

DESIGN BETTER

Your Guide to Shared Workspace Design

W♥RK BETTER

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Design Process



KIMBERLY KANE | Design Manager, *Work Better*

When it's time to start designing one of our locations, I first start by surveying the space. In order to create a design solution, you must first define the problem. The best way to do that in a coworking space is by working out of the physical space. Being the Design Manager at Work Better, I am fortunate enough to be able to do so. This gives me experience with the problem first hand and allows me to visualize the design solution while physically standing in it.

The Community Associates (CAs) at the location offer a point of view not only from an operations perspective but from that of our primary users, better known as our members. We encourage our members to provide feedback and it is our priority to find the root of any issue and resolve it. When it comes to the design of the space, our members let us know how they feel when working in one of our spaces. We aim to influence productivity and efficiency for our members. We aim to optimize our members' productivity and efficiency through not only our team and amenities but also through the design of our locations.

Once a new design project is introduced, the five design phases listed below are how we complete the project:

Programming Phase: Functional needs and information gathering, preliminary budget establishment, and existing inventory identified.

Schematic Design or Concept Development: Determination of mood, preliminary FF&E, and compiling sketches and imagery.

Design Development: Space planning, finalize interior finishes, and finalize budget breakdown.

Final Design Phase: Finalized design presentation of all materials, finishes, drawings, renderings, and budget breakdown.

Construction Phase: Creating the built environment from drawings and specifications per the Final Design Phase.

The **Programming Phase** is when we determine the parameters of the project - it is often referred to as the research phase. During this phase, we discuss the functional needs of the space, desired design aesthetic, and preliminary budget. From this initial conversation, we take inventory of existing furniture, artwork, and lighting. Creating an inventory list allows us the opportunity to stretch the budget by reusing existing items when possible. The project manager then creates a project schedule. Developing a project schedule during this phase helps to set weekly goals while maintaining the desired completion date.

The **Schematic Phase** is when the creativity really starts. In this second phase, a design concept is created and portrayed through imagery, sketches, and mood boards. The design concept imagery helps the client, or in our case, the Work Better team, get a feeling of how the space will look and feel. Preliminary diagrams to show space adjacencies are then created to start the space planning process. Necessary adjacencies are determined and sketched over a floor plate. From this, we can move into the Design Development Phase.

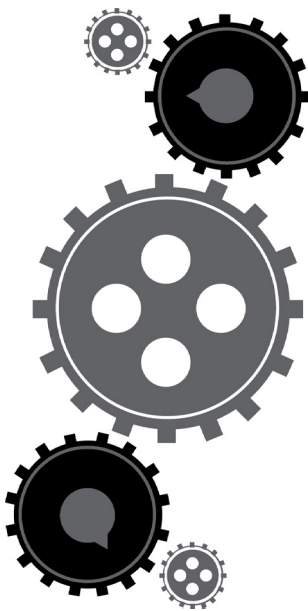
The **Design Development Phase** focuses on the realistic design options - what floor plans, fixtures, furniture, & equipment (also referred to as FF&E) will fit within the budget breakdown. In this phase, floor plans, elevations, and other technical drawings are completed. All architectural and FF&E specifications are completed and documented along with desired vendors for the next phase.

The **Final Design Phase** involves completing technical drawings and documentation to send out for bidding. This phase is used for projects that require construction. If it is an interior project or is more FF&E related, this phase is used to work on final quotes for any custom items. Maintaining a good relationship with vendors helps to speed this process along. Finally, the last portion of this phase is the final presentation and approval process.

The final phase, the **Construction Phase**, is just as it sounds - the process of creating the built environment. If there isn't any construction involved in a project, this is referred to as the installation phase - flooring installation, painting, and furniture and accessory set up. Finally, the project is complete and the designs come to life.



Flow/Efficiency



Form follows function is a common design principle that is used when designing all Work Better locations. This principle focuses on the intended function or purpose of the space. When designing any office space, it is important to use this design principle from the beginning stages of design and carry through to completion. A beautiful space is worthless if it is not functional. Much like food, if it is beautifully plated but doesn't taste good, do you still want to eat it? Coworking spaces have part of the functional definition within the name - it is first a place of work and a place of work must be functional and efficient.

In order to design a space using this design principle, you must first identify and have a full understanding of the users of the space. Users of a space can be broken down into three categories: primary, secondary, and tertiary users. In a coworking space, more specifically our Work Better shared spaces, the primary users are our members, secondary users are the Work Better team, and tertiary users are visitors/guests of either the primary or secondary users. In order for our space to be successful, its design must be functional and aesthetically pleasing to all users of the space.

Our spaces have been thoughtfully designed first with the primary users of the space in mind - our members. We have designed our spaces to accommodate their needs specifically. Each center can be run with only two CAs at each location because our floor plans have been designed to maximize their productivity; if CA's are making more efficient use of their time, our members further benefit from our offered services. For example, having the mailroom located within view or earshot of reception ensures that reception will be taken care of even if a CA needs to step away to assist one of our members. Taking care of reception and the mailroom effectively, also known as back of house operations, is offering the ability to serve our members and their arriving guests simultaneously.

