

# NeoCon®

## NeoCon Presents “Designing Well” April 21-22

### *Six Virtual Programs Exploring Design’s Role in the Wellbeing of Mind, Body, Community and Planet*

**(Chicago, IL - March 2021)** NeoCon is pleased to offer 6 new programs this April 21-22 focusing on “Designing Well.” The two-day event is the latest installment in an ongoing virtual series aimed at connecting the NeoCon community, providing valuable learning opportunities, and sparking important conversations leading up to the live 2021 show, October 4-6 at theMART in Chicago. The April sessions follow last month's dynamic series of discussions around "Designing the Next Workplace," which delivered an engaging and thoughtful examination around the future of the office and of work itself.

Lisa Simonian, Vice President of Marketing, theMART, says, “Our April programming addresses the many ways the industry can approach “Designing Well.” Whether it is incorporating design thinking around social justice and equity and translating that into a profitable business model, addressing the urgent issue of mental health in the workplace, or building a new roadmap to achieve a healthier and more sustainable organization, the series offers actionable insight and diverse perspectives.”

The April programming details are listed below. All programs are complimentary and have been submitted for accreditation. For more details and to register, visit [www.neocon.com](http://www.neocon.com). May programming, which will focus on “Designing in a Digital World,” will be announced in the coming weeks.

#### **Mental Health in the Workplace**

**April 21, 2021, 11:00 AM—12:00 PM CDT**

The COVID-19 pandemic has put mental health in the spotlight. Employees are contending with environments and cultures that lead to stress, isolation and low engagement. This session will explore how the workplace influences mental health and will outline the range of ways organizations can enhance mental well-being, with an emphasis on strategies in the WELL Building Standard™ v2. It will provide suggestions on how employers can harness design and culture to decrease stress and support a focused, engaged and productive workforce, including key considerations for both a remote workforce and for those returning to the office.

#### **Speakers:**

**Carolyn Rickard-Brideau, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP (Provisional), Corporate President, Little Diversified Architectural Consulting**

**Lida Lewis, ASID, WELL AP, WELL Faculty, LEED AP ID+C, Fitwel Ambassador, Director of Interiors, Page, Inc.**

**In the Next Future of Work, Wellbeing, Engagement and Collaboration are Paramount**

**April 21, 2021, 1:00 PM—2:00 PM CDT**

Wellbeing, both physical and mental, will become an increasingly important component of the next future of work. The advancing body of science proving how design impacts human performance and behavior will be harder for organizations to ignore. Gone are the days when historical metrics such as cost/square foot and first cost drive decisions. This new era will center on people and focus on engagement, productivity, recruitment, and retention. As employee engagement numbers hover around 30%, organizations that move the needle through wellbeing, resiliency, and flexibility will come out ahead. Attendees can expect to learn about wellbeing, people-centered strategies that drive positive culture and result in greater innovation and enhanced productivity.

**Speakers:**

**George Athens, AIA, FITWEL Ambassador, Principal, Workplace Studio Leader, SmithGroup**

**Nancy Kohout, PE, LEED AP, Principal, Mechanical Engineering Leader, SmithGroup**

**Candice Messing, Program Manager, General Motors**

**Bring Your Whole Self to Work: Designing for Holistic Employee Wellness**

**April 21, 2021, 3:00 PM—4:00 PM CDT**

The COVID-19 crisis forced the world to undertake the largest remote working experiment in history. Endless video calls revealed people's homes, partners, kids, and pets, blurring the line between work and personal lives. Many also experienced suffering, isolation, and cultural disconnection which has had a profound impact on mental health. This session will explore the pandemic's transformational effect on wellness and the workplace. Attendees will learn about the many dimensions of holistic wellness and how to support wellness beyond the walls of the office for the hybrid workforce of the future. They will also discover design strategies to achieve employee wellness and ultimately organizational success because when people thrive, business thrives.

**Speakers:**

**Amber Wernick, IIDA, Associate, Senior Interior Designer, Clive Wilkinson Architects**

**Megan White, LEED AP+ (BD+C, ID+C, O+M), LFA, WELL AP, Fitwel Ambassador and Chief Sustainability Officer, Integral Group**

**Caroline Morris, Associate | Project Manager, Clive Wilkinson Architects**

**Empathy in Practice**

April 22, 2021, 11:00 AM—12:00 PM CDT

Design is about everything we interact with, and for interior design of the spaces we inhabit, it's about combining beauty and function to enhance how users experience space. But conscientious designers are recognizing that they have a larger role to play. Design has become vital to thinking, to process, to solutions, and to action on so many social and environmental issues we find ourselves collectively facing in the 21st Century.

