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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
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M.F.A. Interior Environments
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To the teachers who inspired and guided me
Roberto Ventura
Christiana Lafazani
Sara Reed
Eleanor Barton
Camden Whitehead
Jillian Chapin
Jennifer Fell
Rob Smith
Emily Smith
Hillary Fayle

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Alex Cibula
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Makaila Meeks
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Heather Cheng
Eve Morgan

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Qiang Yan
Yang Liu
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Shiyang Yuan

I am so blessed to have spent the past two years with you. Truly grateful. Thank you.
table of contents

6 manifesto
8 abstract
10 precedents
26 research
22 site
26 existing drawings
33 exploration
48 design
76 exhibition
82 sources
manifesto

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

— Tadao Ando

I believe... less, but better.

If I am 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 tense or stressed out 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 has focused 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 CBDs 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 methodologies, including interviews and video records of the daily CBD living habits were made. In addition, case studies of recently done CBDs that tackle this question. The Shibaura House, designed by Kazuyo Sejima, located in the business district of Tokyo in Japan, will serve as a case study.

There are three aims in this research. First, it is the design of a series of mixed-use spaces in a working building in the Central Business District of Richmond. The objective is to explore the ways to support 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 indicates the importance of the concern for office workers after office hours. Attention is focused on the practical 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, yet different ways. Some examples include the Shibaura House in Tokyo, which is my inspiration for mixed-use spaces. Another referential project is the Hive On 16th in Denver, which has quite similar operation modes 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. Over here businessmen are having meetings, over there mothers converse, and in another area you find employees like us. It is wonderful to see all these things happening in one space, and it is great that we have managed to create that 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. Also it is suitable for talks and workshops. The second floor is great to use as a lounge space when using the 1st 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.
A21 HOUSE

Project designer: a21 studio
Project location: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Program: Office-house
Built area: 40.0 m²
Date Completed: 2012

The a21 house is a stylish traditional Asian studio with multi-level 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, 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 but thirst for living."

The inspiration A21 house project gave me is the concept of green and nature.

[Images of interior and exterior views of the A21 house, including a section highlighting plants in the building.]
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 “beacons of community life and facilitate and bolster broader, more creative interaction.”

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 could be found there

After researching on workplace stress and health, wellness of office workers and the Central Business District environment, the proposed mixed-use building program will include a café, fitness center, work lounge, workshop rooms and a roof terrace. Most of the program supports entertainment and support spaces which help to 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, this office environments consider the arrangement of places to foster the conditions that deliver an enhanced experience of work. Food choices, high-quality lighting, water and air to create healthier, energized surroundings.

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 have eliminated private offices and transformed 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. Hence, it is necessary to create workplaces with a variety of settings, each specifically designed to support different people and their work.

Haven Settings, where anyone can work.
This building was built in 1975, and it connected 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 Capital and James River. The total square feet for the connector section is 28,000. The property class is Class A in all the building. The construction material is concrete, masonry, metal and glass.

The building is bordered 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 two 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 office 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 landscale 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 groen since 1999. 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.
### Initial Programming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cafe</th>
<th>Work Lounge</th>
<th>Workshop Rooms</th>
<th>Fitness Center</th>
<th>Roof Mixed Use Terrace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Required Areas
- Coffee bar
- Kitchen
- Restaurant
- Bar
- Restrooms
- Housekeeping room
- Yoga studio
- Private offices
- Restrooms
- Housekeeping room
- Lounge
- Restrooms

#### Occupant Load

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

#### 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 work lounges provide office workers a "third" place to work after office hours. Here one can work in a quiet atmosphere, in public or private, at well-lit tables or in overstuffed chairs.
- A space for office workers to organize activities, or for organizations to hold business workshops. It also could be a meeting space or business conference room.
- 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 de-stress in a natural environment.

#### Important Adjacencies
- Lobby
- Restrooms
- Cafe
- Lobby
- Restrooms
- Cafe
- Changing rooms
- Shower rooms
- Restrooms
- Work lounge
- Cafe

#### Accessibility
- Yes-ADA
- Yes-ADA
- Yes-ADA
- Yes-ADA
- Yes-ADA

#### Plumbing Requirements
- Kitchen + Restrooms
- Restrooms
- Shower rooms + Restrooms
- No

#### Specialized FF+E
- Wood tables and seats, stainless kitchen equipment
- Various types of seating
- Moveable furniture
- Water-resistant, dirt-resistant furniture
- Water-resistant, dirt-resistant outdoor furniture

#### Acoustic Privacy
- Medium
- High
- Medium
- Low
- Medium

#### Visual Privacy
- Low
- Medium
- Medium
- Medium/high
- Low

#### Security
- Low
- Medium
- Medium
- High
- Medium

#### Sunlight Requirements
- High
- Medium
- Medium
- Backlit
- High

#### Others
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
- Yes
WORK LOUNGE NET AREA 2,000 ft²

FITNESS CENTER NET AREA 1,500 ft²

WORKSHOP ROOMS NET AREA 2,250 ft²

COFFEE BAR NET AREA 600 ft²

SHOWER ROOMS NET AREA 225 ft²

CHANGING ROOMS NET AREA 225 ft²

PRIVATE OFFICES NET AREA 100 ft²/each

WORK LOUNGE NET AREA 2,000 ft²

FITNESS CENTER NET AREA 1,500 ft²

WORKSHOP ROOMS NET AREA 2,250 ft²

COFFEE BAR NET AREA 600 ft²

PRIVATE OFFICES NET AREA 100 ft²/each

TOTAL GROSS AREA 11,493 ft²

TOTAL NET AREA 6,895 ft²

FITNESS CENTER NET AREA 1,500 ft²

WORKSHOP ROOMS NET AREA 2,250 ft²

RESTROOMS (Net Area 100 ft²/each)

HOUSEKEEPING ROOMS (Net Area 25 ft²/each)

INDIVIDUAL STUDIO NET AREA 400 ft²/each
(Based on 60% efficiency ratio, assembly 15 net occupant load factor)
null
design process

conceptual
Floor Plans

First Floor

FIRST LEVEL PLAN
scale: 3/32" = 1' - 0"
Sections

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’’
Fitness Center
Work Lounge + Interior Courtyard
Thanks to the hard work of all my classmates, my professor Roberto Ventura to make this be real.
It was a memorable exhibition night.
mixed-use building on reducing work stress, improving office workers' health and support the life of office workers after office hours. It also aims to improve wellness

There are three aims in this research. First is the design of a series of mixed-use

recently done CBDs that tackle this question. The Shibaura House, designed by

how the design of traditionally planned CBDs fails to support wellness of office

Several primary research methods were adopted. First, a survey of research on

up from 36% in 2011, while less than six in ten (58%) report that they have the

serve office workers' daily life in the central business district.

However, there is limited "third space" to

WHAT WORKERS SAY ABOUT STRESS ON THE JOB:

St. Paul Fire and Marine Innsuance Co.

Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints

Survey by the Families and Work Institute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very or or extremely stressful.</th>
<th>Very or or extremely need to work more</th>
<th>Very or or extremely family problems.</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Not at all significant</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:

[5] Virginia Commonwealth University

THIRD PLACE


References:
8 Confident and proprietary research with Fortune 500 companies conducted by Herman Miller, 2014.