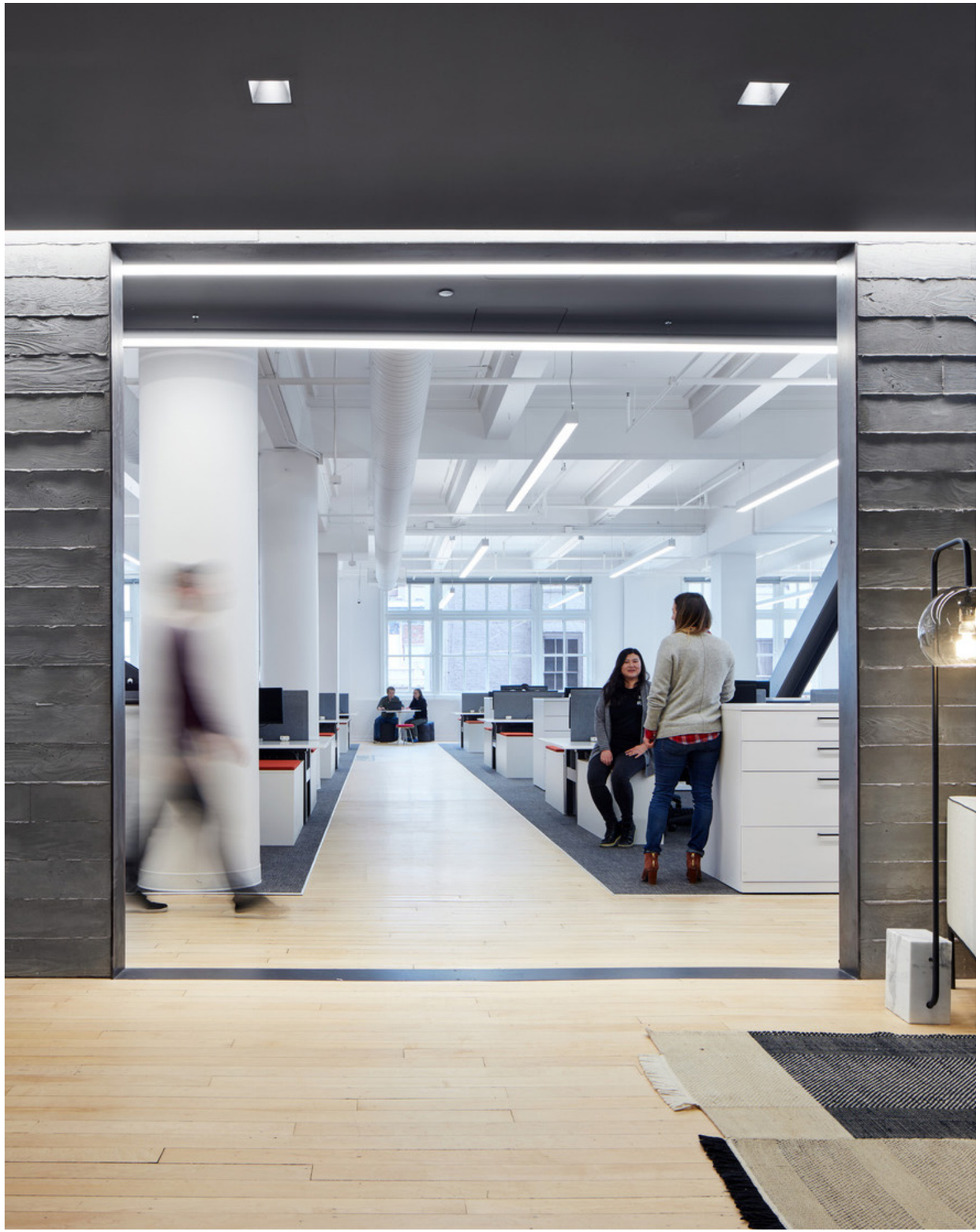
SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA



THE HGA SAN FRANCISCO OFFICE

Architects like to surround themselves with aesthetically thought-provoking workplaces that will inspire their work. So much so, they often seek a workshop-like environment that suggests a roll-up-your-shirtsleeves approach to the creative process of architectural design.