This panel discussion moderated by Jennifer Busch will introduce you to a group of optimistic designers taking their skills and talents to the next level by channeling design for real purpose. These practitioners aren't waiting around for change to happen. They are using design as a tool to enable much needed change to address social challenges that threaten an equitable future for the country.

**Speakers:**

**Verda Alexander, Founder and Artist in Residence, Studio O+A**

**Maya Bird-Murphy, Founder and Executive Director, Chicago Mobile Makers**

**Kia Weatherspoon, NCIDQ, ASID, President + Design Advocate, Determined by Design**

**Moderated by Jennifer Busch, Director, Client Partnerships, Eventscape**

**Build Back Better: Redefining a New Normal for Healthy Buildings**

April 22, 2021, 1:00 PM—2:00 PM CDT

All of our design institutions (healthcare, education, workplace), were built around assumptions and conventional wisdoms that are no longer true. This session will explore how standard and outdated business practices are holding us back from innovating new

solutions needed for a post-COVID world and will examine the ways to engage in an innovation strategy to solve problems often assumed to be unsolvable. Based on insight developed working with Fortune 500 clients, Eric Corey Freed will share how organizations, companies, and municipalities can accelerate their plans for sustainability, climate, carbon, equity, or resilience, while addressing the organizational limitations of waste, inefficiency, and fear.

**Speakers:**

**Eric Corey Freed, RA, LEED Fellow, LFA, EcoDistricts AP, SVP Director of Sustainability, CannonDesign**

**The Role of Research on Climate Change, Human Health and the Built Environment**

**April 22, 2021, 3:00 PM—4:00 PM CDT**

COVID-19 has highlighted the link between environmental conditions associated with climate change – such as loss of habitat and air pollution – and infectious respiratory disease. Understanding how regions, cities and buildings can mitigate and adapt to changing climate conditions while reducing environmental impact has created innovative design, construction and policy practices. What is less clear is the exact relationship between human, organizational and community health and building-level climate change and adaptation practices.

This session will discuss research gaps and opportunities and how building and organizational level practices fit into larger-scale climate change adaptation and mitigation targets. Leaders from IWBI and ASID will discuss how design can further this important work, highlight key areas of research and engage in discussion on the broader role of design centered on climate change and human health.

**Speakers:**

**Dr. Whitney Austin Gray, Ph.D., Senior Vice President, Research, International WELL Building Institute**

**Dr. Angela Loder, Ph.D., Vice President, Research, International WELL Building Institute**

**Dr. Susan Chung, Ph.D., Vice President, Research & Knowledge, American Society of Interior Designers**

NeoCon 2021 will take place from October 4–6, 2021 at theMart in Chicago. Registration will open in June. For showroom, exhibitor, and general NeoCon news, images, and real-time information, follow NeoCon Shows on the following: [Facebook \(@NeoConShows\)](#), [Twitter \(@NeoCon\\_Shows\)](#), and [Instagram \(@NeoCon\\_Shows\)](#).

Media Contacts: Novità Communications

Alexandra Zwicky / Danielle McWilliams / Nicole Haddad / Emma Reuland  
alexandra@novitapr.com / danielle@novitapr.com / nic@novitapr.com /  
emma@novitapr.com

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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 theMART 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 three-day event showcases game-changing products and services from both leading companies and emerging talent—providing unparalleled access to the latest and most innovative solutions. A robust educational program of keynote presentations and CEU sessions offers world-class expertise and insight about today's most relevant topics as well as the future of commercial design. [www.neocon.com](http://www.neocon.com)

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**About theMART:** theMART (formerly The Merchandise Mart), located in the center of the sought-after River North submarket, is interwoven into the fabric of Chicago as an innovator in business, technology, culture, art, media and more. As the largest privately held commercial building in the United States, it is one of the world's leading commercial buildings, wholesale design centers and the preeminent international business location in Chicago. Encompassing 4.2 million gross square feet, theMART spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day and nearly 10 million people annually. Offering continuous innovation and creativity from leading manufacturers and design forward showrooms, theMART serves as the home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative companies.