While our spaces have varying design concepts and floor plans, one consistent design feature is the location of reception, the mailroom, & the pantry. This triangle, or blocking of spaces, is key to successfully running each center. As mentioned previously, front and back of house (reception and mailroom) must be within earshot, if not adjacent. But adding in the pantry to this block also ensures that it will remain neat and stocked with coffee, snacks, and other offerings. This block of spaces contains the most sound because it is a high traffic area where people often gather. Having these high traffic areas as one block of space ensures most sound is maintained in one area, keeping private offices as a space truly for work. Conference rooms are often what separates the private offices from reception, pantry, and the mailroom. Our meeting rooms have also been designed with acoustics in mind. They have acoustical properties integrated in the space through the use of specific materials.



Location/Neighborhood

Each location has been designed to complement its surrounding neighborhood. Each building has an architectural design that has been influenced by its neighborhood, so our designs must first fit with the building architecture in order to ultimately complement the neighborhood. Because our locations are spread throughout different neighborhoods, this allows us to use our surroundings as inspiration - thus creating a variety of design concepts across all locations. This is done, in part, through the use of materials - for example, utilizing existing flooring or exposed brick while introducing new materials to complement the existing materials.

Since the primary users of a space are what drive the design of a space, the industries of our members at each location have influenced our spaces. Much like tying into the surrounding neighborhood, our spaces complement our members and their work industries. For example, our locations house several start-up and recruiting companies. These two industries naturally pull in more tertiary users to our space whether it be interns, guests, or recruits.

This has in turn influenced the open plan setting of the space known as the HUB. This space offers additional comfortable seating for start-up interns and serves as overflow for their main private office as well as a casual setting for interviews for the recruiting companies.

Both of these industries, which are most prominent in this space, have something else in common - the age group. Both start-ups and recruiting companies bring in college students or recent grads, representing an age demographic of early twenties to mid-thirties. This age demographic is known to prefer a more casual workplace while still wanting access to other work settings. This influenced the HUB design, which includes semi-formal conference rooms, open desk seating, dedicated desks, a lounge, and comfortable seating. This maximizes the range of the type of work that can be done in this space - informal, impromptu meetings, short term solo work, and formal conferencing. Integrated technology, such as speakers and video projection paired with soaring ceilings, makes for perfect event space. Networking events are vital to start-up companies in order to get their name out there and pull in more investors. The HUB space can accommodate 100+ people for events, thus providing optimal conditions for successful networking.

In contrast, Grand Central West is located in an area that is highly populated with business and financial services. These industries require a more formal work setting - more private offices and formal conference rooms. To make the space feel even more luxurious, it is enriched with natural, yet refined materials. The warm, walnut wood doors and accent paneling offset by the white marble slab accent walls help make the space feel more like a five-star hotel than a place of work. Liquid crystal glass facade conference rooms that change from transparent to translucent at the touch of a button offer privacy for formal meetings with guests. Classic mid-century furniture pieces are used to offset the modern architecture within the space.



Chelsea

Just off reception, the largest conference room at the Chelsea location accommodates a total of 10 people. Being located adjacent to reception makes it easy for members to meet with their clients upon arriving at Work Better. This conference room mimics the **urban** setting of the surrounding neighborhood by maintaining the **original exposed brick and hardwood flooring** of the building. The **urban** feeling of the space is further enhanced by using **accent lighting** on the exposed brick. The grazing provided by the recessed lighting brings out the naturally rough texture of the brick, adding character to the room. This room has the technology to accommodate conference calls, projection of presentations, and encourages a collaborative effort.



GRAND CENTRAL WEST | Office



Grand Central West

This office has been set up to accommodate a design firm executive and her assistant. By using an **L-shape workstation** for the executive, it **engages the floor space** while making it easy for her to collaborate on designs with her assistant. The executive has a **clear line of sight** in the office. Being able to manage her protege from where she is sitting enables a higher level of productivity. A round table and chairs has been provided to encourage in-office meetings, collaboration sessions, and to serve as a break table. At Work Better, we encourage our members to make their private office space their own. This can be achieved by adding your own personal touch through accessories such as plants, desk organization tools, and personal photos or artwork.

Creating break out spaces throughout our centers allows our members to use the spaces for a variety of needs. This break out space is located in the 10th floor pantry right off the elevator bank. Being located in the cafe/pantry, off the elevator bank and adjacent to the conference room creates a minimum of three uses for our members. It's a great space to take a break while enjoying our freshly ground Counter Culture coffee.

Treating the walls with **natural materials** such as the **walnut wood paneling** and **marble slab backsplash** not only makes the space feel luxurious but offers a connection to nature. Using natural materials helps to give the users of the space a **connection to nature** within our urban setting of New York City. The vertical wood grain not only maintains the natural growth/display/direction of the wood but also draws the eye upward, enhancing the height of the ceilings in the space. The **juxtaposition** of the warm walnut wood and cool marble slab helps to balance the **visual color temperature of the space**. The contrast between the natural movement in the wood and marble against the linear pattern of the floor tile and upholstered seating gives the space a connection to the modern design concept driving the space.



