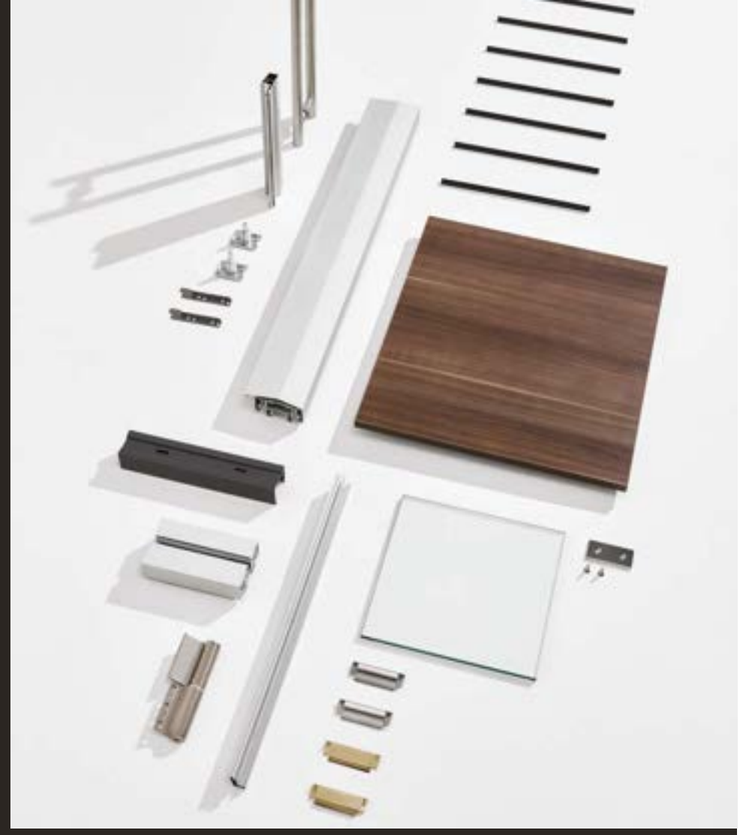
Loop to Loop by Designtex* captures and upcycles the company's own textile waste. More examples of the reuse model include Intersection*, made with ocean-bound plastic, and Gabriel Group's Beyond Loop and Renewed Loop in Europe, which are projected to annually use 17 tons of material scraps from the Steelcase Sarrebourg, France plant. (see pp. 20–22)

Design for Circularity

Designing for circularity is an inherently complex goal. It's a new way to think about quality. Instead of only focusing on how a product performs during its life, all parts of the product's lifecycle are considered — including how much energy is used to build it, how it's shipped and what happens at the end of use.

"Too many products that could get recycled don't," notes Held. "Some products are theoretically recyclable, but effectively they aren't. So we focus on designing for easy disassembly, which makes it easier to repair or refurbish and extend the use of the product, and to get it into the proper recycling stream if necessary."

Steelcase Flex Active Frames, for example, is designed so it needs just one simple tool to make assembly and disassembly faster. Many of the parts click together and don't need a tool at all. In Europe, Steelcase Flex Active Frames is designed to be shipped in a flat pack with optimized parcel logic which groups everything you need together in one unit for easier installation. Depending on the size, it can take just 20 minutes or less to put together. Flat boxes means more products ship at once, lowering carbon emissions. When you need to move it, you can take the pieces apart. When its useful life is over, easy disassembly means it's more likely to be recycled.



Everwall™*, a prefabricated wall system, is designed for modularity with the ability to adapt as workplace needs change. Its components are created as a kit of parts, made with recyclable materials such as glass, steel and aluminum and it's 100% reusable. It arrives partly assembled which means less cutting, dust and waste, and faster installation.

In Europe, designers and engineers figured out how to create Divisio Acoustic Screens with zippers instead of glue. Made with recyclable PET infill and hand-sewn fabric, Divisio is easy to disassemble and more likely to be recycled.