As such, HGA designed its own workplace relocation in downtown San Francisco with the aspiration to create a purposeful frame—or armature—for inspiration and work fluidity. From the outset, the team avoided certain pitfalls of designing one's own space, such as overthinking decisions and concepts, or making assumptions about how individuals work—or should work.

Instead, potential pitfalls were vetted through an inclusive, interactive programming/planning process that included internal questionnaires, one-on-one staff interviews, and visioning sessions to ensure that each department and staff function was represented—from Senior Designers to Operations, Human Resources, IT, and Marketing.

This process resulted in a vibrant workplace where all team members personally and professionally feel invested.

Occupying a full floor in a nine-story concrete masonry office building downtown, the open work plan encourages a fluid workstyle among team members throughout the day.

From the elevator lobby, common spaces—reception, copy/print room, workroom, huddle rooms, mother's room, kitchen, break room, and VR studio—are grouped within a core on the west half of the floor plan. Further inside, three various-sized conference rooms and a library line up along the north floor-to-ceiling window wall, with hoteling, pre-conference, and collaboration spaces just outside the conference rooms. Finally, open work stations are grouped along the south and east window walls within an open plan.

Throughout the workplace, design elements suggest a sense of tongue-in-cheek fun through textures, finishes, and lighting—communicating to staff and visiting clients that design is a creative process.

For example, exposed "concrete" walls projecting an industrial building aesthetic are simple applied tiles. Reclaimed wood laths serving as sound-absorbing panels recall traditional timber construction (instead of the building's concrete construction). Custom workstation dividers provide privacy while custom filing units next to workstations allow team members to flip a front panel between whiteboard and pin-up boards to accommodate critiques and team huddles.

Additionally, high-efficiency lighting enhances aesthetics. Skewed tube lighting along the main hallway visually directs wayfinding. Oversized dome light fixtures with ornate plasterwork figures in meeting rooms pay homage to the previous furniture company tenant. And timed dimmers office-wide modulate illumination throughout the day—creating an invisible transition from artificial to natural light.

The programming, environmental sustainability, and aesthetics drove the planning process. The discretely hidden mechanical system seamlessly maintains a healthy and comfortable work environment. HVAC system, ductwork, and vents were redesigned for a more pleasing ceiling aesthetic with clean lines, in which the original units were moved away from the open work area to an enclosed space above the walkway and new dropped ceiling.

National sustainability rating systems helped guide the design process. The project is tracking LEED-CI v2009 Gold and is registered with WELL Building. As both rating systems emphasize environmental sustainability and human health, they drove many of the design elements that ultimately created a workplace that is energy efficient, comfortable, and healthier for occupants.

The post-occupancy survey results validate occupant satisfaction. Many of the responses praised the daylight and views to the outdoors. The open office layout also has had a dramatic influence on how the employees work, with survey respondents repeatedly lauding the open layout as a driver for increased collaboration. Thoughtful furniture choices, such as custom millwork desk dividers and the pin-up wall, further facilitate collaboration.

Since move-in, the new workplace has served as a showroom—or workshop—for the process of design. Team members hosting client visits use the space to point out design elements that will inspire their own office design, from the functional open floor plan that encourages collaboration, to the discreetly successful mechanical systems, to the strategic use of natural and artificial light. The new office, as the survey results indicate, enhances a sense of shared ownership among team members.

COMPLETION
2017

PHOTOGRAPHER
Corey Gaffer

ARCHITECT
HGA

AUDIO VISUAL
HGA

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Novo Construction

LEED & WELL
HGA

SUSTAINABLE FEATURES

SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

Project is pursuing LEED and WELL certification

INCREASED VENTILATION

Outdoor air ventilation rate is 30% above baseline. This increases occupant comfort and enhances indoor air quality

