

NeoCon®

NeoCon 2026 Wraps 57th Edition with Expanded Experiences, New Connections, and Industry-Wide Momentum

Traffic Increased 9% Over 2025 to 55,000 as the Commercial Design Industry Gathered at The Mart to Discover Products, Exchange Ideas, and Shape What's Next

(CHICAGO, IL – June 16, 2026) [NeoCon](#) wrapped its 57th edition with traffic up **9% over 2025**, reinforcing its position as the premier gathering for the commercial interiors industry. Centered on the theme “Where Design Connects,” the 2026 edition welcomed design professionals from **88** countries for four dynamic days of product discovery, thought-provoking programming, networking, and business development. Bringing together **450** brands—from longtime exhibitors and established industry leaders to first-time participants, returning veterans, and emerging companies—NeoCon 2026 showcased the breadth of innovation shaping the future of commercial environments, while providing the face-to-face interactions that continue to drive specification, partnerships, and market growth.

The event introduced several new initiatives that enhanced the attendee experience and created new opportunities for connection. A standout addition was ***Illuminate at NeoCon***, which debuted on the 7th floor as a dedicated lighting pavilion. The showcase surpassed expectations, ultimately welcoming more than 60 global and emerging lighting exhibitors, exceeding the initial projection of 50 brands. Also new this year, **NeoCon Collab: Half-Light**, an immersive, hospitality-driven installation by Charlie Greene Studio, activated on the 7th floor as a hub for interaction and exploration. The introduction of an early opening day on Sunday, June 7, offered attendees entry to showrooms and booths ahead of the official opening, setting the stage for deeper engagement throughout the week.

“NeoCon has always been a reflection of where the commercial design industry is headed, and this year there was a real sense of momentum that was felt across every floor,” remarks Byron Morton, Vice President and Co-Head of Leasing at The Mart. “It was evident in the conversations taking place between exhibitors and specifiers, in the investments brands are making in their presence at The Mart, and in the enthusiasm around new ideas and introductions.”

A Marketplace for Fresh Ideas and Innovative Products

Across nearly one million square feet of exhibition space, attendees encountered design-forward solutions spanning workplace, healthcare, hospitality, education, public space, materials, technology, lighting, acoustics, and furnishings. This expansive landscape—from permanent showrooms on floors 1, 3, 6, 10, 11, and 14 to the 7th Floor Exhibit Hall and its specialty areas—showcased introductions designed to address the changing needs of commercial environments and the people who use them.

Burgundy, lavender, and plum tones emerged as a dominant color story. Furniture silhouettes shifted away from rigid geometry, favoring plump curves, cocooning lounge pieces, serpentine

seating, and elongated communal tables designed to foster flexibility and ease. Fluted and pleated detailing migrated from architectural elements to table bases, upholstery, and casegoods, while velvet-like textures and layered materials brought a heightened sense of tactility to the floors. Against these softer material cues, bold color blocking and playful tubular accents injected moments of energy and individuality. Collectively, the introductions pointed toward universally-designed environments that pair residential comfort with inclusivity, while remaining purpose-built for the evolving demands of commercial settings—spaces that invite people to gather, focus, restore, and engage.

“That rich mauve. The muted, almost-exhaled palettes appearing independently across showrooms who never compared notes. That’s not a color trend. That’s the industry taking the emotional pulse of the culture. Overstimulated people need color that is an act of care and the floor knew it before anyone wrote the brief,” notes Meena Krenek, Global Sector Director, Interiors, at HKS.

“Cognitive research is reshaping design at every scale — seating that invites movement, lighting calibrated to circadian rhythms, natural materials that carry the restorative quality of the outdoors inside, acoustic and sensory elements working together rather than in isolation,” notes Janet Simpson, ASID, IIDA Associate AIA, President, CEO of TVS.

The show also reflected continued leasing activity across The Mart, with 22 long-term agreements, new permanent showrooms, significant expansions, and specialty showcases. New spaces from Formica Group, Haskell Education, Nevers Industries, Slalom, and Workrite joined substantial reinvestments from companies including Keilhauer, Division Twelve, and Calyx by Claridge, while longtime exhibitors such as Emeco, Schiavello, and Stance Healthcare reaffirmed their presence through renewed commitments. Together, these moves underscored NeoCon’s enduring value as both a launchpad for innovation and a destination for year-round business.

“The business momentum and engagement this year were unmistakable,” notes Tim Penczar, Principal at Martin Bratrud. “We saw an influx of active buyers and designers arriving with projects in hand, turning our showroom into a destination for collaborative planning rather than ‘look-and-see appointments.’”

“With 2026 officially marking Turf’s 10th anniversary, seeing record-breaking attendance in our showroom—with visits up nearly 20% from last year—alongside the incredible energy and turnout at this year’s NeoCon truly reinforces our investment in both the design community and the historic Merchandise Mart, a true cornerstone of our industry,” says Robert MacMeccan, Ph.D., WELL AP, President at Turf.

