

# FROM DESK TO DISTRICT

THE CHANGING OF REAL ESTATE  
FOR COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION



**STRATFORD  
CROSS**

 **lendlease**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

**WORKTECH** ACADEMY

# COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION



“As organisations rethink, reimagine and relocate their workplace, there is now an unprecedented opportunity to raise the bar in terms of collaborative innovation.”

**Jeremy Myerson, Professor Emeritus  
Royal College of Art, Director of WORKTECH ACADEMY**



"Collaborative innovation is relying more on the experiences and relationships that can be made at a neighbourhood scale, than simply the space a business rents alone."

**Rachel Edwards  
Lendlease**





# CONTENTS

- Executive Summary**
- Introduction**
- Innovation Lab**
- Shared Hub**
- Innovation District**
- Desk to District**
- Postscript: Stratford Cross**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Today, the pressure on organisations to innovate in a rapidly changing world has never been greater. New social, economic, environmental, and technological trends have compelled companies to consider new ways – and find new places – to develop and test new ideas.**

Collaborative or open innovation, briefly curbed by the global pandemic, has made a strong comeback as organisations increasingly recognise they must collaborate to compete.

This shift is taking place against a background of a major readjustment in how office real estate is used. Many companies are increasing efforts to repurpose, redesign and relocate workplaces to get employees back to the office for competitive advantage – whether that be to strengthen internal culture or build external networks.

This ‘Desk to District’ report looks at the changing real estate for collaborative innovation, building on a study published by Lendlease with WORKTECH Academy in 2019, which identified three key models for innovation space at different scales. Five years on, these three real-estate models remain relevant but have significantly evolved.

## The Innovation Lab

A contained and dedicated internal facility for employees, operating at an organisational scale, it has enjoyed a renaissance since the pandemic as part of a move to stimulate employees to return to the office. Collaborative settings and maker spaces are contributing to workplace effectiveness and experience.

## The Shared Hub

A mutual, invitation-only external innovation space for key players from within and outside the organisation, it has become less about the corporate environment inviting external experts in and more about a move into privileged neutral territory to bring together a range of commercial, academic and public sector organisations to collaborate on common ground.

## The Innovation District

A permeable innovation district that enables an organisation to develop and maximise partnerships as part of a broad ecosystem of academics, collaborators, specialists and start-ups. This is a platform for accelerated collaborative innovation that can address long-term challenges in a more sustainable and equitable way. For employees, innovation districts give access to a wide range of public, cultural, educational and leisure facilities.

How organisations utilise these models to support their business strategy is still evolving, but what is evident are the unprecedented opportunities arising for every scale to allow the testing of ideas, to build internal and external communities, and to devise innovation strategies that put companies ahead. Critically, collaborative innovation demands more than just space – the curation and

networking elements of these knowledge-intensive ecosystems are as important as physical proximity. The report concludes with an in-depth look at Lendlease’s Stratford Cross development, which sits within the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London and is part of SHIFT London, a catalyst for innovators. Stratford Cross is the embodiment of the Innovation District in action.

# MEGATRENDS IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF REAL ESTATE



“To stay competitive through the complex challenges of today our customers increasingly operate in cross-disciplinary partnerships, with intentional proximity.

But co-location isn't enough – our role as ‘place-partners’ is to design for business ecosystems to thrive, and local economies to grow. How permeable a place is and how networks are curated is invaluable to convene people, ideas and expertise.”

**Rachel Edwards**

**Workplace Futures Lead, Development | Lendlease**

# THE LANDSCAPE FOR COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION

**In today's increasingly competitive and volatile business climate, the ability to innovate at speed and at scale is widely recognised as a cornerstone of organisational success.**

To meet this challenge, forward thinking companies from large corporates to smaller, agile organisations are now rethinking where and how they conduct their innovation activities. They are acutely aware of the limitations of closed innovation models that are conventionally reliant on internal R&D capabilities with limited capacity and expertise, and they're looking for alternative ways, and often new places, to combine their reach and resources with the ideas and agility of start-ups and specialists.

This is the powerful new landscape for collaborative innovation in which innovation is not locked behind the closed doors of the corporation; instead, multiple players both inside, and importantly, outside an organisation, contribute towards the development of new products, services, and business solutions, through a complex pattern of interactions in an open and collaborative environment. This is why the process itself is sometimes called open innovation.