> Sustainable design requires team thinking across all aspects of a product's lifecycle and working with a broad range of partners to find new technologies, materials and processes. Sometimes what feels like a small change can have a huge collective impact. It's a journey of ongoing experimentation, learning — and being open to sharing — so we can make a difference. *Together.*

**Product availability varies by region.*

14 Choices
for a Better Planet

Creating a workplace that's better for the planet hasn't always been easy. The challenge of identifying which products are truly sustainable has increased the demand for transparency and accountability.

Leaders surveyed in the Steelcase 2023 global research study (see page 2) identified a range of product attributes and services that are important to help reach their organization's sustainability goals – underscoring an even deeper focus on creating offices that reflect their values. Companies want workplaces to resonate with their people on a personal level and support their overall wellbeing, which is directly tied to the wellbeing of the planet.

Steelcase and our Community of Brands are committed to creating a broad range of sustainable options to give designers more choices in diverse product categories. These are some of the products that represent our sustainable design principles of reducing carbon, designing for circularity, and choosing and using materials responsibly. Organizations and designers can feel confident by choosing solutions that do better for the world we all share.

New! Steelase Karman
Steelcase

A lighter impact on the planet, Steelcase Karman uses less materials and the least number of components necessary compared to other high-performance seating. Less weight and fewer materials means less fuel for transport, fewer resources for production and less environmental impact. Weighing only 13 kilograms, Steelcase Karman is one of the lightest work chairs in the industry.

Think
Steelcase

Think reimagined what an office chair could do, and how sustainable it could be. Designed with fewer parts for quick and easy disassembly, the Think chair can be taken apart in just five minutes for recycling. A pioneer of sustainability, Think was the first furniture product in the world to receive Cradle-to-Cradle certification, and recycled content makes up roughly a quarter of the chair's weight. Today, Think offers a new breadth of style choices that are warm and sophisticated, including monochromatic color schemes and lux metallic finishes.

Volum Art Recycling Station
Steelcase

The Volum Art Recycling Station features uniquely shaped, interchangeable inserts with icons that provide clear direction for disposal and recycling. Its replaceable top is available in multiple surface materials: paper, plastic, aluminum, glass, and recycled waste.

Migration SE
Steelcase

The Migration SE height-adjustable desk is lighter than most other desks available, without sacrificing durability. Supporting a broad range of applications, its modular kit of parts provides flexibility for update and reuse possibilities.

Do Better
Orangebox

Designed with circularity in mind, the Orangebox Do Better task chair is made with 58% recycled materials and 98% of the overall chair is recyclable. Made of fewer parts and materials, Do Better promotes resource efficiency with a low carbon footprint.

Steelcase Flex Acoustic Boundary
Steelcase

Steelcase Flex Acoustic Boundary offers lightweight portability and end-of-life recyclability. Assembled with cardboard, PET cover and a zipper, it is easy to configure and disassemble. Its simple and flat packaging allows for efficient shipping.

Steelcase Flex Perch Stool
Steelcase

Through a partnership with BASF, Steelcase Flex Perch is the first furniture product to use a sustainable innovation called Chem-Cycling or Ccycling™. This process transforms a waste stream from electronics production that would have been incinerated into a like-new raw material needed for high-quality products, which is also 100% recyclable. The process reduces waste and reliance on fossil fuel resources.

Funda
Viccarbe

The Funda collection is made to last — designed with metal structures and a replaceable upholstered seat to extend the product's lifecycle. Stefan Diez, the designer behind the Funda collection, actively champions the principles of the circular economy. The chair, armchair and stool are all constructed to be easily recycled. The metal and fabric may be recycled independently, reducing waste and fostering a more circular economy.

Steelcase Flex Active Frames

Steelcase

The modular design of Steelcase Flex Active Frames allows for easy reconfiguration and transformation, minimizing waste by reusing the existing structure and components. Steelcase Flex Active Frames ensure a longer product life while being simple to disassemble. When their useful life is over, easy disassembly means it's more likely to be recycled.