THERMAL COMFORT

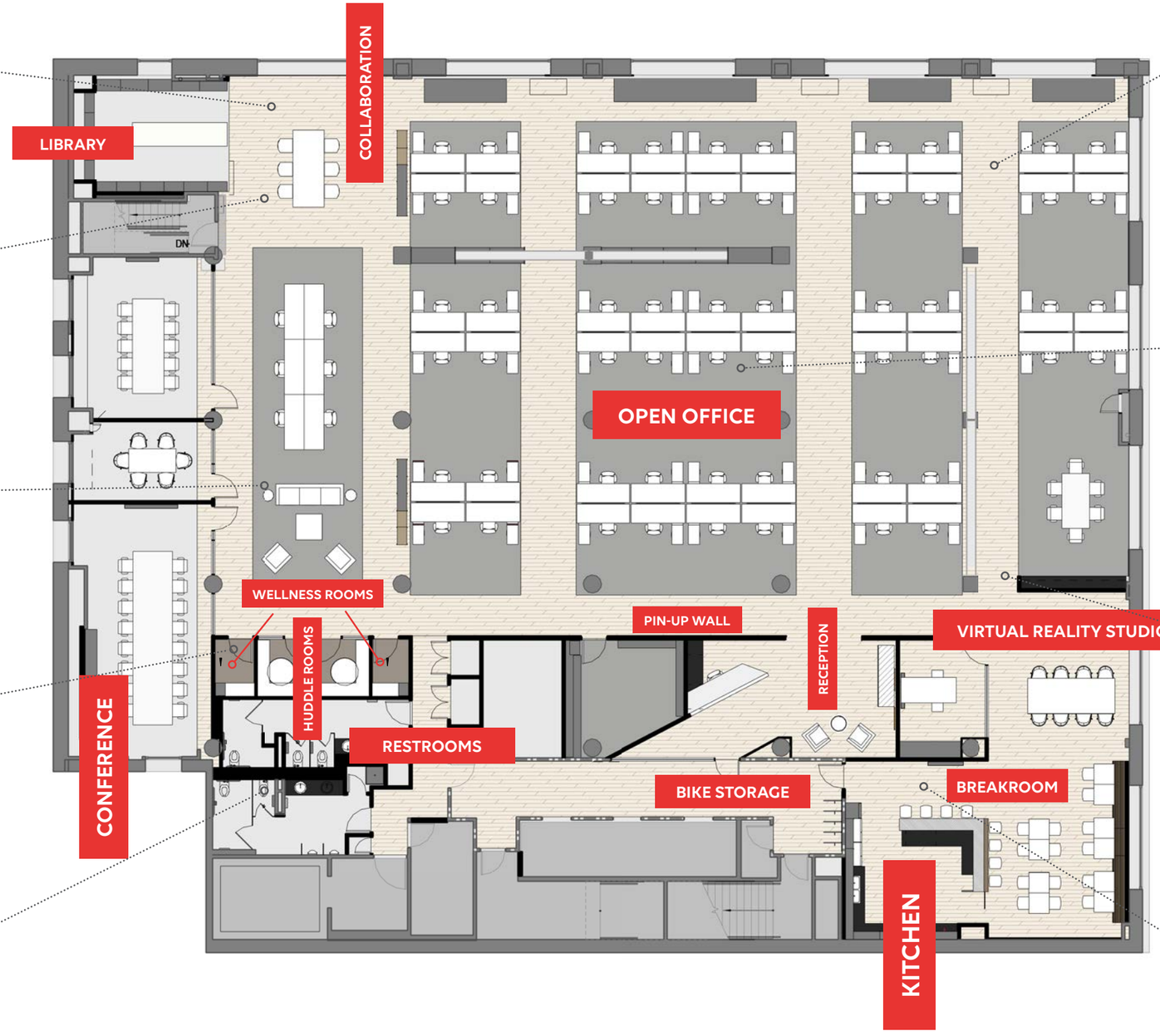
HVAC and building envelope design contribute to occupant comfort

WELLNESS ROOMS

Wellness Rooms offer quiet and cozy places to rest and recenter, and can double as mothers' rooms

WATER

Indoor water use is reduced by 35% through use of low and ultra-low fixtures



VIEWS

Over 90% of regularly occupied spaces have direct line-of-sight to the outdoors

DAYLIGHT

Over 90% of regularly occupied spaces have access to daylight - reducing energy use and boosting occupant health, wellbeing, and productivity

OPTIMIZE ENERGY LIGHTING CONTROLS

Lighting power use is reduced through the use of efficient LED light fixtures where possible, and control strategies such as occupancy sensor control and the integration of natural daylighting

MATERIALS

Use of low-emitting building materials throughout the office contributes to enhanced occupant health and improved indoor air quality

POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION PERCENT SATISFACTION:

ENERGY PERFORMANCE DATA: LIGHTING POWER DENSITY

Lighting power use is reduced through the use of efficient LED lighting for all light fixtures. This translates to a reduction in Lighting Power Density (LPD) of 43% when compared to LEED baseline and a 15% reduction from the Title 24-2016 code baseline. Daylight dimming is also incorporated into the lighting controls system to reduce energy consumption.

