



ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY BUILDINGS MAGAZINE

# FLEX TECH BUILDINGS: CREATING A SCIENTIFIC WORKPLACE

Facility managers and building owners who work closely with life science tenants understand the unique needs of the science sector when it comes to workspaces. Demand for suitable spaces for research and development work is increasing, and facility managers know it is ideal to offer an adaptable space that can quickly accommodate new learning methods, research modalities and scientific instruments.

**The science sector has unique needs when it comes to workspaces, including a focus on employee recruiting and retention.**

In new build and retrofitting projects for spaces that are designed for life sciences tenants, there's significant focus on structural factors like load bearing capacity, connectivity and energy delivery. But there's another priority to keep in mind for this sector: employee recruiting and retention.

Talent is everything, and the competition for skilled workers is fierce in the life sciences sector regardless of economic conditions, so it's important to provide amenities that make it easier for tenants to attract and retain highly skilled employees. To appeal to the life sciences tenants, building owners should keep amenities in mind along with other design choices that create a scientific workplace.



## GROWING DEMAND FOR SCIENTIFIC WORKPLACES

Whether the organization is creating new products, developing pharmaceuticals, engaging in biotechnology research or investigating promising new health solutions, the life sciences sector is growing, and with it the demand for workplaces that facilitate discovery. There's high demand for flexible, collaborative scientific workplaces.

Potential life sciences tenants typically aren't looking for office environments paired with separate laboratory facilities as in the past. Now, they're seeking science-focused workplaces that feature integrated spaces with transparency and connectivity that foster collaboration. Building owners and facility managers who can deliver a world-class scientific workplace can meet that demand.



The building owners and managers who combine seamlessly integrated workplace and research environments with amenities like natural lighting and access to outdoor spaces will find and keep tenants. This approach offers life sciences organizations a way to promote creativity and engagement while providing a welcoming environment to help attract and retain the best and brightest in the field.

## MAJOR OPERATIONAL SAVINGS POTENTIAL

There's a reason tech and life science hubs form and grow: innovation is often a team project, and a region with the right mix of educational institutions, investors and local talent can drive discovery efforts forward more efficiently than organizations operating in isolation. For life sciences and technology businesses, much of the work occurs in a communal space.

That same principle applies when approaching a building or rehab project with a flex tech building strategy in mind. It makes sense from an operational savings standpoint because it allows building owners and facilities managers to drive ROI more quickly. If a building owner has to upgrade a facility to accommodate the needs of a life sciences tenant, it could take months to complete the retrofitting.

Taking a flex tech approach from the beginning eliminates the lag time to value, and it also enables building owners to attract high-growth tech and science tenants. By working with an integrated team of architects, engineers and contractors, building owners can incorporate features like load capacity, taller floor-to-ceiling heights and energy delivery into the base structure and make the right design choices to attract new tenants and keep them onboard as the organizations grow.

## OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE WITH INDIVIDUAL & TEAM WORKPLACES

In the past, lab spaces tended to be enclosed—cut off from the rest of the activities in the workspace. Now, open labs are more common and sought after. In a modern lab, people can see from offices into lab spaces, and labs designed to facilitate collaborative benchwork and co-learning are now the new standard in recognition of the importance of teamwork.

Since life sciences companies are competing head-to-head for talent, company leaders are looking for spaces that will appeal to job candidates who prefer a modern collaborative environment. Life sciences companies will be seeking a workspace that helps them reach their productivity and innovation goals by facilitating teamwork and individual focus while also using space efficiently.

The best way to create a flex tech space is to work with a collaborative team of architects, engineers and contractors who plan and execute the project from beginning to end. It's also beneficial to work with partners who are capable of supplying technology that showcases the space for prospective life sciences tenants. Features like 3D tools and video walk-throughs provide a sense of how the space can be configured to meet their needs.

**“Since life sciences companies are competing head-to-head for talent, company leaders are looking for spaces that will appeal to job candidates who refer a modern collaborative environment.”**

With a flex tech approach, building owners and facility managers can ensure that their space is adaptable to accommodate not only the learning and research modalities their tenants use today but new

methods, scientific instruments and data-sharing tools that will emerge in the months and years ahead. A scientific workplace helps facilitate life sciences tenants' discovery efforts and keeps occupancy rates high for building owners and facilities managers.



Tim Schulze AIA (left) and Kevin Perry AIA, LEED AP (right) are Principals with HED. They can be reached at [tschulze@hed.design](mailto:tschulze@hed.design) and [kperry@hed.design](mailto:kperry@hed.design).