The practice of collaborative innovation has been around for some time, but it is evolving faster than ever before alongside major global shifts. In recognition of this evolution, this report builds on previous research conducted by Lendlease and WORKTECH Academy, published in 2019. Our original 'Desk to District' report highlighted the challenges organisations faced in fostering innovation and identified three different settings where collaborative innovation thrives at three different scales: the Innovation Lab (organisation level, the Shared Hub (network level), and Innovation District (ecosystem or district level).

Five years on, and a global pandemic later, the landscape of collaborative innovation has changed. Our three innovation space typologies remain both visible and relevant, but each has adapted in interesting ways amid new conditions.

The pandemic initially disrupted large-scale innovation efforts by businesses as attention diverted to short-term crisis management. Creativity was curbed as organisations prioritised staying afloat and concentrated on the business basics. Enabled by digital technology, the rapid rise of remote work altered communication and collaboration dynamics. This further hindered innovation activities dependent on high-value interpersonal activity, which proved difficult to replicate online.





“As the global economy has pulled away from the debilitating impact of the pandemic, innovation has returned to the top of the business agenda.”

A study by architect Carlo Ratti and his research team at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) demonstrates some of the the impact of virtual communication on innovation.

Analysing the email exchange network of 2,834 faculty and post-doctorates at MIT before and after the Institute’s Covid-19 lockdown, revealed a notable decline in ‘weak ties’—the looser relationships outside of our core network of friends, family, and colleagues—with purely digital communication. These weak ties are crucial bridges between social groups that encourage innovation and creativity according to sociologist and Stanford University professor, Mark Granovetter.

As the global economy has pulled away from the debilitating impact of the pandemic, innovation has returned to the top of the business agenda. Despite the intensely challenging climate, or perhaps because of it, governments and large organisations are both prioritising and investing in policies and environments to support innovation-led economic growth. As part of this recovery, the focus is set on innovation at different scales, often seizing opportunities to support ‘building back better’ in a way that is more sustainable and socially equitable.

This means a growing emphasis on addressing social challenges and creating social purpose alongside more conventional commercial innovation.

# COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION IN A HYBRID WORLD

**Innovation activity is taking place against a backdrop of widespread adoption of hybrid working patterns. One of the chief reasons that large organisations are intensifying efforts to bring their employees back into the workplace is to enhance collaboration and innovation.**

As a result, companies are redesigning, repurposing and relocating their workplaces to better facilitate critical in-person activities, attract and retain talent, find new partners and to widen their knowledge base. In this context, the different scales of innovation spaces, previously identified in the 2019 report, are increasingly relevant for today's workforce though they are adapting to the changing times.

Organisations are investing in spaces at every scale from the Innovation Lab – a contained and dedicated internal facility for employees, operating at an organisational scale – to the Shared Hub, a mutual, invitation-only external innovation space for key players within and outside the organisation, and the Innovation District, which is a permeable district-wide ecosystem for innovation where the company is situated to maximise partnerships with a broad network of academic researchers, collaborators, specialists and start-ups.

As many organisations renegotiate their office leases and assess the potential for relocation, moving to an innovation district is becoming an increasingly attractive option that offers a unique platform to accelerate opportunities for organisations to engage in the process of collaborative innovation. There is today a rapid growth of innovation districts in major cities across the world.

“You see 21st-century industries clustering... because they are following the talent. Don't think of this as an industrial district — it's not an office park. It's really a neighbourhood in which a culture has emerged around this new kind of production and lifestyle.”

