

A Softer, Gentler Workplace

How amenities, Gen Z, and the outdoor office
are changing the way we work and play together





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6. MDC: Digital Curated Wallcoverings

The analogue and digital worlds collide in MDC's new Digital Curated series, which comprises digital wallcoverings designed to echo our experiences beyond the built environment. The collection features 37 patterns that reference everything from festivals to technology and nature.

mdcwall.com

7. JANUS et Cie: Pivot Daybed

Equipped with wheels, this canopied daybed boasts zealous rotation and increased mobility as well as seamless adjustability to accommodate users no matter the time of day.

janusetcie.com

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The Next Frontier: Go Outside!

By Paul Makovsky

Neocon Show unveils ‘The NeoCon Plaza’— a new experiential outdoor environment.

A rendering of the NeoCon Plaza, a new outdoor amenity space that spans the length of The Mart’s South Drive in Chicago. Designed by Gensler Chicago and brought to life in collaboration with Forward Fruit Branded Environments, the space will offer visitors a place to connect, relax, recharge, and enjoy the outdoors, with a backdrop featuring sweeping views of the Chicago River, Riverwalk, and Chicago cityscape.

As any visitor to NeoCon knows, the world’s leading platform for commercial design serves as a great resource for any designer or C-suite executive looking to figure out what’s next in the industry. One new need-to-know development shaping the future of workplace design is the rise of the outdoor office. To explore this trend, The Mart is launching the NeoCon Plaza, a new outdoor amenity space that spans the length of The Mart’s South Drive.

Designed by Gensler Chicago, and brought to life in collaboration with Forward Fruit Branded Environments, the space will offer visitors a place to connect, collaborate, recharge, and enjoy the outdoors, with a backdrop featuring sweeping views of the Chicago River, Riverwalk, and Chicago cityscape.

According to Todd Heiser, managing director and principal of Gensler Chicago, “An effective workplace is critical, but it’s no longer enough. Employees want, and expect, an excellent experience at work, which means spaces with high levels of choice, variety, and balance. Adding an outdoor element is another step in the evolution of choice and it is with this philosophy that we approached the NeoCon Plaza.”



As companies compete to attract top talent, workplace design is the go-to recruiting tool. "Current and future talent will weigh their job options more critically, so leadership teams need to appeal to their people with creative workspaces, in-house amenities, and communal spaces and offices that bring their people together," Heiser says.

Inspired by the idea of "The Urban Boardwalk," the NeoCon Plaza will provide a welcome outdoor oasis. Social and ancillary spaces will be furnished by brands such as Haworth, Janus et Cie, and Cappellini, and feature an extensive range of offerings from lounge seating and height-adjustable tables to outdoor furnishings. Sunbrella's high-performance fabrics will be featured on lounge seating, pillows, and shade features, demonstrating how durable and fade-resistant fabrics meet demanding commercial needs. The outdoor environment also will feature carpets designed and supplied by Interface, all made with ECONYL yarn.

The spotlight on the outdoor workspace will continue throughout the building with top manufacturers offering outdoor-minded solutions—from permanent showrooms including Haworth (312), Extremis/Steelcase (300/301),

Arper (346), Janus et Cie (1420/310A), Tucci (1507), MAMAGREEN (1586), and Kanna (1598), to seventh-floor exhibitors including Sunbrella (7-7054), Chilewich (7-7030), emuamericas (7-4086), Pedrali (7-5050), and Lonseal Flooring (7-9106).

The idea of utilizing the outdoors to work, collaborate, and improve one's wellbeing will also be addressed in NeoCon's conference program. On the morning of Monday, June 10, Leah Bauer, IIDA, ASID, IFMA, interior design director and practice leader of HDR, will lead a presentation with Assal Yavari, CID, associate director, facilities and operations of Gilead Sciences, on "Outdoor Workplace Evolution (M112)" and the results of their partnered efforts to shift culture through data. That afternoon, Heiser and Paul Makovsky, editor in chief of *Contract* magazine, will explore the topic of "The Outdoor Office: The Next Big Thing (M128)." Their conversation will focus on how biophilic design creates a more productive, creative, and happier workforce, and the opportunities and challenges involved in creating outdoor workspaces—from new codes to specifying the appropriate products for these spaces. c