New! Carbon Neutral Seating

Steelcase

As we work to reduce our impact on the environment, we know other organizations are seeking ways to do the same. We've widened our CarbonNeutral® product certification options to some of our best work chairs in EMEA. Each of these products with CarbonNeutral® product certification supports trusted projects through Climate Impact Partners that slow climate change and deliver social impact.

B-Free Cube

Steelcase

The B-Free Cube is made from locally supplied wood from PEFC controlled sources. It uses a non-added formaldehyde (NAF) resin, resulting in extremely low formaldehyde levels, making it a safe and environmentally conscious choice for all spaces.

Seed

Bolia

Bolia, the Scandinavian design company, asks its designers to incorporate sustainable solutions into the development of all their products. This applies to durability, choice of materials, construction, component design and overall climate footprint. Made from 85% recycled plastic and FSC®-certified wood, the Seed armchair combines modern style with sustainability. It promotes reuse of materials, less waste and responsible sourcing.

Steelcase Work Tents

Steelcase

Steelcase Work Tents reduce transport emissions through compact packaging and efficient stacking. Crafted for longevity, every part is easily disassembled, from the aluminum poles to the fabric and connectors. Even style changes are eco-friendly – replace fabric separately and reuse the structure, reflecting our commitment to a more sustainable future.

Campers&Dens

Orangebox

Designed for circularity, Orangebox Campers&Dens are easily refreshable and repurposable, providing acoustic privacy solutions without requiring permanent architecture. These easily relocatable pods structures feature reusability at their core. Careful material selections offer an environmentally friendly palette of fabrics, high recycled content aluminum, recycled plastics and Poplar plywood. Crafted without gluing, stapling, and with separable assemblies, they're repairable and recyclable.

Explore ways to design spaces for the wellbeing of people and the planet with Steelcase and our Community of Brands

Closing the Loop

Steelcase supports Gabriel's ambitious recycling program with up to 17 tons of material scraps per year.

The amount of waste flooding our planet plays a major part in the climate crisis. Textile waste contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Only a fraction of the 92 million tons of textile waste produced each year worldwide is reused or recycled. The remainder finds its way to landfills or incinerators. As people become more aware of this daunting problem, the demand for sustainable fabrics in all business sectors – including the furniture industry – is growing.

Steelcase works to reduce its impact on the environment throughout the entire product design and delivery process. Collaboration is key in implementing sustainable solutions that have a real impact on our planet.

Steelcase has been relentlessly looking for innovative fabric solutions as part of its long-standing commitments to designing for circularity and choosing and using materials responsibly. In the United States, the company started to explore ways to recycle fabric scraps from its own production process as early as 2011. In 2017, with the help of its supplier Duvaltex, Steelcase introduced the New Black collection: a range of sustainable fabrics made of scrap panel fabric and PET from recycled bottles.

Inspired by this successful – and sustainable – partnership, teams at the Steelcase Sarrebourg manufacturing facility in France, which produces chairs for Europe, the Middle-East and Africa, looked for a local partner who shared this same ambition. "We started discussions with our textile supplier Gabriel, who was in the process of designing a revolutionary textile-to-textile recycling program and was in need of a partner to provide them with textile waste," recalls Andrea Korsten, Steelcase product manager. "It was a perfect match."

The textile waste is shredded, pelletized and mixed with recycled polyester from plastic bottles to create the yarn that is used for the Gabriel Loop fabric.

"It is time to leave the throwaway culture behind and embrace waste as a valuable resource."

Jeppe Emil Mogensen,
Design Director
Gabriel

Gabriel's vision was to design a fabric that would come from used materials – including textile waste – and could be recycled again and again to create new textiles. "It is time to leave the throwaway culture behind and embrace waste as a valuable resource," explains Jeppe Emil Mogensen, design director at Gabriel.

