

Reimagined WORKPLACES



POST-PANDEMIC WORKING TRENDS ARE SPURRING THE TRANSFORMATION OF OFFICE SPACES, RIGHT-SIZING FOR OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES AND INNOVATIVE PRECINCTS THAT ENCOURAGE CONNECTIVITY, AND SUPPORT STAFF WELL-BEING.

WITH BUSINESS OWNERS AND corporates encouraging – and sometimes mandating – a return to centralised offices after pandemic-induced remote working models, the look and feel of the office environment is playing a pivotal role in the attraction and retention of staff.

The flight to quality continues as the office workplace increasingly becomes packaged as a “destination” rather than feeling like an obligation, with the form, function, quality and quantity of space paramount to bottom lines and staff morale.

Bayleys head of insights, data and consulting, Chris Farhi says various corporates have been right-sizing their office footprints, including some subleasing transactions, but the overall sentiment

seems to endorse the centralised office as being crucial to productivity, brand reinforcement and team culture.

“In talking to our clients and observing movement within the office sector, there has not been a wholesale slashing of occupier space and key players in the market are prioritising A-grade buildings as part of their overall real estate strategy.

“For small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), there’s been notable growth in demand for turnkey office suites which gives them better quality office spaces with more flexibility on lease terms, while minimising their investment in fitout.

“The data shows that ‘work from home’ has primarily impacted lower quality or secondary office spaces,

particularly those located away from high amenity areas and landlords with those buildings are faced with a choice of either accepting lower demand and therefore more vacancies, refurbishing to a higher standard, or changing use.”

BANKING ON IT

The foundation of BNZ’s workplace strategy is flexibility, and providing space that meets the individual needs of its staff and teams says BNZ’s workplace experience manager, Kristina Martin.

“This approach was valuable during the pandemic, and moving forward will enable our staff to balance their work and personal lives and allow them to do their best work.”

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MANAGER

“Meanwhile in Auckland, we’re still in the early stages of planning and design for 80 Queen Street, with improvements being done in a way that’s least disruptive to our people, as we’ll be occupying the building during construction.

“We can’t wait to get cracking on the redevelopment and to see the BNZ logo shining bright in the Auckland skyline once again.”

With technology changing the way its teams work, BNZ is creating more dynamic and flexible workspaces within these two buildings.

“For example, we’ve added acoustic pods that allow our people to connect virtually with others while minimising disruption to those around them, and our meeting rooms are equipped with the latest technology to create an equitable experience for both in-person and virtual attendees,” explains Martin.

“Our walk-up tech help desks are always available to assist with any technical issues and these changes allow us to work in modern ways and to adapt our workspaces to fit the needs of our people.”

Martin says in recognising the crucial pillars of staff wellness and connectivity, the bank is increasing the amount of space in its workspaces dedicated to communal amenities.

“Like a grandstand for gatherings and a rooftop terrace to encourage social connection,” she says.

“We’re also creating restorative spaces, including a retreat for rest, a yoga studio and a gym to help our people look after their minds and bodies and be their best selves at work.”

OPTIMISING AUCKLAND COUNCIL’S OFFICE FOOTPRINT

Over the past five years, Auckland Council’s overarching office strategy has been one of modernisation and space optimisation.

Rod Aitken, council’s head of corporate property says some of the key decisions included the sale of several legacy office buildings that were no longer required, enabling transition to a smaller modernised portfolio of fit-for-purpose offices, aided by increased use of flexible working strategies.

“More recently, the expansion of hybrid working models since the pandemic gave us the opportunity to further optimise and consolidate our footprint by expanding the use of our flexible working strategies that were already in place prior to the pandemic.”

Council has committed to leasing around two-thirds of a new-build campus-style office building for its Albany Hub at 6-8 Munroe Lane, Albany – a development being undertaken by NZX-listed company, Asset Plus.

Situated in central Albany within walking distance to key public transport

To support this strategy and to create operational efficiencies, the bank has committed to remodelled or new high-quality CBD space in Auckland and Wellington where it will bring teams together for modern ways of working.

At 1 Whitmore Street, Wellington, on a prime central city site that was formerly a service station, is the new-build 12-storey headquarters for BNZ undertaken by Auckland developers Newcrest.

Occupying a full city block, the new building is targeting a 5 Green Star rating and will be one of the most seismically-advanced developments in New Zealand.