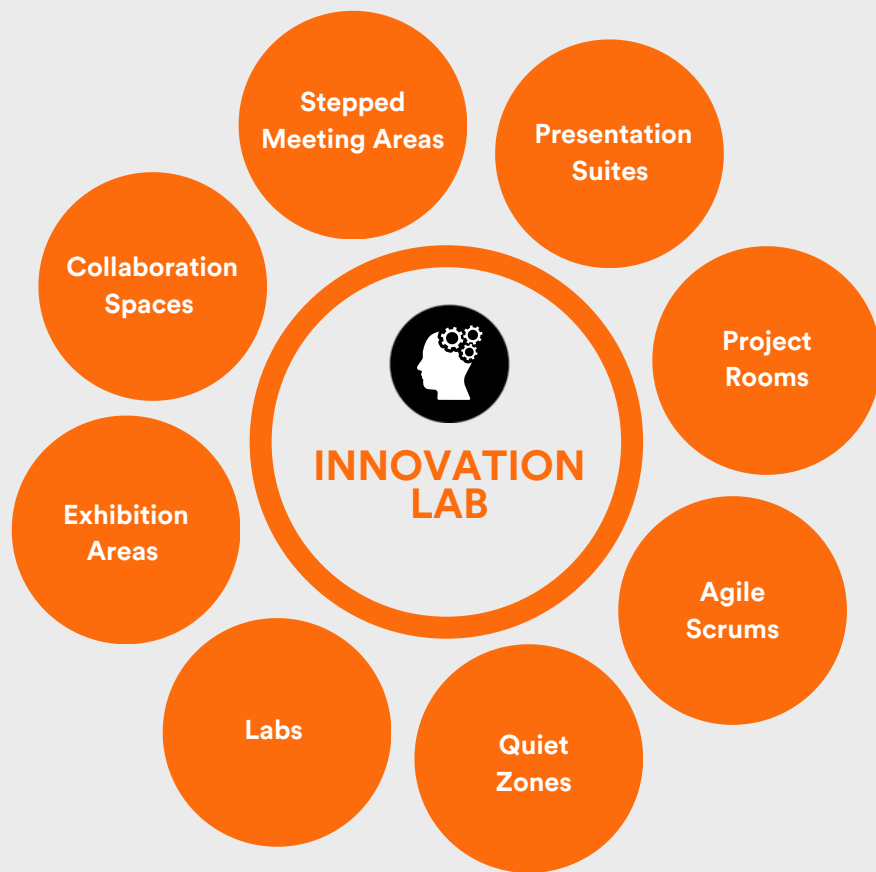
**Dennis Frenchman, Professor of Urban Design and Planning at MIT**

Increased investments in R&D and upskilling will continue to boost the growth of innovation ecosystems attracting knowledge-intensive companies, start-ups, and universities into one concentrated precinct.

As Dennis Frenchman, Professor of Urban Design and Planning at MIT explains, ‘You see 21st-century industries clustering there, because they are following the talent. You see social spaces: a huge resurgence in restaurants, markets, and cafés. And you see laboratories, start-up accelerators, and shared workspace. Don't think of this as an industrial district — it's not an office park. It's really a neighbourhood in which a culture has emerged around this new kind of production and lifestyle. People are globally connected and producing very high-value products.’

According to Steven Johnson, writer, broadcaster and author of *Where Good Ideas Come From*, ‘If you look at history, innovation doesn't come just from giving people incentives; it comes from creating environments where their ideas can connect...’