Gabriel's goal is three-fold: to create an eco-friendly range of products, to ensure the same quality standards as any other Gabriel fabric and to create a beautiful design that would appeal to a wide variety of customers. "It's this combination of sustainability, functionality and aesthetics that makes Loop so unique," adds Mogensen.

To play a meaningful part in Gabriel's take-back system, the Steelcase plant in Sarrebourg had to define a well-thought-out waste management process, including fabric scraps sorting and collection, as well as exploring ways these could be compacted and transported.

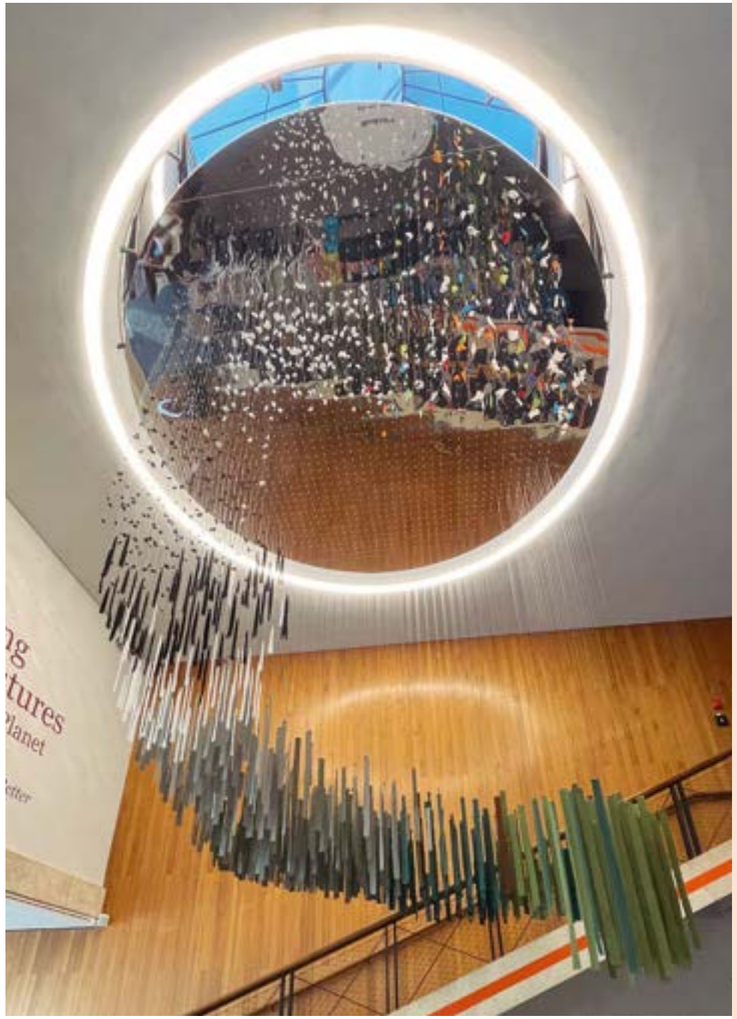
Once delivered to Gabriel's recycling unit, the textile waste-bales from Steelcase's manufacturing plant are shredded and melted into pellets, which are then mixed with post-consumer recycled polyester from used plastic bottles. These materials are melted again and spun into a new yarn, which can then follow Gabriel's usual production process. The result is a new textile made entirely of waste.

"It took about one year for the Sarrebourg team to implement the project as the process requires a lot of preparation and knowhow," underlines Christophe Bonnet, quality engineer at Steelcase. "We carried out a number of tests to identify which fabrics could be part of that take-back system, and we reconfigured the cutting production line to make room for the containers. We also trained employees to recognize the right scraps among 100 different fabrics and meticulously remove any elements, like plastic or paper, that could pollute the process. This step is critical – if not done very carefully, it could compromise the ability for Gabriel to reuse the material."

