It's safe to say COVID-19 has transformed office space — definitely for the foreseeable future, and maybe forever. Though many people are still working from home, others have returned to the office, even if only for a few days a week, and many spaces look entirely different.

Current trends in office design focus on safety and comfort but also other elements such as color, textures and sustainability that will continue into 2022 and beyond.

From design aesthetics such as acoustics and greenery to a greater focus on safe, protected workspaces, designers and companies are always looking for ways to maintain a healthy and happy working environment while improving productivity. We invite you to explore the top office design trends for 2022.
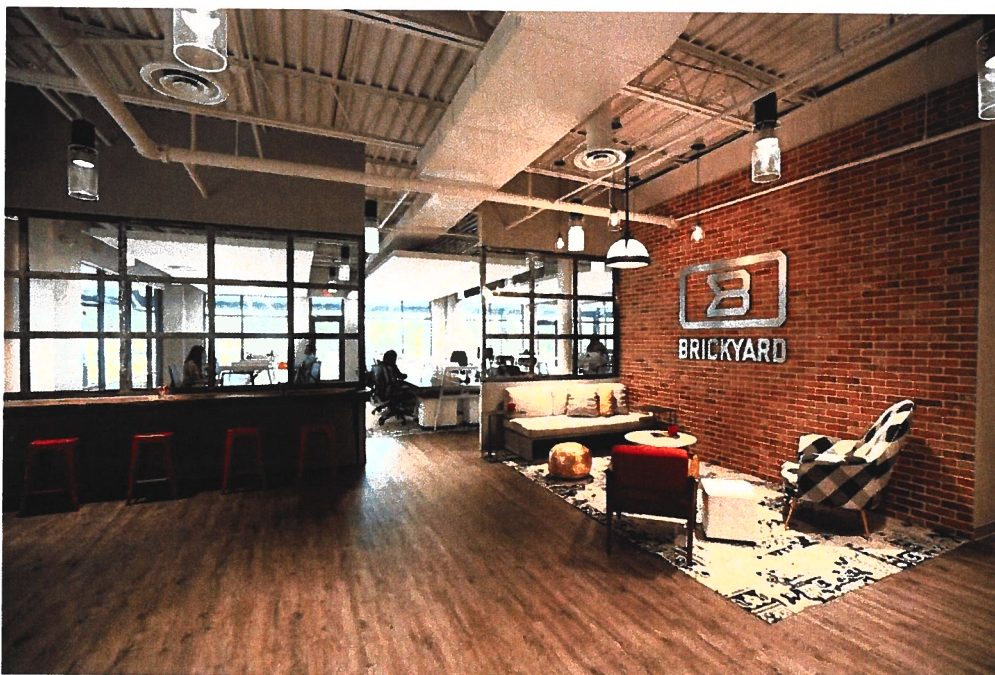
1. A Sense of 'Home' at Work

Carta | Photo and Design by GH+A Design Studio

Since many people are still currently working from the home, the idea of the design and aesthetic of the office has changed. For those employees who are in the office, the goal is to provide comfort and safety at every level and to make employees feel relaxed, as if they were at home.

To foster a safe, comfortable sense of "home" in the office, designers can incorporate residential elements such as comfortable sofas and chairs, soft lighting features in common spaces or artwork displayed throughout the office. Wood flooring can bring a sense of warmth to a space. Engineered hardwood (https://parterreflooring.com/commercial-hardwood-flooring/) and wood-look LVT are frequently used to create a home-like atmosphere in the office.

2. Flexible, Pod-Area Layouts

Over the years, many companies have embraced the open concept office design, and now flexible workspaces and "pod-style" layouts are more important than ever.

Now when employees are in the office, they are often seeking private spots or enclaves where they can safely work. These open-office environments also include smaller, private areas and "pod areas" with enough workspace, seating and outlet access so employees can make phone calls, participate in video conferences or work on research safely. The versatility of engineered hardwood or LVT make for suitable flooring options in these pod-area layouts.

These spaces must also easily accommodate employees who may be in the office just a few days while spending the rest of the week working from home.