Martin says the building is nearly finished and floors are currently being fitted-out, with the bank expected to begin moving in this August.

“We’re really excited about the building’s unique design features, like the curved corners and large glass panels that reflect the city and harbour surroundings.”



facilities and close to motorway arterials, the project is expected to complete in the second half of 2023 with Aitken saying integrated fit-out works are currently underway, alongside the base build works programme being undertaken by Asset Plus and its lead contractor, Icon.

“Elsewhere across Tāmaki Makaurau, refurbishment and reconfiguration works are also being progressed with the Albert Street and Henderson Civic Building refurbishments completed, and the Manukau Civic Building refurbishment now underway, all supporting optimised workspace into single hubs in the CBD, west and south,” he says.

When the office optimisation programme is complete early 2024, Auckland Council’s office-based staff will be fully enabled to work flexibly from four new and fully-refurbished consolidated office hubs.

“These decisions have unlocked substantial cost savings, a significantly lower carbon footprint, and delivered a network of flexible workspace locations across Tāmaki Makaurau that work better for our customers, communities and staff.”

HARBOUR GROUNDS LEADS THE WAY

Bayleys manages Harbour Grounds, the large property portfolio in Wynyard Quarter spanning seven premium Auckland waterfront office buildings with around 7,000 tenants across circa-88,000sqm of space.

Harbour Grounds (previously known as the VVX precinct) is home to some of New Zealand’s leading national and global brands, and incorporates the flagship Air New Zealand, Datacom, Fonterra, Bayleys, Auckland Transport, Microsoft and KPMG buildings.

Bayleys senior property portfolio manager, Zahid Al-Abayechi oversees the day-to-day property management of the Harbour Grounds portfolio and says the current focus is on the regeneration of 22 Viaduct Harbour Avenue, Microsoft House, which is undergoing a comprehensive building upgrade designed by architects Warren & Mahoney.

“The refurbishment works for the ground floor Anchorpoint retail area have been largely completed and we have been showing prospective tenants through,” he says.

“The broader Anchorpoint plaza development is also nearing completion, having been delayed by recent weather events and we expect this to be completed in Q1 2023.”

With the return to the office movement gaining momentum, and corporates becoming more comfortable about real estate footprint decision-making in the post-pandemic environment, office precincts like Harbour Grounds support productivity while having the points of

difference that tangibly aid the attraction and retention of staff.

“Going above and beyond the provision of high-quality office accommodation with large floor plates, strong sustainability credentials and pivotal location, Harbour Grounds offers workplace connectivity and socialisation that the pandemic eroded,” says Al-Abayechi.

Leveraging off the open areas around its office towers, Harbour Grounds is activating space with innovative programmes and initiatives to bring people together and support the wellness side of the staff equation.

Heading up events and activations is Maia Poananga, of Bayleys’ commercial property management team who says more than ever, there is a need for spaces that promote wellbeing and spaces to relax and unwind outside of the office.

“Harbour Grounds has two outdoor plazas – The Deck, and the currently being upgraded Anchorpoint plaza – for the workplace community to enjoy,” says Poananga.

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ZAHID AL-ABAYECHI,
BAYLEYS SENIOR PROPERTY
PORTFOLIO MANAGER

“They can relax on provided beanbags or picnic blankets, and these spaces are also used for market days, giveaways, and live music performances to help foster a sense of community and fun.

“Sustainability is also a big driver for Harbour Grounds, with a worm farm in the basement of the 22 Viaduct Harbour Avenue building, five productive beehives on the rooftop of the Air New Zealand building and four bird houses positioned in the trees of the plaza, with plans to also install eight bug houses being created by a local primary school.”

With wellness a key focus in the reimagined workplace, Harbour Grounds’ monthly activations held on site include fitness and yoga classes, free massages, puppy cuddling sessions, paint classes, and guided e-bike rides and sustainability tours.

Poananga says feedback from occupiers confirms that these spaces and events help to create happier work environments and to connect people who work in the precinct.

“Harbour Grounds has a website, active social media channels and a highly-engaged e-newsletter database, and while our target audience is predominantly the occupiers within the Harbour Grounds precinct, some events or campaigns we run are open to the wider community.”

“We drive the overall strategy and events plan for Harbour Grounds occupiers, but also collaborate with occupiers on key events like the KPMG Eco-Market and the Bayleys Fishing Classic.”