"Gabriel Loop is truly a circular solution that strives to make the best possible design decision that does the least amount of damage possible to our planet," says Mogensen. Convinced that this closed-loop system is the right way forward, Steelcase is now exploring more ways to design for circularity, including recycling more fabrics and involving additional manufacturing facilities in the take-back system. "Designing out waste, building long-lasting products and supporting responsible end-of-life management is our way of helping to create a more sustainable future," explains Korsten.

Read the article online

Gabriel Loop closes the loop by transforming textile waste into new textile products. Offering a timeless and beautiful design, it is available in a wide range of colors.



"Closing the Loop" art installation by Steelcase, created intentionally for the 2023 DLD Circular Conference. Made from textile and plastic waste, recycled yarn and the Gabriel Loop fabric.

Introducing Poonam Bir Katsuri

Founder, Daily Dump

Poonam Bir Katsuri founded Daily Dump in India which creates hand-crafted composting containers. Work Better talked with Poonam about her notion that design and business can be forces for good.

WB: Tell us about the journey that led you to start Daily Dump (dailydump.org).
PK: As an industrial design student in India, we talked about how design could change the world, and what it could mean to each of us. That stuck with me, and after I finished school I wanted to answer that question for myself – how can design intersect with the real world? It was during this internal inquiry and my exposure to the small-scale, industry crafts and batch production in India that all of my learnings came together into this clear vision of a need. There may not have been a demand, but I knew there was a need. That's when I started to prototype the first home composter in the country – made by craftspeople, not in a factory.

WB: Why focus on food waste, as opposed to plastics or electronics?
PK: Food waste is 60% of our waste stream. I knew food waste can become circular much more easily than plastic. People can also see the circularity of food waste happening tangibly in their homes – they can witness what it means to 'close the loop,' and be connected to the earth. Food waste is also about 70% water. Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay to truck what's essentially water to a landfill, which creates methane.

WB: What impact has your business made in your country?
PK: We have opened the doors – created the pathway and designed a movement – to legitimize the idea of decentralized waste management. Because we took a business risk that opened up these conversations, we now find people following us through those doors, and we've seen that circularity has become the norm for them. That's our contribution and impact.

WB: Why did you decide to use handmade pottery from craftspeople instead of more efficient and functional manufacturing?
PK: There is a sentiment in India that if you're educated or have money, someone else should handle your waste. Dignity of labor is a big issue and I come from a family where we believe there's nothing wrong with doing your own work. For us, supporting craftspeople who work with their hands is a priority. Secondly, it's about changing minds. If we're just building another dustbin, it'll just be another dustbin in your mind and you'll just treat it like one. We wanted to change people's minds and behaviors, so we needed to create a new space in people's minds that speaks to regeneration – a new energy. This is a new space and so we had to give it a form and material linked to a deep and meaningful archetype in India – clay and pottery have that significant resonance in India.

Last Words

Diversity in business models is an important thing to have. You need MBAs starting businesses. But you also need foolish people like me. Because even if people think they don't need something, you need people to say 'yes, you need composting.' We built this business and had to convince people they needed it. That's why I think in today's world more foolishness is needed in business.

Hear more of our conversation with Poonam in our Work Better podcast. Season 3 launches October 24 anywhere you get your podcasts.

Inclusive Design

Designers, leaders and even inclusive design advocates often ask, “How do we balance everyone’s needs when they are very different?” Or, “Who do we listen to when there are competing needs?” These questions come up often because what might support an equitable experience for one group, may also create challenges for another.

There is no single solution, but there is power in understanding “tensions” or competing priorities.

As organizations partner with advocates and DEI leaders, the opportunity to create more inclusive experiences has never been greater. People expect better as we come together in space to collaborate, learn and be productive. By considering these tensions and working alongside traditionally excluded perspectives and communities, leaders can be proactive and notice when decisions do not support the full spectrum of needs that exists — resulting in a mismatch or exclusion. Through our work we have identified five key design tensions to consider when designing for inclusivity (see Design Tensions table to right).

