THE THIRD PLACE: A MIXED-USE BUILDING FOR OFFICE WORKERS IN THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Mingming Zhao

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The Third Place
A mixed-use building for office workers in the central business district
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Mingming Zhao

B.A. English Studies with International Business
The University of Nottingham Ningbo China, 2015
M.F.A. Interior Environments
Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017

To the teachers who inspired and guided me
Alejandro Arroyo
Chalsee Altman
Sara Reed
Katherine Belew
Callen Blanken
Alex Zhang
Karen Silvestri
Bri Smith
Kendra Smith
Hilary Ries

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Alexis Holcombe
Heather Overby
Lucy Dabney

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Yang Liu
Xilin Chen
Xiran Yang
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Sara Reed
Eleanor Barton
Camden Whitehead
Jillian Chapin
Jennifer Fell
Rob Smith
Emily Smith
Hillary Fayle
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manifesto

“I believe that the way people live can be directed a little by architecture.”

—— Tadao Ando.

I believe... less, but better.

If I aim to design, I must be honest to materials, be critical to “truth”, and be brave to move beyond the traditional and accepted. Embracing the constraints of nature as a jumping off point, not a barrier.

Speaking in a design voice that is respectful of humanity, mindful of our planet and influences those who interact with my solution to be mindful as well.
Work-related stress is an issue of growing concern around the world. The relationship between work stress and individuals’ psychological and physical health is well acknowledged. In the survey of “stress in the workplace” conducted by American Psychological Association in 2012, two in five (41%) of employed adults report that they typically feel stressed during the workday, up from 36% in 2011, while less than six in ten (58%) report that they have the resources to manage work stress.

Historically, Central Business Districts are a focal point of cities, and are occupied by a large group of office buildings and a number of retail spaces. According to Elsbach and Bechky (2007), office workers regularly leave their offices in search of more relaxed, creative environments. However, there is limited “third space” to serve office workers’ daily life in the central business district.

Most of the design research about wellness of office workers have done focus on the spaces in which people work during office hours. Consideration for office workers in the CBD after office hours is relatively rare. What else is needed to support the life of the office worker, and what kind of spaces they are looking for after hours.

Several primary research methods were adopted. First, a survey of research on how the design of traditionally planned CBD fails to support wellness of office workers was made. Then, the thesis examined what is needed to support the wellness of office workers. In order to make it specific to the office workers in the CBD of Richmond, qualitative methodology, including interviews and observation, were used. Two qualitative interviews were conducted with an LCDT employee and an architect of the Shibaura House, located in the business district of Tokyo in Japan.

There are three aims in this research. First is the design of a series of mixed-use spaces in an existing building in the Central Business District of Richmond, Virginia. The wellness of the office workers in the CBD of Richmond, and try to define the CBD in a new way.

The preliminary results for this research indicate the importance of the CBD for office workers, after hours. The typical effect of the mixed use building on reducing work stress, improving office workers’ health and enhancing wellness of office workers.
The original idea for this project is to design a mixed-use building for the office workers after office hours. In the process of researching, I kept finding existing projects all over the world with the similar starting point as mine. For example, the Shibaura House in Tokyo, which is my spirit for mixed-use spaces. Another referential project is the Hive On 16th in Denver, it has quite similar operation mode for public spaces and proposed to use for my project.

For the thesis project, it aims to change the single form of the central business district in Richmond, and improve the wellness of office workers. Therefore, the keywords for my research were mixed-use building, office workers, wellness, pressure reducing, co-working spaces, and sustainability.
The Shibaura House represents a new spirit for mixed-use spaces. It is a multistory building containing flexible workshop spaces which provide diverse areas within the various levels. It is capable of supporting a wide range of functions and activities, and individuals or groups may hold meetings, conferences, events, lectures and exhibitions within the unique interior and terraced plan arrangements. The way of mingling different programs but also making them be relatively independent is what I am looking for in the thesis project.
“What I really like is the mix of people using the space during their lunch hours. Here businessmen are having meetings, over here mothers converse, and in another area young employees like us. It is wonderful to see all these things happening in one space, and it is even more amazing that we have managed to create this in the middle of the city.”