3. A Safe, Protected Workspace

In addition to adhering to guidance from OSHA (https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3990.pdf) and the CDC (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/office-buildings.html), businesses and organizations are rethinking the interior design and layout of their office space in order to provide a safe, protected workspace. While the focus is touchpoints (such as doorknobs and elevator buttons), many companies are opting for hard surfaces and design elements that can be easily cleaned, sanitized and maintained. Social distancing signage, hand sanitizing stations and signs limiting room capacity are also important office additions that make employees feel safe.

When it comes to choosing an easy-to-clean office flooring, one option is LVT, which is known for its durability and user-friendly properties. LVT is easy to clean and sanitize (https://parterreflooring.com/how-to-clean-and-maintain-luxury-vinyl-flooring/), which is exactly the type of functional and practical solution companies are looking for in the wake of COVID-19. Another option known for its longevity and easy maintenance is engineered hardwood. It's firm surface and simplistic cleaning requirements have made it a popular solution among workspaces for decades.

4. Lighter Colors

One of the corporate office interior design trends for 2022 is using lighter colors with a mixture of grays, greens and neutrals (gray being one of the two Pantone Colors of the Year (https://www.pantone.com/color-of-the-year-2021) for 2021.) Light wood looks mixed with pops of color on flooring and walls is a popular option in an office environment that can help employees feel more cheerful and positive.

Color helps companies stay on brand, and many find ways to incorporate their logo or brand colors into the design of their space — including colored furnishings, pillows or even flooring. With LVT, you can even cut into the lobby flooring (https://parterreflooring.com/lobby-flooring/) to prominently display your brand logo. Companies are also using color in COVID-19 safety signage.

Aside from the company brand, color in flooring can add energy to a workspace. If an office uses an open floor plan, different pops of color are a great way to separate space and improve navigation. Using engineered hardwood and LVT together is one way to aesthetically define different spaces.

5. More Natural Lighting

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MakeOffices

One of the big office trends in 2022 is incorporating more natural lighting into the workspace, if it's possible. If you don't have many windows, consider these other options from HMC Architects (https://hmcarchitects.com/news/the-benefits-of-natural-light-in-office-spaces-lighting-design-for-increased-employee-satisfaction-2019-03-27/):

- Use diffused light

- Install artificial lighting that mimics natural lighting

- Plant ground-level trees and shrubs outside windows that can protect against sun glare

Also, matte, non-reflective flooring and wall finishes are popular options, and designers should consider the light reflective value (https://www.diamondvogel.com/architectural/blog/what-is-lrv) when selecting design elements. This refers to the amount of light reflected by a paint color. The darker the color, the less light it will reflect.

6. Sustainability & Green Options

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Carta | Photo and Design by GH+A Design Studio

Many modern office spaces now feature living walls (also known as green walls), which are real gardens and plant displays that are fixed to interior walls. You don't even have to go as far as a full green wall; many offices are embracing more plants in general. Some spaces don't have many windows or poor lighting, so incorporating greenery helps to add a bit of nature and bring the outdoors inside. Adding greenery can also serve as an accessory to the natural design properties of wood flooring such as engineered hardwood and LVT. Plus, plants in corporate settings are not only part of the comforting, home-like trend, but they also provide numerous health benefits.

Depending on the type of greenery you choose the perks of adding plant life may also include:

- Increased productivity by 15%

- Improved air quality and oxygen flow

- Reduced toxins in the air from carpets and other office furniture

- Reduced noise

Manasa Kovvali Rao, Sustainability Data Manager and Researcher at WAP Sustainability Consulting (http://www.wapsustainability.com/), has stressed the value of office green spaces for years. "Adding plants to an office space has multifaceted benefits. Taking a break from stressful work and tending to plants can have a calming effect on the mind. It also brings workers closer to understanding seasonal variations and their effects on vegetation. This helps promote the sharing of knowledge and experiences which would otherwise not be possible. This kind of understanding and conversation also helps develop an instinct to choose healthy both in terms of living and eating, thus creating an overall healthy lifestyle."

Rao also stresses the importance of choosing the right plants in an office space, as specific plants enhance the benefits substantially. She recommends:

- Peace lily

- Pothos

- Snake plant

- Spider plant

- Philodendron

- English ivy

- Areca palm or any other palm

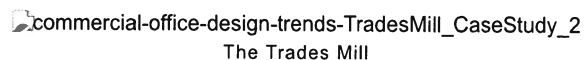- Holy basil or any plant from the sage family

7. Wallcoverings

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MakeOffices

Many office designs are incorporating wallcoverings (https://parterreflooring.com/commercial-wallcovering/) into their spaces, which can be used to showcase history and culture. Any pattern, texture or color on a wall — a wood design, wallpaper, absorption paneling among other options and more — can add warmth and dimension to any space. Plus, these hard surfaces can be more easily cleaned and maintained.