Asking, “how can space empower and accommodate,” is how we can start to reimagine solutions and intentionally co-create inclusive experiences or destination spaces that align and reinforce a culture of equity and accessibility.

“Designing for inclusivity creates an opportunity to make a collective impact,” says Meg Bennett, Steelcase global design principal. When you understand the unique needs of one, you recognize synergies and solutions that can be scaled to many.”

Contributor:
Kamara Sudberry
Leader, Inclusive Design,
Steelcase

Design Tensions

Universal
Design for all ability levels, without the need for adaptation.

Targeted
Design for a group of individuals with very specific needs.

One size does not fit all — accessibility also means creating inclusive destinations for unique needs + situations.

Wellbeing for All
Wellbeing is communal — it’s impacted by our relationships, communities and environments.

Wellbeing for Me
Wellbeing is also a practice people can cultivate and develop when given the right space and tools.

An environment that balances the me + we in wellbeing is proven to reduce stress and cultivate a healthy, resilient community.

Hyposensitive
The experience of being less sensitive and less likely to recognize and respond to stimuli. Preference for more sensory input from the environment.

Hypersensitive
The experience of being highly sensitive to sensory stimuli. Preference for a controlled, predictable, “sensory-friendly” environment.

Sensitivities can change frequently and people need to be able to control their environments to reduce triggers and stressors that lead to disorientation, fatigue, irritability and shutting down.

Flexible
Accommodating a wide range of preferences and abilities is critical to accessibility, and helps people make the space their own.

Predictable
Predictability helps people prepare and plan their day and reduce stress.

Although flexibility helps eliminate barriers, flexibility without predictability can lead to confusion and cognitive overload.

Connect
Meaningful connections to others sustain people and combat loneliness, a growing health concern.

Protect
Physical and psychological safety are essential needs — all people need places for privacy, solitude and respite.

As we design for connection and collaboration, we should also seek to make people feel protected, safe and secure through our choices.

Balancing Tensions

To help people reconnect, organizations are hosting large gatherings in expansive spaces, where everyone can come together. But the experience may not be right for all.

Before
In this central gathering hub, a diversity of people assemble, yet the space offers only one way to experience the event. The equality of the experience creates exclusion, limiting individual accommodation and leaving many feeling left out or uncomfortable. Bennett and her team explored the design tensions and identified how space can create a more equitable experience.

After

1. High back individual lounge chairs provide the protection, psychological comfort and reduce visual distractions in the open. Standing-height tables provide choice so people can sit, perch or stand to support movement.
2. Elements like architectural walls, or built-in features define a space providing a level of predictability, which is as critical as flexibility.
3. Shielded nooks provide a feeling of safety and comfort. Round table seating provides good sightlines and stackable, lightweight chairs allow quick reconfiguration and improve accessibility.
4. A defined area allows people to feel protected, grounded and able to self-soothe. Low seating provides additional options. Tables with integrated seating that swivels 360 degrees allow for movement and fidgeting.
5. A raised level for presenters allows better visibility. Swivel seating allows movement and mobile technology supports equity.

Building Belonging at Neiman Marcus

High-end fashion retailer Neiman Marcus says employee wellbeing and belonging aren't luxuries — they're essential. The company's new Dallas hub captures the same luxurious feeling customers experience in their stores with the goal of "making life extraordinary" for its associates.

It's clear when you arrive at Neiman Marcus' new corporate hub at CityPlace Tower in Dallas, this is no ordinary workplace. Not only is it beautiful and welcoming, the hybrid space has everything the company's remote-first teams need to get work done and feel good while doing it. Designed to support equity goals, anyone, regardless of their position can use any space. Associates can choose from a diverse range of spaces that allow flexibility and autonomy. "We've embraced a model that's not one size fits all, but rather one size fits one," says Neiman Marcus Chief People, ESG and Belonging Officer Eric Severson. "We've optimized our real estate to allow people to work where they feel comfortable and can be most productive. The key is cultivating an environment that provides equity and flexibility so people can do their best work. This freedom and choice is empowering, allowing everyone to thrive and advance in their career."

