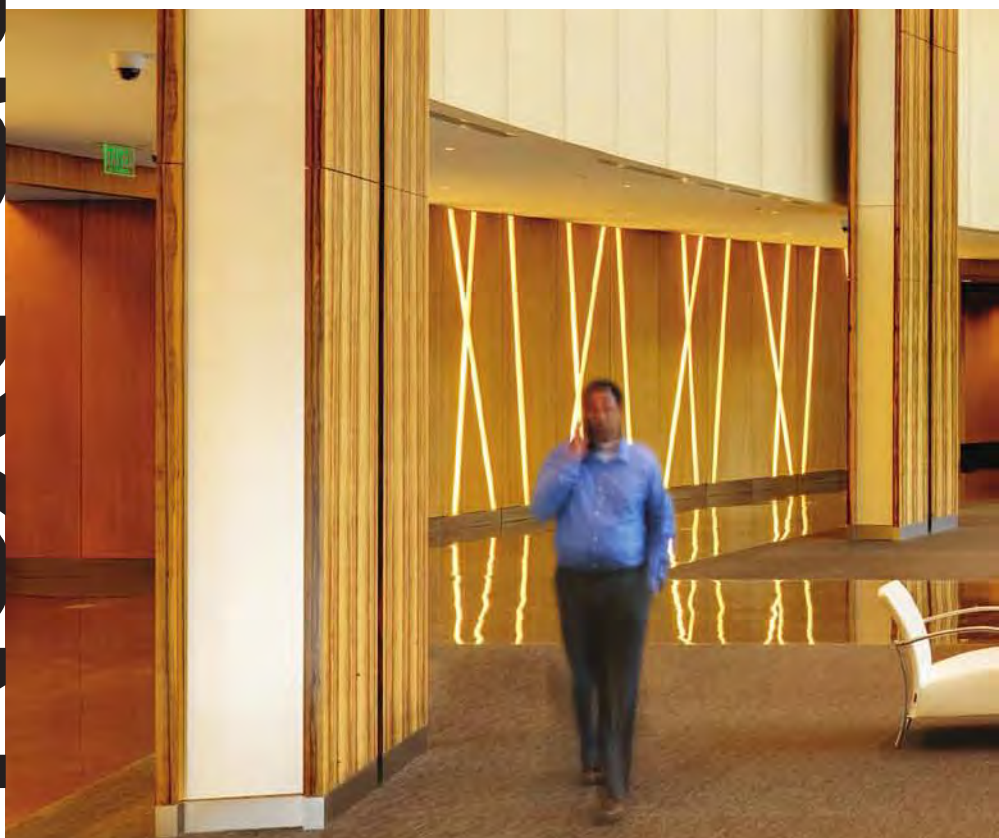




Downtown office buildings, once the domain of buttoned-down financiers, executives and attorneys, face a seismic demographic shift as tenants radically change. By 2020, generation Y employees born between 1979 and 1994 will be roughly 50 percent of the U.S. workforce. By 2030, their presence will grow to 75 percent of the global workforce.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

