

## Designing for Neurodiversity APRIL 2022

Project:

10 Wellington, Les Terrasses de la Chaudière, Gatineau

Profile: Balanced Space solution: 1 887m2 Target occupancy: 157 FTE Year of planning: 2020

# Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity refers to the natural range of variation in human neurocognition, or the ways in which we process our environment using the central nervous system. Neurodiversity acknowledges that each individual may require a different level of environmental stimulation in order to feel comfortable and productive in the workplace. While an organizational culture of inclusion and respect is the most essential element in the success of a neurodiverse workplace, the design has a major role to play by removing barriers, improving accessibility, providing variety and fostering choice and equity for occupants.

Neurodiversity can manifest in different ways. Therefore, enabling occupants to choose the most effective environment to suit their functions and needs is the most inclusive approach. Offering a variety of settings in which to perform individual and collaborative tasks is the starting point to help occupants find a comfortable level of social exposure, interaction or environmental stimulation.

Neurodiversity is considered in the design process by creating a varied and choice-rich work environment that optimizes individual control and offers different degrees of stimulation by managing factor such as lighting, acoustics, texture, colour, or overall sense of psychological safety. Design principles such as repetition, rhythm, focal point and predictability as well as biophilic design principles such as exploration and discovery, intuitive circulation, areas for refuge, access to outside views and connection to nature are essential to ensure an inclusive workplace design. Providing different acoustic zones with visual cues to identify expected activity levels is a key aspect of inclusive design, especially for quiet zone. Finally, an awareness of the effects of colour on mood and feeling and the effect of patterns and materials on sensory stimulation when designing can also factor into the planning of a variety of more or less stimulating areas.



#### 10 WELLINGTON, GATINEAU BY PSPC NCR TEAM

This project was designed following GCworkplace standards and best practices, which include many strategies to promote inclusivity and diversity in the user experience. Key design principles such as zoning, equal access to space and variety allow the occupants to choose the most appropriate workpoint whether it is according to noise level, posture, type of task, the technology needed or the need for visual or auditory privacy. A judicious selection of furniture and thoughtful design choices, such as the addition of acoustic panels or partitions between workpoints or along the circulation, make the space even more inclusive. The variety in furnishings is one way that autonomy and choice are encouraged in order to meet a wide range of needs and preferences.

## We should celebrate neurodiversity – the world would be poorer and life duller if we were all the same

Neil Milliken



### **General best practices**

environment for neurodiverse occupants:

- and acoustic stimulation)
- colour
- Locate individual workpoints in all functional zones to allow users to choose their preferred level of stimulation while doing focus work
- Offer many refuge spaces and locate them in a low-traffic area
- standard, counter and bar height, upholstered seat and non-upholstered)
- Create focal points that are memorable by using unique furniture or features
- Optimize access to daylight and views to the outdoors ٠
- Incorporate natural elements, colours, textures and materials
- Use non-stimulating colour schemes intermixed with areas with high stimulation: colours are stimulating
- Use predictable patterns, such as symmetrical or fractal forms, to help occupants navigate, and organic or irregular patterns to focus
- hierarchy
- Emphasize wayfinding cues through architectural elements, patterns and signage consistency
- some visual and auditory privacy while eating

#### Following are some best practices that can be applied to ensure an inclusive work

Create three distinct functional zones with different levels of stimulation (consider visual

Improve acoustics in quiet zone by including acoustic panels in the open area and dividers between workstations and specifying work pods and focus pods with surrounding panels

Clearly define spaces by using visual separations and design changes such as using different forms and volumes that define the space, or by using decorative elements or

Provide variety in workpoints types, layout, furniture, feature and setting. For example, vary the sizes of Focus Rooms, some being smaller than others, provide some Focus Pods with ottomans or provide a variety of chairs in the kitchenette (with and without armrest,

typically, cool (blue, purple) colours are calming whereas warm (red, orange, yellow)

Plan clear and intuitive circulation paths using logical spatial organization and visual

Plan built-huddles adjacent to kitchenettes to provide a less stimulating workpoint with

Avoid planning workstations with the user's back to main corridors or large, open areas

### **Designing for neurodiversity**

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\* This is a schematic plan for example only