



USEFUL TIPS FOR FUTURE-PROOFING

Four Strategies for Future-Proofing a Building

In a time where technology and best practices are consistently evolving, future-proofing is a **crucial step** for any project.

Future-proofing involves anticipating future stresses, shocks, and other changes that might otherwise cause a building to become outdated. Consider the following strategies when designing for the future.

BUILD IN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE FUTURE

While we may not be able to see the future, we do know that certain types of renovations are especially costly. Building structure, system capacity, and immovable components like stairs and elevators can potentially constrain future alterations. In situations where the future is uncertain, or where transformation is likely, planning for the most intensive use-case can ultimately reduce future cost and risk to owners down the road.

Consider not only the needs on day one as well as building's structural capacity, and the configuration of core circulation and infrastructure spaces of the future to allow its transformation without significant impact to the primary building systems.

MAXIMIZE MULTI-USE

A common scenario (especially when are creating new as-yet-untested programmatic space), it may not always be clear what lies ahead. In these situations, maximizing flexibility in the initial buildout allows the space to support a range of activities and for the program to evolve as users occupy the space.

In a recent performing arts building the design supports both traditional classroom learning, and a range of performance typologies, including ones that the drama department hoped to introduce in the future. Moveable and transformable components—overhead operable partitions, telescopic seating, and sliding glass walls allow the space to transform from day-to-day.



(L) Performing Arts Building

(R) City Library and Government Center

USE THE DESIGN AS A PROTOTYPE

Especially for public projects, there can be significant pressure to “figure it all out forever”, since funds and staff may not be available if buildings need to change. And while that’s certainly true for major capital projects there can be significant value in allowing for a more iterative process, both to ensure the best possible solutions up front, and to create opportunities for adaptation as circumstances change.

FF&E procurement can be a great opportunity for this kind of prototyping. We’ve all experienced the dramatic change in workplace environments over the last few years, and it’s likely that the office will continue to evolve. Cities or companies could consider a series of smaller furniture investments to test out the best configurations for meeting rooms, or office suites. Each successive round would then be able to integrate the experiences and data gleaned from the previous effort.

PLAN

However, perhaps the most effective future-proofing strategy happens even before standard design processes. A robust planning and predesign effort can serve as insurance against complex and expensive future changes. From programming to site selection, these phases represent a fraction of total design fee, but can be instrumental in identifying the most effective strategies

We are currently completing a project assessment phase to do just that. Like many public agencies, understanding current budget may exceed the needs of campuses that had not been modernized for some time. Combining programming, facilities assessments, site planning, and community engagement, this initial phase not only served to build consensus around an initial priority scope, it also provided a “roadmap” for projects that could occur in the future.