The first floor is equipped with a kitchen and drinking and eating is possible. It is great for a party. Above it, suitable for talks and workshops, the second floor is a really comfortable space, when using the first floor for a party. It is also a fitting space for a small exhibition as there is natural light from the southern terrace. The third floor is gently divided into two spaces, by a glass window and the terrace, which is suitable for presentations and seminars.
The A21 house is a stylish traditional Asian studio with multilevel construct which uses natural sunlight, open spaces, and skylights to create a relationship between nature and the building itself. The overall organic ambiance is amplified with simple white textured walls and hints of greenery growing indoors.

This project inspiring the way of bringing green from outside to inside, and its lack of fussy details, reuse of existing structure and surfaces, abundance of natural light, open breezy spaces, integration with trees and plants, an overall relaxed style and effortless beauty in the simplicity.
I simply want our studio like a wild cage which is bathed in sunlight, inundated by rainwater, fully surrounded by tree... and non-frontier space... And we are like wild beasts in cage, stay temporary, momentary but thirst for living.

The inspiration A21 house project give me is the concept of green and nature.
Contemporary living office approach to work or workplace

Traditionally, office design were places where people worked and spent most of their time. Today, people are more likely to work in environments that foster creativity and innovation.

Oldenburg calls one's "first place" the home and those that one lives with. The "second place" is the workplace — where people may actually spend most of their time. Third places, then, are "interiors" of community life and facilitate and foster broader, more creative interactions.

Oldenburg suggests the following hallmarks of a true "third place":

- Free or inexpensive
- Food and drink, while not essential, are important
- Highly accessible: proximate for many (walking distance)
- Involve regulars — those who habitually congregate there
- Welcoming and comfortable
- Both new friends and old should be found there

After researching workplace stress and health wellness of office workers and the Central Business District environment, this proposed mixed-use building program will include a cafe, fitness center, work lounge, workshop rooms and a roof terrace. Most of the program supports entertainment and support spaces which help office workers relax after office hours. However, the concept of the work lounge (public lounge + private offices) in this building resembles a living office.

Living Office is a high-performing workplace that delivers an elevated experience of work for people, it provides an updated understanding of people and their work, founded on elements that are naturally human — how we experience the world and what motivates us. Informed by this understanding, company considerations for the arrangement of surroundings, furnishings, and tools to meet the needs of people and deliver an elevated experience of work.

From privacy-as-a-luxury to privacy-on-demand:

As work activities have become more interactive and communal, the need for privacy hasn't gone away. Private workstations or offices are no longer the way to provide this privacy. Many organizations are taking their exclusive-yet-vacant private offices and transforming them into smaller, better-equipped Haven Settings, where anyone can work.

From standard conference rooms to a variety of group settings:

People doing a variety of activities throughout the day. A majority of these activities are social and collaborative in nature like dividing and conquering work on a project, having a conversation, or co-creating an idea for a new product. Hence, it is necessary to create workplaces with a variety of settings, each specifically designed to support different people and their work.

From oversized conference rooms to precision-fit meeting spaces:

Large, traditional conference rooms (think long rectangular tables with seats lining the sides) are still prevalent in many offices today, but most are underutilized: people only use two to four seats in spaces designed to accommodate six to twelve. It is necessary to create workplaces with a variety of settings, each specifically designed to support different people and their work.

From required circulation to desired connection:

In the past, circulation space was viewed as a necessary evil of use had to move from Point A to Point B. But circulation space can be far more than a conduit for people. When purposefully planned — with people's needs, experiences, and activities in mind - it can become active connective space.
This building was built in 1975, and it connects to the high-rise Bank of America building which is built in 1973, located in heart of downtown Richmond's financial district. It has excellent views of the Capitol and James River. The total square feet for the connector section is 28,000. The property class is Class A or B office building. The construction material is concrete, masonry, metal and glass.