“There’s a reason the design community has returned to The Mart and NeoCon year after year,” comments Glenn Stinson, VP/Chief Operating Officer at CF Stinson. “For nearly a century, they’ve evolved alongside the people and brands shaping how we live and work, continually moving the industry forward. CF Stinson Brands is in its own period of evolution, and opening

our new third-floor showroom this year—bringing all of our brands together under one roof for the first time—felt like a fitting milestone. The Mart is a place that has never stopped evolving, and neither have we.”

“NeoCon has always been one of the most important gatherings for the commercial design industry, and this year was especially meaningful for the Formica Group,” comments Meghan Howell, North American Design & Creative Director at Formica Corporation. “Opening our new showroom in The Mart gives us a permanent home at the center of the design community and creates new opportunities to engage with architects, designers, and customers throughout the year. We are grateful for the incredible response and excited about what this new chapter means for Formica Group and the customers we serve.”

“My only regret is that I wish I had another day here,” comments Morri Chowaike, Head of Sales and Partnerships at The Shark Group. “NeoCon, more than any of the other trade shows, is worth its weight in gold because I got to see and experience so much under one roof.”

A New Chapter for Lighting at NeoCon

Anchoring the 7th Floor Exhibit Hall, the launch of *Illuminate at NeoCon* brought lighting innovation to the forefront of industry conversation. To ensure the showcase resonated with the lighting and broader design community, NeoCon tapped industry veterans Sohana Arni of line + form + light, Avi Mor of Morlights, and Clara Powell, now of Deltalight. Leveraging their deep technical expertise and market insight, NeoCon secured more than 60 global and emerging lighting brands, underscoring the industry's enthusiasm for a centralized lighting destination. Beyond product discovery, *Illuminate* highlighted the increasingly multifaceted role of lighting within the built environment. Exhibitors showcased the breadth of today's lighting landscape, spanning architectural, technical, and decorative lighting applications, while presenting high-performance LED technologies, system-based designs, advanced engineering, and customization capabilities designed to meet complex project demands. The debut offering also included five immersive educational vignettes developed by line + form + light, fourteen Spotlight Sessions presented in partnership with Lytei, a featured panel discussion examining the role of lighting in shaping spatial experience, and lighting-focused CEUs exploring specification, wellness, technology, and design strategy.

“Knowing that lighting now has a dedicated presence at NeoCon gives us the confidence to push our products and designs even further,” says Mel Saenz, Vice President of Relationships at Juniper. “We’ve been able to have meaningful conversations with people who may not regularly specify lighting or fully understand what’s possible. There’s an excitement in being able to educate, inspire curiosity, and bring more designers into the conversation. That’s why we want to be here.”

“Participating in the inaugural year of *Illuminate at NeoCon*—the epicenter of workplace design—allowed us to forge new meaningful connections with senior designers from leading international studios,” states Charles Brill, Managing Partner at RBW.

Industry Recognitions

Innovation remained at the center of the week's activity through the 36th annual [Best of NeoCon Awards](#), one of the industry's most respected benchmarks for commercial design excellence. This year's competition received **274** entries from **97** NeoCon exhibitors, with **71** products ultimately recognized across **42** categories for achievements in design, performance, innovation, sustainability, and business impact. Additional lighting classifications introduced alongside *Illuminate at NeoCon* highlighted the growing importance of lighting within commercial interiors.

The program's highest honor, **Best of Competition**, was awarded to KI for Cognetic Technology, a gravity-powered seating innovation designed to support natural movement and intuitive comfort, which was featured in the NeoCon Collab space on the 7th Floor Exhibit Hall. Cognetic Technology was invented by Aaron DeJule. Determined by attendee votes and the broader design community, the second annual **People's Choice Awards** celebrated products that resonated peer-to-peer. This year's recipients were Mohawk Group's Hero Rubber made with Nike Grind, SurfaceWorks' Newton, BIOS Lighting's SkyView Tile, Haskell Education's Pathmaker Table Series, Andreu World's Patin Chair, and HALCON Furniture's VESPER. Competition-wide, the most-awarded companies included Andreu World (7), KI (7), Davis Furniture (6), Haworth (5), HALCON Furniture (5), BIOS Lighting - SkyView (5), and Keilhauer (4).

"NeoCon 2026 at The Mart surpassed all of our expectations," comments Robert Soler, Founder & Chief Scientist, BIOS Lighting - SkyView. "We came to make connections—and what we found was a global community of forward-thinking designers, architects, and facility leaders who were hungry to learn and eager to engage. Being part of the Illuminate show was particularly special, and winning five Best of NeoCon awards made it truly unforgettable."

Tiffany Liem, Former Vice President, Design at Brookfield Properties and Best of NeoCon 2026 juror, adds: "One of the most rewarding aspects of the jury experience was learning from diverse perspectives while evaluating some of the industry's most innovative product launches. Through direct engagement with designers and manufacturers, we assessed each product beyond aesthetics, analyzing resilience, sustainability, value, and real-world performance. An inspiring experience and a great reminder of the innovation driving our industry forward."