"Wallcoverings are an incredible design tool for transforming plain offices into places where employees and visitors feel welcome and comfortable," said Mike Walsh, CEO of DGI Communications. "A floor-to-ceiling accent wall can help a stuffy boardroom evolve into a warm meeting space, while a strategically placed backdrop can bring in some much-needed allure. However they are installed, wallcoverings (https://www.dgicommunications.com/invisuals/wall-coverings/) are a beautiful, worthwhile investment."

Another great, easy option for accent walls? LVT. The Avara collection (https://parterreflooring.com/store/avara.html) provides a variety of 23 plank design options for an accent wall or other wall surface. The designs mimic stone, wood and other natural materials, and are neutral enough to work with any color palette. They are also Class A fire rated for wall applications and can be easily cleaned and sanitized. Aside from safety and design benefits, unique wallcoverings also:

- Enhance mood and enthusiasm

- Provide a creative environment to work in

- Add personality to the space

8. Mixing Old & New

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The Trades Mill

Current office designs are pairing old and new design elements together — an inspiring fusion of the past and the present. Designers are opting for retro and geometric patterns, such as chevron and herringbone designs. You can also feature geometric patterns in larger areas, such as flooring and walls; these design patterns can display everything from bright pops of color to muted tones of gray and ivory. Mixing old and new even applies to flooring — pairing engineered hardwood with LVT can neutralize the colors in a space or even complement the surrounding design elements.

Other trendy "old and new" design elements include brass, industrial retro metals and stone looks. You can also mix different metal finishes (https://www.lumens.com/how-tos-and-advice/how-to-mix-metals-in-interior-design.html) for an alternative design spin.

"Pairing old and new elements together has been a growing trend in office design. By mixing old with new, the old design component gives off a warm feeling to balance out the new and modern pieces that are added into the space," said Parterre Designer Roche FitzGerald.

"Whether it's an area rug with a geometric pattern on top of an original concrete floor or an antique desk with a brightly colored chair, coupling old and new can be done in so many ways."

9. Texture

Current trends in office design show an increase in pairing varying textures together, even in furnishings like wood, iron or stone. Combining different abstract elements and textures that can be easily swapped in and out creates a more unique space and gives you diverse design options.

Fun, unique and eye-catching textiles, fixtures or flooring can really bring a space to life and brighten up the sometimes-dull office environment. Engineered hardwood and LVT flooring come in a wide array of species that can align with the changing trends in texture and design.

10. Acoustics

Products and fixtures that serve dual purposes for office spaces are also popular. Many products on the market today are designed for sound reduction (https://www.buzzi.space/acoustic-solutions/types/acoustic-essentials), but still complement the overall design theme. You can find textures, furnishings, wallcoverings and even lighting products designed with acoustics in mind.

"The main concern with acoustic solutions or acoustic products (noise reducing products) is the quality of their make-up – how they are built, types of materials, geometry, etc." said Hernan Saurit, Architecture – Design + Acoustics Solutions Regional Manager of Buzzi.space (https://www.buzzi.space/).

Sound-reduction efforts, however, start from the ground up. While carpet is a good sound absorption solution, it can hold moisture, dirt, bacteria, mildew and mold.

Good quality flooring is quieter to walk on and aids in muffling the environmental noise that can occur in offices. For example, 5mm Loose Lay LVT (https://parterreflooring.com/store/loose-lay.html) has natural sound-reducing qualities because of its overall thickness; it also has multiple designs to choose from. Loose Lay is simple to install and maintain with a specialized backing that provides traction to stay in place freely after installation.

If you're getting ready to design (or redesign) an office space, explore our latest Look Book (https://parterreflooring.com/look-book-luxury-vinyl-flooring/) for inspiration. A good design starts with flooring, and Parterre's palette of engineered hardwood and LVT designs will help you create a unique interior space.

If you have any questions about Parterre's flooring or wall products or how we can help with your office design, please don't hesitate to contact us (https://parterreflooring.com/contact-us/).