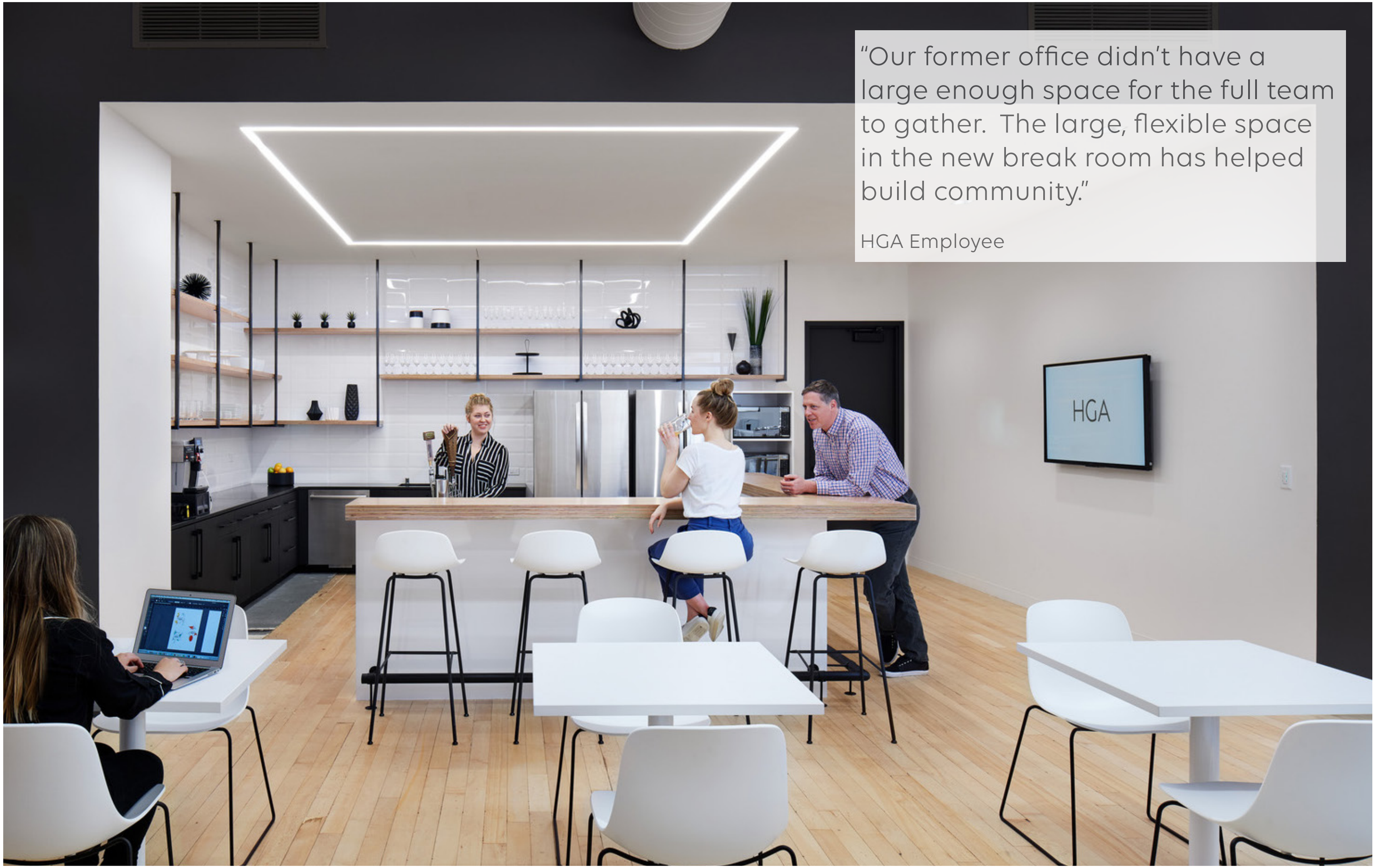
43%

REDUCTION WHEN COMPARED TO LEED BASELINE

15%

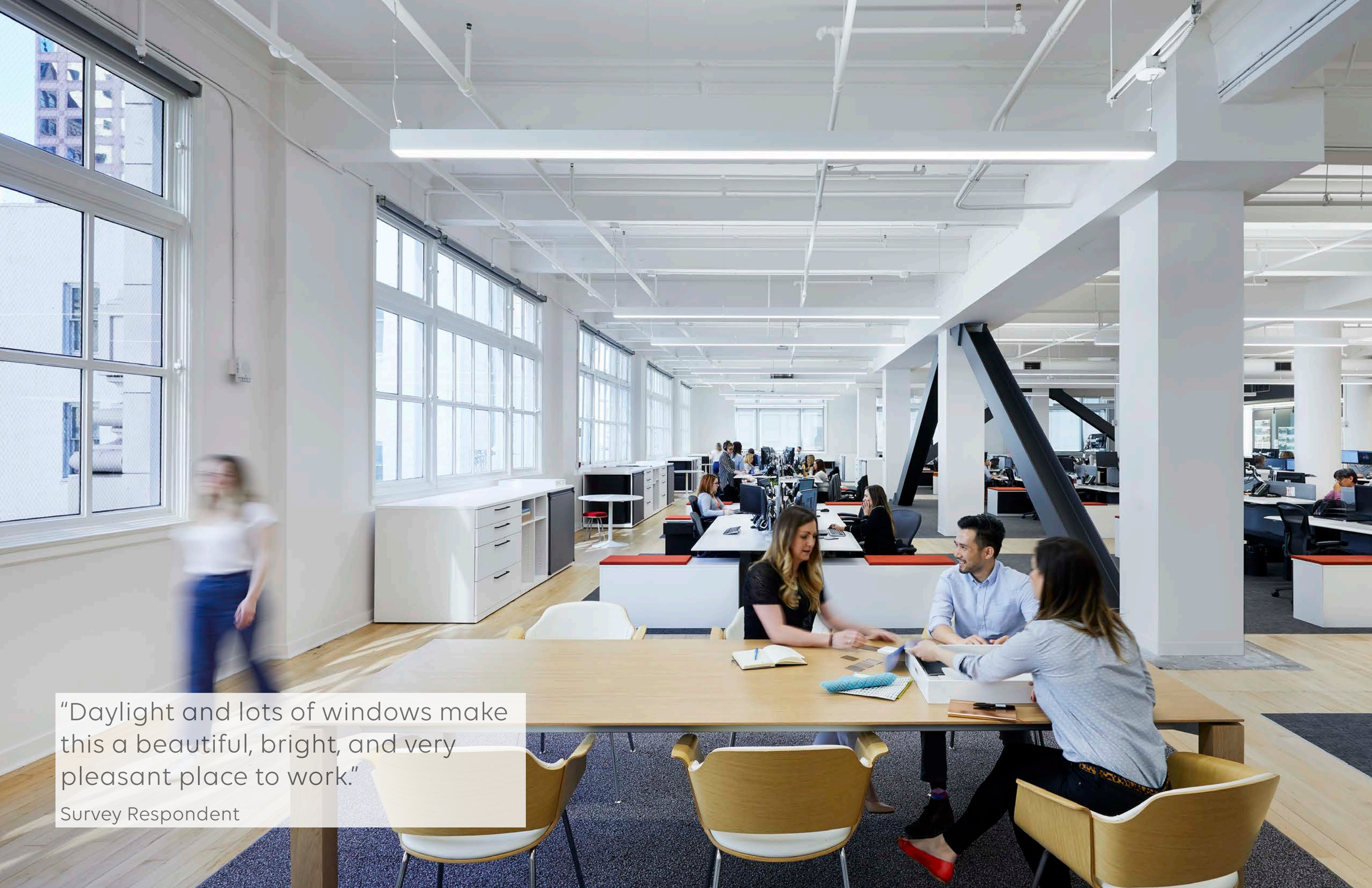
REDUCTION FROM THE TITLE 24-2016 CODE

Break room and virtual reality studio connect to physical pin-up space in the corridor. Each of these areas serves as space for informal collaboration.