"Activity at The Mart was substantial, and we saw a significant growth in visitors," says Paul Nemschoff, Haworth Global Strategy and Marketing Vice President. "Haworth ancillary introductions were well received and won a variety of awards."

Curated Global Programming and Hyper-Local Experiences

NeoCon's future-focused programming convened visionary thinkers, cross-disciplinary leaders, and cultural outliers for dynamic conversations and experiences exploring the future of the built environment. Both globally relevant and hyper-local, intergenerational and culturally attuned, the program forged unexpected connections and delivered cutting-edge perspectives.

This year's keynote speakers—Jessica O. Matthews, Nick Foster, and David "Shingy" Shing—embodied that multidisciplinary vision, offering insights spanning innovation, entrepreneurship, emerging technologies, human behavior, leadership, and cultural transformation. Across a robust lineup of Featured Presentations, Workshops, NeoCon Talks, Spotlight Sessions, Inside Design experiences, and CEUs, attendees explored the forces reshaping the commercial interiors, from artificial intelligence and neuroinclusive design to workplace transformation, sustainability, lighting, material innovation, and human-centered environments. Together, these conversations informed, inspired, and provided a roadmap for change.

"We often talk about the future of design as if it's about spaces, furniture, or technology. At NeoCon, I was reminded it's really about people," comments David Shing, Digital Prophet, Cultural Strategist, and NeoCon 2026 keynote speaker. "Design has the power to connect worlds of work and play, support diverse needs, and create environments where people can thrive. If the conversations I had this week are any indication, the future looks incredibly human."

Expanding beyond the presentation stage, interactive technologies enabled real-time audience participation, while dedicated networking and gathering spaces fostered meaningful face-to-face exchanges between speakers and attendees. The return of Inside Design, presented in partnership with the Design Museum of Chicago, offered attendees curated off-site tours connecting the NeoCon community with the city's creative and cultural fabric. These experiences, including a special behind-the-scenes visit to the Obama Presidential Center before its public opening, reinforced NeoCon's commitment to curating a platform where global ideas, local culture, industry leaders, and unconventional voices converge to inspire what's next.

Immersive and Expanded Activations

Throughout the week, momentum extended into a series of featured installations, activations, and special events. On the 7th Floor, NeoCon Collab: Half-Light, inspired by the "Chicagohenge" phenomenon—where the sun perfectly aligns with the city's architectural grid—provided a light-filled space for cross-sector connection. Additional highlights included Paved States x DesignLab, Material Intelligence: Destination NeoCon, and Neuroaesthetic Art: A Healing Journey to Self-Reflection. Across The Mart's 2.5-acre riverfront facade, Art on The Mart's digital projection, *Love Language* by HDR, coincided with NeoCon and illuminated the night skyline in a tapestry of color and sound.

"NeoCon always reminds me that one of the best parts of design isn't just what we create—it's who we create it with," notes Kerrie Kelly of Kerrie Kelly Studio. "I had the chance to reconnect with longtime friends, meet new faces, explore emerging ideas, and spend time with some of the brands helping shape where our industry is headed. Beyond launches and showroom visits, my favorite part of NeoCon is always the conversations. The ideas shared between meetings, the unexpected introductions, and the collective energy around what comes next."

“NeoCon was incredibly educational,” comments Ulya Fewer, Pratt School of Continuing and Professional Studies. “I learned so much during the three days that I attended the show. It was so helpful to hear directly from the people behind the products.”

NeoCon will return to The Mart for its 58th edition, taking place June 13-16, 2027, continuing its commitment to a four-day experience and lighting innovation through *Illuminate at NeoCon*.

For more showroom, exhibitor, and general NeoCon news, images, and real-time information, follow NeoCon on: [Instagram](#) (@NeoCon_Shows), [LinkedIn](#) (@NeoCon-Shows), and [Facebook](#) (@NeoConShows).

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About NeoCon: NeoCon is the world’s leading platform and most important event for the commercial interiors industry, held each year at The Mart in Chicago. Since launching in 1969, NeoCon has served as the annual gathering place for the commercial design world’s manufacturers, dealers, architects, designers, end-users, design organizations, and media. The four-day event showcases game-changing products and services from more than 400 leading and emerging companies—providing unparalleled access to the latest and most innovative solutions. A robust educational program of keynote presentations, CEU sessions, workshops, and tours offers world-class expertise and insight into today’s most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. www.neocon.com

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About The Mart: The Mart is the largest privately held commercial building in the United States: It encompasses 4.2 million gross square feet, spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day (or nearly 10 million people annually).

The Mart serves as the home to Chicago’s most creative and technologically innovative companies, including Motorola Mobility, PayPal, Avant, and MATTER, as well as Fortune 500 companies Conagra Brands, Allstate, Medline Industries, Beam Suntory, IPG, and Grainger. It is also the largest and most important center for design in North America, with more than 250 premier design showrooms offering the latest resources for both residential and commercial markets.

Media Kit:

Access the official show press kit [here](#).

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