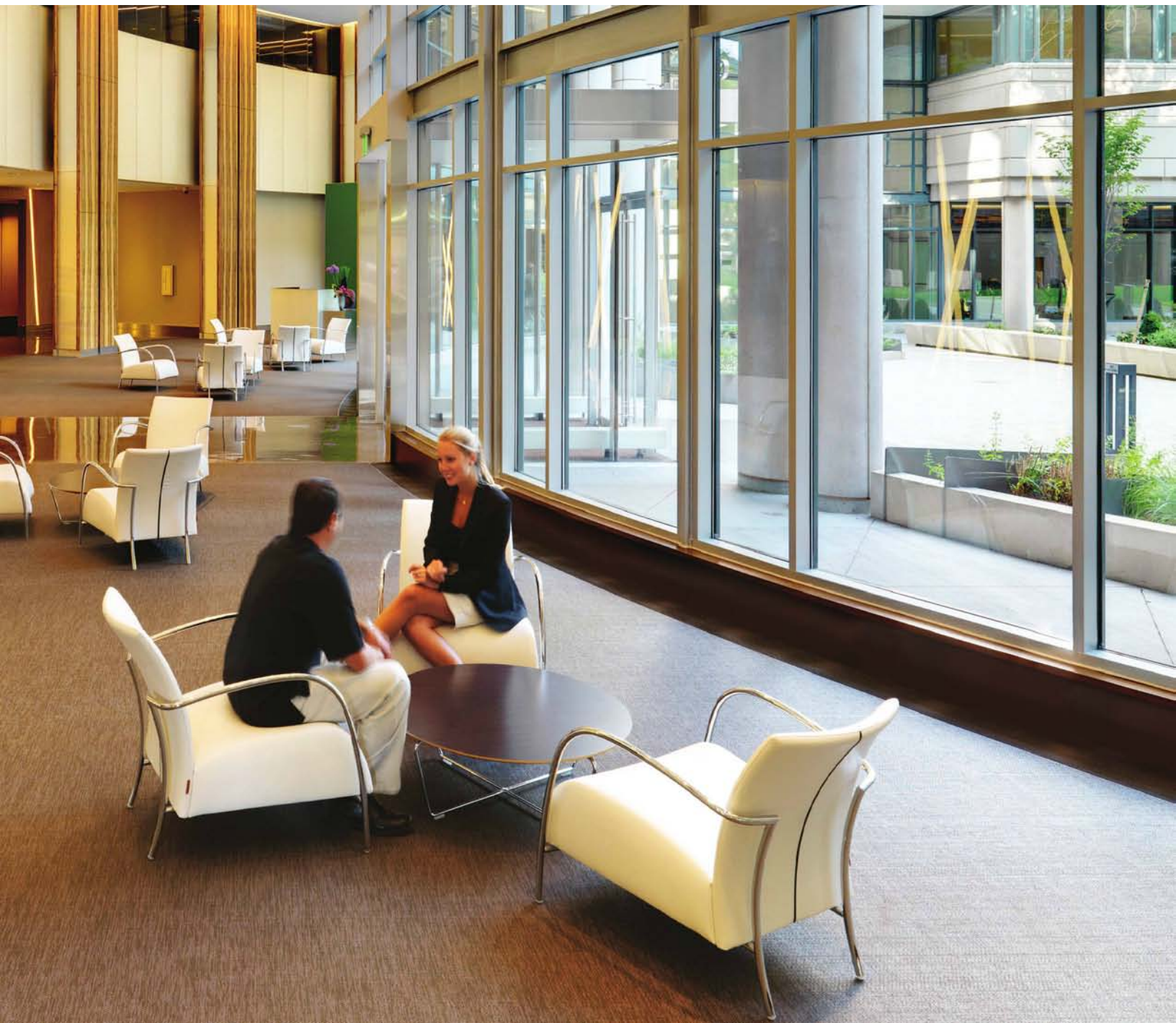
Next-Gen Lobbies




With impressive views and access to natural light, the new contemporary design of the lobby at One Rogers Street embraces nature with its use of limba wood panels and warm natural tones. Lomas lounge chairs from Montis, Conic coffee tables from Allermuir and textile-inspired flooring from Bolon complete the space.



To attract a new generation of knowledge workers and their tech company employers, commercial owners are investing in new lobby designs to reposition and rebrand. How can the buildings of yesterday become buildings for tomorrow?





A beautifully lit glass wall reflects the Boston skyline and natural light into the boutique-feeling One Memorial Drive lobby. Its color changes throughout the day; it is also programmed with color scenes for key occasions and holidays. Leather club chairs from Rudin, coffee tables from Carolina and area rugs from Karastan create a hip yet comfortable place to socialize and work.



Findings from a Knoll research initiative, "Generational Preferences: a Glimpse into the Future Office," reveal two key characteristics of these next-gen knowledge workers:

- ▶ Generation Y views work as an "experience" and seeks an engaging work environment supporting a wide choice of work styles, regardless of location.
- ▶ This generation seeks connection to others, especially their peers. They value group work and learning, and have a deep desire for teamwork and collaboration.