"The hub serves as a magnet, not a mandate," says Severson. The space is designed to create community and support teamwork, innovation and creativity, for both in-person and remote participants. Collaboration spaces are equipped with virtual tools and technology so everyone can see and be heard. "The technology we built into our spaces is the great equalizer," says Severson. "We made sure that no matter where our associates are working, we support them effectively and they can contribute because they can really be present in virtual meetings. This levels the playing field."

"We designed the hub to feel the same for our associates as our stores feel for customers. We want it to feel luxurious – and I don't mean expensive but personalized luxury that makes everyone feel special."

Eric Severson
Chief People, ESG + Belonging Officer

Five beautifully-designed lounges, each representing one of Neiman Marcus' iconic store locations in San Francisco, New York, Miami, Chicago and Dallas, create places where associates can find respite, make connections, share ideas and build trust.

Collaboration spaces are equipped with monitors, cameras and speakers to effectively support mixed presence so everyone can contribute equally and be present in virtual meetings.

The Dallas hub brings associates together where they can effectively build relationships and collaborate, as well as do individual work. Workstations with height-adjustable desks, ergonomic seating and screens to control privacy support associate's physical and cognitive wellbeing.

Learning by Doing

"For the first time in education, I feel like I am telling the truth to students. We truly are student-centered."

Khaaliq Salim
Director of the Danforth Campus

Filled with natural sunlight, bright pops of color and a sleek blend of wood, stone and other natural elements, Francis Tuttle's Danforth Campus in Edmond, Oklahoma is designed to spark creativity and encourage students to ideate, explore and problem solve together like never before.

Whether training to be a doctor, engineer, mechanic or hairstylist, Francis Tuttle is designed to offer a wide range of hands-on learning experiences and serve a diverse student body. You won't find rigid rows of clunky desks in classrooms at the Danforth Campus. This school was literally built for collaboration – where every space is a learning space. Desks and chairs on wheels allow students to easily change the orientation of the classroom, pushing their desks together for teamwork and idea sharing.

"The great thing about our students is they choose to be here," says Khaaliq Salim, director of the Danforth Campus. "They said, 'I want to be an engineer, a doctor or a nurse.' They took on that challenge and we're tasked with helping them get to that next level."

"Students need to work with each other. They need to understand the value of teamwork," says Salim. "Our furniture and spaces make it easy to recognize what learning should look like." The building is brimming with flexible furniture that creates open spaces for group gatherings and solo focus. Work tables, wheeled whiteboards, and expansive couches provide plenty of space for group brainstorms or one-on-one interactions. Pods and quiet enclaves offer spots to tackle individual tasks.

"The physical space helps us understand we're on that next level," says student Maira Arshad. "Whatever we do, it's always collaborative, everyone has to work together and talk together and that gets me really close to my peers."

Learn more about how the Francis Tuttle campus sparks creativity and encourages students to ideate, explore and problem solve together.

More Learning Solutions

+ **Steelcase Flex Single Table**
Steelcase

+ **WorkValet™**
Steelcase

Inspiration

Steelcase Karman ®
A light impact on the planet at just 13 kilograms, Steelcase Karman uses the least components necessary and is one of the lightest task chairs in the industry. It goes beyond leading mesh office chairs with 21st century design that naturally responds to a body's movement, delivering industry-leading comfort, ergonomics and sustainability.

"Steelcase Karman is the amalgam of all our learning and legacy – there's DNA of every single one of our chairs built into it. It's the evolution of everything we know about seating and the way people work."

Mark Spoelhof
Design Director, Global Seating
Steelcase

Find out more about Karman