The building is bound on the north side by East Main Street, on the east by South 12th Street, and on the south side by East Cary Street. It has a 25 story office building, a three level office building, a nine level parking deck, and a pedestrian plaza.

The building was rezoned from B-6 Mixed Use Business District to B-4 Downtown Central Business District in 1999. Today, east of the building across 12th Street is zoned B-5 Central Business District. The property to north and west are occupied by high-rise office buildings.
The building is located in the Central Business District in downtown Richmond. The area of offices in downtown has transformed from a public functional district to the Central Business District of Richmond today. The CBD acts as a district connecting government, MCV campus and James River, and also a boundary separating the downtown from the residential districts (R-6) and light industrial districts (M-1). A number of landmark high-rise buildings are located in the CBD, such as the building of Bank of America, Capitol, as a landmark, play an important role to note this area.

The CBD in Richmond has grown since 1998. Today, the west boundary of the district extends to North Harrison Street as shown in the following image. And the east boundary is Interstate 95. The north boundary is E Leigh Street, and the south is the James River.

According to the labor statistics from Richmond Government Information System in 2015, the total labor population is 1,218,864.
site study
## Initial Programming

**1. Quantities**

|         | cafe | work lounge | workshop rooms | fitness center | roof terrace
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

**2. Required Area**

- coffee bar
- kitchen
- dining space
- restrooms
- housekeeping rooms
- public work lounge
- private offices
- restrooms
- performance rooms
- individual study areas
- storage spaces
- residence
- coffee bar
- fitness center
- roof terrace
- mixed-use terrace
- housekeeping rooms
- public work lounge
- private offices

**3. Occupant Load**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>40</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>150</th>
<th>30</th>
<th>40</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>office worker members + their families</td>
<td>office worker members</td>
<td>organizer + invitee + audience</td>
<td>office worker members + their families</td>
<td>office worker members + their families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4. Space Summary**

- A place to eat, talk, and have a break. The appropriate furniture elements, materials, colors, lighting and even music make workers relax in a day.
- The fitness and exercise center includes multiple exercise areas such as aerobics, free weights, stretching and yoga studios. To counteract office workers’ sedentary lifestyle.
- A multipurpose space for office workers to be de-stressing in a natural environment.

**5. Important Adjacencies**

- lobby
- restrooms
- cafe
- lobby
- restrooms
- cafe
- changing rooms
- shower rooms
- restrooms
- work lounge
- cafe

**6. Accessibility**

- yes-ADA
- yes-ADA
- yes-ADA
- yes-ADA
- yes-ADA

**7. Specialized FF&E**

- wood tables and seats, stainless kitchen equipments
- various types of seating, movable furniture
- water-resistant, dirt-resistant furniture
- water-resistant, dirt-resistant outdoor furniture

**8. Acoustics Privacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>medium</th>
<th>low</th>
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<tr>
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<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
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<td>medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunlight Requirements</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium/low</td>
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**10. General Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>cafe</th>
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<th>fitness center</th>
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<td>yes-ADA</td>
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<td>Specialized FF&amp;E</td>
<td>wood tables and seats, stainless kitchen equipments</td>
<td>various types of seating, movable furniture</td>
<td>water-resistant, dirt-resistant furniture</td>
<td>water-resistant, dirt-resistant outdoor furniture</td>
<td>cafe</td>
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<td>Acoustics Privacy</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>low</td>
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<td>Visual Security</td>
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<td>high</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunlight Requirements</td>
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<td>medium</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>medium/low</td>
<td>high</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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<td>tbd</td>
<td>tbd</td>
<td>tbd</td>
<td>tbd</td>
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</table>
### Minimum Exit Requirements