They are also increasingly interested in working in the city, lured by the promise of diverse career experiences and the opportunity to connect with others. Consequently, a new wave of enterprising companies is moving into urban office buildings, in large part to recruit and retain these next-gen employees. Traditional tenant companies already downtown are competing to hire the same demographic: young, highly educated and digitally savvy.

In a race to attract the right tenants, building owners are investing precious capital into existing building stock, updating lobbies, plazas and tenant amenities. These repositioning and rebranding initiatives should be done strategically, securing the best "bang for the buck" with an understanding of what can and should be done. First-phase improvements should be based on evaluating market conditions and defining the results for future revenue, occupancy and tenant satisfaction.

ADDING VALUE

The central objective of any repositioning, large or small, is to add value for the tenants, and in doing so, add to the asset value and appeal of the building. We at CBT Architects begin repositioning projects by asking a series of questions to help our client identify clear goals and gain consensus on competing aspirations. Proper scenario planning, done with key decision makers at the table, provides the owner with a range of budget projections and options, allowing them to weigh the project's scale versus the expected return on dollars spent.

A recent example of this process can be found in 53 State Street, a LEED Gold, Class A office building in the heart of Boston's financial district where the owner had a strong anchor tenant desiring a building upgrade. The building includes a blend of old and new Boston. It integrates a modern, 40-story glass tower built in the mid-'80s and the adjacent granite and marble Boston Stock Exchange built in 1896.

Facing upcoming lease renewals for major tenants and a need to attract new companies coming into

CONTINUED ON PAGE 66



Coffee tables from Cumberland and distinctive curved seating upholstered in leathers from Moore & Giles and Enrico Pellizzoni make the lobby of 53 State Street feel more like that of an urban hotel than an office building.



CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOBBY REPOSITIONING

ARRIVAL, ENTRY + LOBBY

- Remember: first impressions are everything!
- What is the front door to security desk to office space experience like?
- How does this experience become memorable?

SIGNAGE, IDENTITY + BRAND

- Do people know who and where you are?
- What defines your building's brand? Tenant demographic? Ownership? Location/neighborhood?
- Does it need to be redefined or refreshed?

AMENITIES

- Includes café, fitness, retail and shared conference space.
- What are your tenant offerings?
- Can ownership easily implement amenities to attract/retain tenants?
- Can the amenity generate revenue?

PUBLIC PLACES

- Includes roof decks, courtyards and plazas.
- Can you maximize unused spaces?
- How can you create a green marketing strategy or sustain the existing LEED designation?

BASE BUILDING UPGRADES

- What is the market demand for the building?
- Does it make sense to convert multi-tenant floors to single service, or vice versa?
- Does the building need systems or core upgrades (MEP/FP, elevator modernization, ADA updates)?

SECURITY + CIRCULATION

- Is the desk at the best location?
- Do you need security turnstiles?
- What is the path from front door to elevator?
- Have you performed an ADA, access and egress path analysis?

FURNITURE, LIGHTING + ART

- Can you replace and refresh lobby furniture?
- Can you increase both natural and artificial light levels?
- Can you add or replace artwork to be more contemporary or current?
- Have you considered a rotating art or public art program?



The lobby at One Memorial Drive includes a vibrant café with a view of the city. Tall ceilings and ample natural light make it a hub of activity.

the city, owners UBS Realty Investors began to explore options for repositioning.

Working with UBS and its real estate advisory group, the design team reviewed multiple scenarios. The selected design option involved a rebranding of 11,000 square feet of underused street-level space. Surveying tenants, an overwhelming consensus emerged to convert these passive spaces into a more active destination.

“Our tenants were definitely looking for a comfortable touchdown area for their guests, more spaces to meet and a more social environment in the lobby,” says James Zilora, director of asset management for UBS Realty Investment, advisors to the building’s ownership. “The composition of our tenant companies was changing dramatically, with more tech-oriented and socially-conscious firms and a younger demographic.”