GRAND CENTRAL WEST | Kitchen

Wall Street

Chalkboard walls allow for creativity and productivity to flow in the office space. Can't find a piece of paper to take notes on, simply turn to the wall and make a quick note. This is another great way to **personalize** your private office. Draw murals and frames, take notes, brainstorm ideas - regardless of what you use the chalkboard wall for, it keeps the brain active while influencing productivity. Adding shelving to the wall provides more space to hold decorative objects and further personalizes the office space. We have created one central **workstation** to seat two in this private office. By placing the **workstations** perpendicular to the chalkboard wall, you are not only **engaging the floor space** but you are also allowing each person their own writing space. The **symmetry** of this design is not only **aesthetically pleasing**; it also gives these business partners a sense of equality of space and resources.





A member lounge on the 29th floor was incorporated into the design at Wall Street to encourage members to take a break from their private office. The flood of **natural sunlight** from the wall of windows along the back wall of the lounge is what draws our members into the space. Grounded by the overscaled black and white stripe area rug, the arrangement of comfortable, upholstered sofa and lounge chairs offers a great spot to relax in the bright and airy space. A foosball table has been incorporated into the design of this space to encourage members to have fun at work. It is a great way to meet and make connections with other members in the space.

CHICAGO | Reception



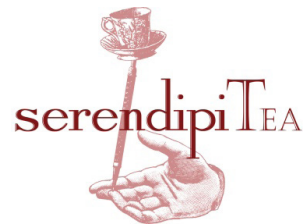
Chicago

Reception is the first and last impression of any office space. This is where the **design concept** of the space is set. In Chicago, the vastly wide and open reception area allows us to set the stage for a luxurious coworking environment. Two types of seating areas **flank** the oversized reception desk. Creating multiple seating areas not only allows guests to choose their view when seated but adds variety in texture, style, and pattern. While the two seating areas have different types of chairs and colors/patterns, they are **unified** by the area rug they sit on. Neutral flooring transitions into the neutral backdrop while following a similarly **linear design relief**. Recessed lighting serves as the general lighting while the pendants hung above the reception desk and the cove lighting at the back wall enhance the **visual and physical texture of materials** in the space. A mid-sized conference room at the far end of the space designed with walnut wood paneling **contrasts** the otherwise light reception area. Using contrast in a large space like this one creates a strong emphasis within the overall space.

Amenities

The aroma of freshly brewed Counter Culture coffee coming from the pantry located just steps from reception welcomes members and guests each morning upon entering. Offering amenities such as freshly ground coffee, SerendipiTea tea, and snacks is just one small way of showing our members we want to help them to work better.

**COUNTER
CULTURE**
COFFEE



Design Better

Researching and monitoring trends in the commercial, and specifically coworking, industry allows us to help you design better. We have the ability to take the spaces we have and to dissect the design of each in order to determine what has been successful. Being able to use our spaces as part of our research, gives us the experience of both successful and unsuccessful design first hand. On paper, a design with floor plans, materials, and products might look and seem adequate, but in the physical space, there could be some discrepancies. Our best tool for designing new spaces is our experience in our own space.

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About the Author



KIMBERLY KANE | Design Manager, *Work Better*

I grew up in a small town in the Hudson Valley, which is where I still reside. The Hudson Valley has always served as an inspiration for me because it has so much to offer. In my free time I enjoy being active by hiking local trails, mountain biking, and taking my dog for a swim. I am an avid baker, flea market junkie and an animal enthusiast. When I was about 8 years old, my parents built a new home for our family. During that time, I was exposed to the design world from the construction, to the design and finishing of the home. That exposure is what truly sparked my desire to study interior design.

I studied at the Fashion Institute of Technology where I earned my Bachelor's degree in Interior Design. At FIT, I learned how to turn my passion for interior design into something positive to give back to others and that has always been my goal. My experience ranges from residential, hospitality and commercial interior design.

I am the Design Manager at Work Better for all of our locations. Some responsibilities of the Design Manager include renovations and updates to current spaces, show office and day office design, management of facilities maintenance, and design concepts for new spaces. I am constantly working to make improvements to our spaces to better serve our members. This may be in small ways such as new hospitality offerings for our members, or in more pronounced ways such as redesigning conference rooms and reception areas. It is my goal at Work Better to better the lives of our members through providing them well designed spaces for them to work in.

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Work Better, formerly Office Links, is a leading shared workplace provider with locations in New York City, and one in the Willis Tower in Chicago. Servicing over 100 companies, Work Better's mission is to enable businesses to serve their clients, and quite simply work better. With top amenities including industry-leading technology, Work Better boasts all-inclusive packaging with the customer's experience in mind.

Experience the Work Better Difference.



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