- **Floor 1:**
  - OL = 153
  - 2 exits

- **Floor 2:**
  - OL = 153
  - 2 exits

- **Floor 3:**
  - OL = 153
  - 2 exits

(Based on 60% efficiency ratio, assembly 15 net occupant load factor)

### Code Analysis

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<th>Location</th>
<th>OL</th>
<th>1 exit</th>
<th>2 exits</th>
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<td>A-3 Study Lounge</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-4 Workshop</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-5 Fitness Center</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1 exit</td>
<td>1</td>
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**Notes:**
- OL = Occupant Load
- M = Male
- F = Female
- W = Water Closets
- L = Lavatories
- D = Drinking Fountain
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First floor</th>
<th>Second floor</th>
<th>Third floor</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Required number of exits per floor</strong></td>
<td>Assembly</td>
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<td>Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Occupant load by classification</strong></td>
<td>15 net</td>
<td>16 net</td>
<td>15 net</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of each gender</strong></td>
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<td>Male Female</td>
<td>Male Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of water closets per gender</strong></td>
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<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of accessible restroom fixtures per gender</strong></td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>1 1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of water fountains</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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![Diagram](image_url)
design process

conceptual

[Diagram showing conceptual design process with various floor plans and perspectives]
First Floor

FIRST LEVEL PLAN
scale: 3/32" = 1'-0"
FOURTH LEVEL PLAN
scale: 3/32" = 1' - 0"
LONGITUDINAL SECTION A - A’
Scale: 1/16” = 1’ - 0”

CROSS SECTION B - B’
Scale: 1/16” = 1’ - 0”

CROSS SECTION C - C’
Scale: 1/16” = 1’ - 0”
Dinning Space
Work Lounge + Interior Courtyard
models
Opening

Thanks to the hard work of all my classmates, my professor Roberto Ventura to make this be real.

It was a memorable exhibition night.
A Mixed-use building for office workers in the central business district

The Third Place:
Contemporary living office approach to work or workplace spaces in an existing building in the Central Business District of Richmond to primary case study.

Records of the daily CBD living habits were made. In addition, case studies of supporting life of the office worker, and what kind of spaces they are looking for. Elsbach and Bechky (2007), office workers regularly leave their offices in search of a second place. According to a large group of office buildings and a number of retail spaces, workers are finding a variety of options to suit their needs.

Work-related stress is an issue of growing concern around the world. STRESS AND HEALTH relationship between work stress and individuals' psychological and physical health has become active connective space. The American Psychological Association reports that 2011, while less than six in ten (58%) report that they have the resources to manage work stress. According to the Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2011 the percentage of workers reporting job stress than a generation ago.

The Shibaura House represents a new spirit for mixed-use spaces. It is a multistorey office, event space, lounge, cafe project location: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. This project inspiring the way of bringing green from outside to inside, and it's lack of white textured walls and hints of greenery growing indoors.

Date Completed: 2012
Built area: 40.0 m²
Program: Office-house
Project location: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Image and cross section present the area plants go through between floors: Party & Dinning 2nd Floor - Lounge 3rd Floor - Lounge 4th Floor - Lounge 5th Floor - Bird Room Small exhibition

Top Five Work Stress Factors in 2012

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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>Back Strains</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Insecurity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
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</table>

Have resources to manage work stress

Survey by the Families and Work Institute
Survey by Northwestern National Life

Both new friends and old should be found there.

Highly accessible: proximate for many (walking distance)
Food and drink, while not essential, are important

“Second place” is the workplace — where people may actually spend most of their time.

THIRD PLACE

Living Office concept of the work lounge (public lounge + private offices) in this building is rooms and a roof terrace. Most of the program supports entertainment and needs.

After researching on workplace stress and health, wellness of office workers become active connective space. From required circulation to desired connection:

Haven Settings, where anyone can work.

REFERENCES:

WORK CITED

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IMAGE CITED

1 http://www.myledlightingguide.com/office-lighting
2 http://www.sradigitalsolutions.com/the-company/
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