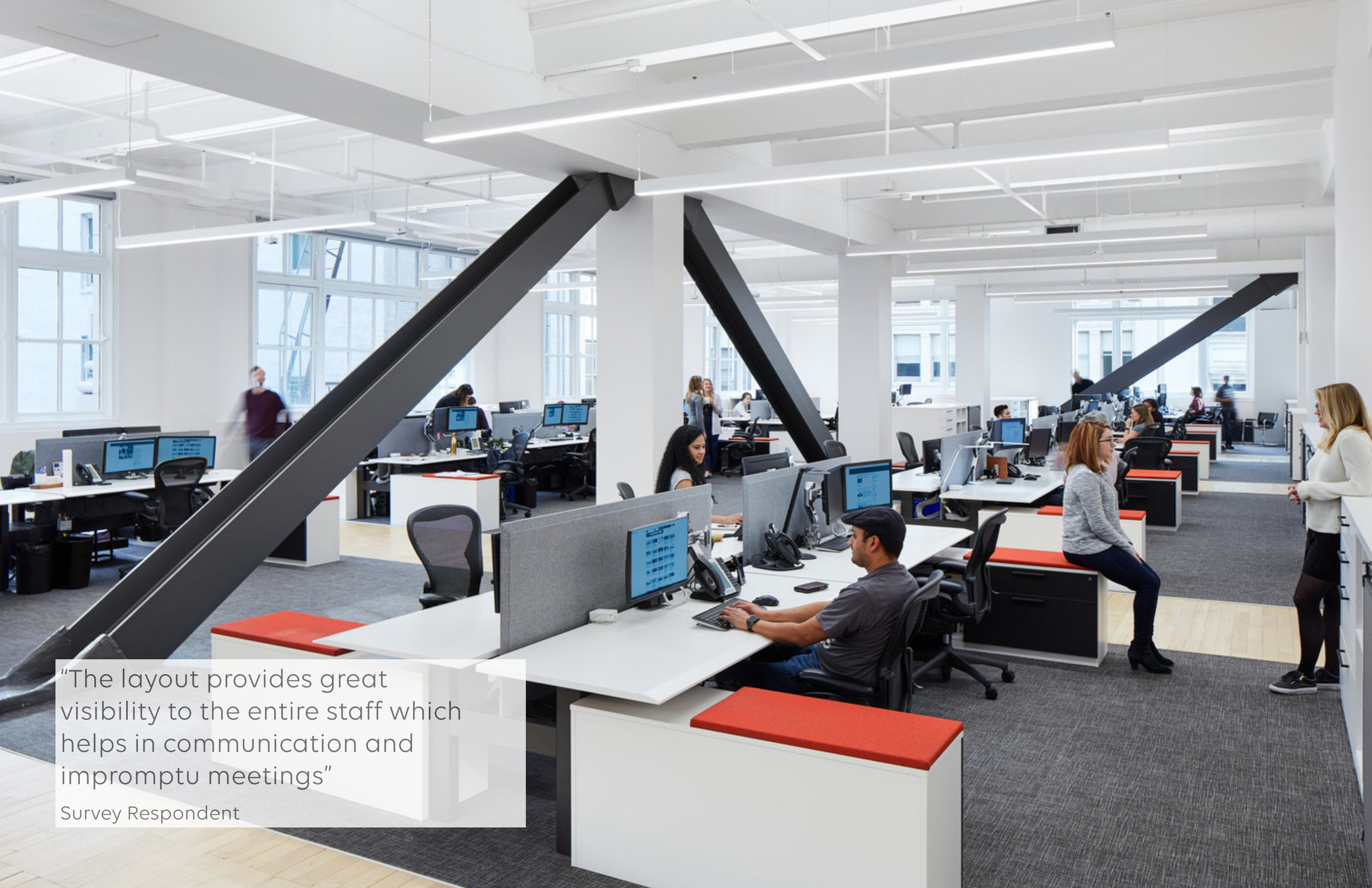
"Our former office didn't have a large enough space for the full team to gather. The large, flexible space in the new break room has helped build community."

HGA Employee



"Daylight and lots of windows make this a beautiful, bright, and very pleasant place to work."

Survey Respondent



"The layout provides great visibility to the entire staff which helps in communication and impromptu meetings"

Survey Respondent

Huddle rooms

Materials and finishes are visually enticing and mimic patterns found in nature, boosting well-being and effectiveness, while inspiring the imagination.