The opportunity within 53 State was to create something new: an inviting workspace and meeting hub at the lobby level, with spaces designed to serve as an extension of the offices upstairs. “With so many companies going to an open office layout with higher densities, having access to functional and comfortable common space in the building is becoming more important,” Zilora notes.

The design team was able to transform the underused lobby into a new “great room” for tenants and visitors—a central hub for social interaction, dining and people watching. The design translation feels more like the lobby of a cool boutique hotel than an office building. The lobby now features

meeting spaces, curved walls, Wi-Fi connections, a media bar and a café.

The tenant response to the new spaces and lobby amenities has made the project an unqualified success, according to Zilora. “The seating in the lobby is in use all day long, and there’s always an informal meeting taking place,” he says. “The design solution perfectly brought together the old and the new, preserving the high-quality finishes that were in place and adding exactly the right elements to warm up the space and soften it so it appeals to today’s tenants.”

INTEGRATING NATURE

Integrating indoor and outdoor space is another repositioning strategy applied in both urban and suburban locations. At One Rogers Street, a Class A office building in tech-centric Cambridge, Mass., an ambitious rebranding program transformed a former corporate headquarters into a multi-tenant technology center.

“The building had a serious identity crisis in the broker community and with potential tenants,” recalls Kevin Stubbs, director of architecture and engineering for Principal Real Estate Investors, the building’s owners. “We had a property known only as a former headquarters. It was seen as two separate buildings and had two addresses. The lobby and courtyard were underutilized and dated, to say the least.”

Principal and CBT undertook a comprehensive strategic plan to evaluate the market opportunities and review options for a repositioning program that


would help attract the target demographic: life science, R&D, technology and consulting firms. From this planning, a big idea emerged: By treating the large courtyard space as an integral extension of the lobby, the brand identity could be dramatically changed by creating a destination filled with life, color and light.

Today, the interiors at One Rogers are flooded with daylight. A reflective back-painted glass wall and a nature-inspired, LED-lit wood feature combine to increase the lobby's depth and height while mirroring the external elevations of the building. A popular café and fitness center extend to the east connecting all key public spaces. Exterior courtyard seating expands the lobby experience outdoors.

"CBT tailored the program to meet the demographic future by providing an edgier look and feel with simple, clean lines and a green-oriented image. It's a home run for us," Stubbs says. The repositioning has elevated the building among its competition, generated positive broker feedback, improved energy efficiency and increased the occupancy of technology-based companies.

Equity Office, with a portfolio that includes 70 million square feet of Class A office space in the United States, recently invested in a repositioning of 60 State Street, one of Boston's most prominent office towers. Built in the 1970s, the lobby suffered from its small size and lack of natural light.

"We invited input from tenants on what they wanted to see, and learned how important the lobby image is when they decide to lease or renew," says John Conley, senior vice president of asset management for Equity. "Our goal was to attract more tech companies who can appreciate the building, plus keep the tried-and-true companies that have always been downtown. Today we have a broad range of tenants looking at the building, including everyone from digital advertising firms to traditional financial service companies."

As collaboration and social experience become more important to tenants, office buildings can finally unbutton those starched collars and become beloved destinations for all generations. By taking a strategic approach to implementing high-impact renovations, designers can provide solutions that alter perceptions, advance brand identity, and improve a building's revenue and market value. 

Haril Pandya, AIA, LEED AP is a principal at CBT Architects in Boston with two decades of experience planning and designing corporate, hospitality, mixed-use and retail projects. He specializes in the strategic rebranding, repurposing and repositioning of urban and suburban commercial buildings.

BELOW A new café fills an underused corner of the 53 State Street lobby, creating a popular gathering space while also generating revenue in a previously vacant space.



ABOVE A lush new landscape was created for the threshold of the building entry at One Rogers Street. It offers new park structures and areas to gather in, such as this custom teak trellis and ipe bench.

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