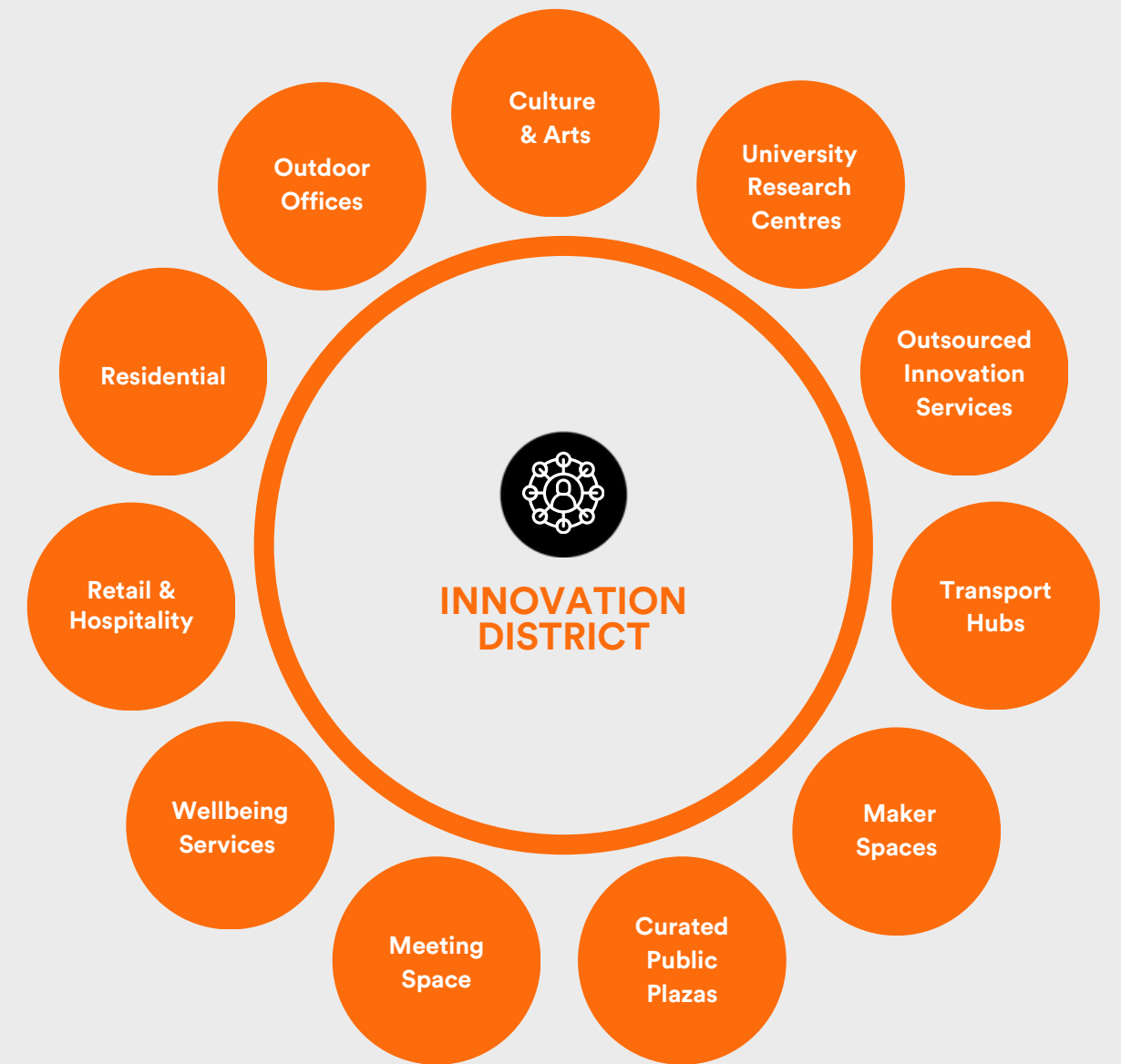
**ORGANISATIONAL SCALE**

A contained, dedicated internal company facility for employees to innovate



**NETWORK SCALE**

Brings key collaborators inside and outside the organisation together to share ideas on dynamic neutral ground



**ECOSYSTEM SCALE**

A permeable, district-wide ecosystem for innovation involving multiple partners and contributors



# INNOVATION LAB

Status: Private

## WHAT IS IT?

The Innovation Lab provides a dedicated internal space specifically designed to enhance innovation within the walls of the organisation. It is contained, secure, and controlled by the company. These spaces are often used as a foundational strategy for collaborative innovation; organisations can invite external partners, customers, and suppliers to co-create new developments but ultimately the process is entirely in the hands of the organisation, making it easier hold onto intellectual property.

## WHAT'S CHANGED?

This model has enjoyed a rapid renaissance since the pandemic as large employers have sought to make innovation activities a core reason for employees to return to in-person office working. Many organisations have redesigned their offices to create an innovation lab with specialist facilities that will become an attractive destination for a more flexible workforce. Space once reserved for traditional open plan desking has been reallocated to facilitate collaboration and innovation-driven activities, a strategy complemented by a wider range of social amenities. Many organisations are also experimenting with flexible space, that is changeable throughout the day to accommodate for the changing needs of different people using it. A global workplace study conducted by architects Gensler in 2023 revealed that spaces for creative group work such as innovation hubs and maker spaces have the greatest impact on workplace effectiveness and experience.

## WHO'S DOING IT?

The Innovation Lab has become the default in-company setting for collaborative innovation after the pandemic. Organisations around the world are building internal spaces and laboratories to harness co-created innovative ideas. Implementation of innovation labs varies from small-scale dedicated workspaces to larger purpose-built facilities.

Dyson's global headquarters in Singapore, for example, houses 18 state-of-the-art research laboratories on its 110,000 sq ft campus with the aim of supercharging Dyson's ambition to enter entirely new fields of research and innovation. Opened in 2022, it spectacularly converts Singapore's historic St James Power Station into an innovation hub; its settings are consistent with founder Sir James Dyson's goals of constant learning and experimentation based on face-to-face collaboration.

In Chicago, sweet-packaged food company Ferrero Group opened a 45,000 sq ft innovation hub in 2023, bringing together 150 employees within R&D teams from different brands in the Ferrero portfolio in the U.S. to collaborate and innovate in one space located in the famous Marshall Field and Company Building in Chicago. From food to pharmaceuticals and financial services, a range of other companies have also opened innovation labs, including AXA, Pfizer, Amazon with a fintech lab, and Japanese soy sauce company Kikkoman with a new R&D centre.

## WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

"Innovation is not a solitary endeavour; it requires collaboration and diverse perspectives...I hope the Dyson Innovation Studio will inspire more of Singapore's brightest young minds to take up the challenge to solve problems...."

**Sir James Dyson**  
Founder and Chief Engineer, Dyson

"Our work never finishes; our aim is to always think bigger, be better and solve faster."

**Richard Erwin**  
General Manager, Roche Products

## LOOK OUT FOR >

Presentation Suites  
Stepped Meeting Areas  
Collaboration Spaces  
Exhibition Areas

Project Rooms  
Agile Scrums  
Quiet Zones  
Labs



# SHARED HUB

Status: Privileged

## WHAT IS IT?

The Shared Hub was introduced as a means for large organisations to cosy up to nimble start-ups before corporate coworking spaces were the norm. Shared Hubs were typically set up and hosted by the corporate organisation – potential collaborators and partners were then invited into the space to share ideas and expertise. Large banks such as Barclays and the Royal Bank of Scotland were among the first to adopt this model, which was advanced as more permeable and less contained than the Innovation Lab model, and more conducive to open innovation methods.

## WHAT'S CHANGED?

Today, the Shared Hub is no longer viewed as a predominantly corporate-led facility. It is more commonly hosted on neutral territory provided either by an academic or public sector partner, or a dedicated coworking host. Large organisations, start-ups, and specialist partners thus collaborate on common ground, co-creating in a new type of incubator or ideation space in which power imbalances are addressed and R&D funding is sometimes available. This evolution of the Shared Hub allows for more mutual knowledge-sharing between collaborators, but still within a controlled environment.

## WHO'S DOING IT?

Business incubator spaces focused on specific industry sectors are a popular feature of the Shared Hub. Plus X, located in London and Brighton, is an innovation hub that provides coworking space, communal workshops, incubators for growth start-ups and space for corporates within one integrated environment. Each Plus X facility has close links with the local community and includes the latest equipment and tools for innovation including a wet lab for experiments, a spray booth with a high-tech filtration system, and digital labs for 3D printing and laser cutting. Plexal at Here East in the Shift Innovation District located in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park at Stratford, London is another example of incubator space, offering support services and networking to businesses.

Universities are also playing host to the Shared Hub. For example Melbourne Connect 3,600sqm Superfloor at The University of Melbourne, is at the heart of an innovation community to connect talent with academia and businesses. It is accessible to all co-located partners and supported by a dedicated team of curators and connectors who run year-round activations and events, including pitches, demo days, hackathons, launches, exhibitions, skills development, social and cultural events. It is a place that brings the community together.

European cities are paving the way for shared innovation hubs. In the German city of Heilbronn, Innovation Park Artificial Intelligence (IPAI) is a campus opened in 2023 that houses a mixture of businesses, laboratories and a start-up innovation centre in a circular plan designed by architects MVRDV. The scheme is funded by the municipality of Heilbronn and the Dieter Schwarz Foundation.

The UK Government announced the launch of new innovation hubs in eight UK regions in October 2023, which will provide R&D grant funding for local businesses. Run by Innovate UK, these innovation hubs will focus on sectors including healthcare and net zero initiatives and will provide specialised innovation resources, and opportunities for founders to connect, share ideas, and participate in joint ventures.

## WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

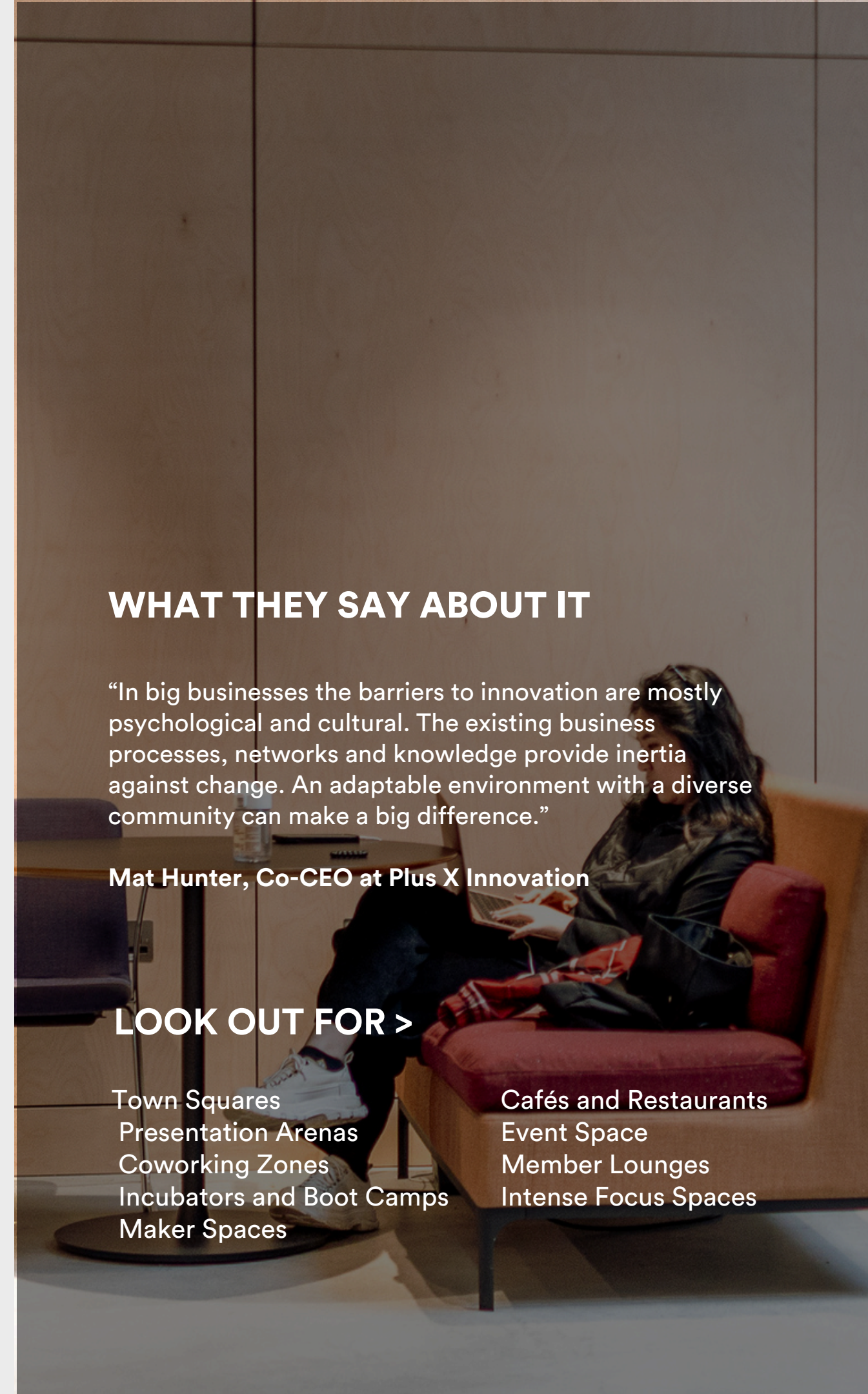
“In big businesses the barriers to innovation are mostly psychological and cultural. The existing business processes, networks and knowledge provide inertia against change. An adaptable environment with a diverse community can make a big difference.”

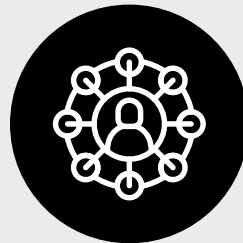
Mat Hunter, Co-CEO at Plus X Innovation

## LOOK OUT FOR >

Town Squares  
Presentation Arenas  
Coworking Zones  
Incubators and Boot Camps  
Maker Spaces

Cafés and Restaurants  
Event Space  
Member Lounges  
Intense Focus Spaces





# INNOVATION DISTRICT

Status: Privileged

## WHAT IS IT?

The Innovation District is the most permeable of all three models, stretching the collaborative innovation network from the private office into public space at district scale. For the 21st century knowledge economy, this model situates the corporate organisation in a diverse community of innovators, researchers, and networks often located within a concentrated cluster of mixed-use amenities and services. Universities will often take space within the Innovation District to be part of the ecosystem and connections in this knowledge marketplace are made via collaborative facilities helping to activate the district.

## WHAT'S CHANGED?

Before the pandemic temporarily shut down its flow of ideas exchange, the Innovation District was typically focused on specific themes and industries, from life sciences to learning. Now, corporates, start-ups, academia, and government collectively aim to use the concept to 'build back better', more sustainably and equitably. Permeable innovation districts give employees direct access to external public and cultural amenities, university research centres, entrepreneurs, start-ups, and a mix of restaurants, cafes, retail, and transport links, which support a vibrant working environment. Innovation Districts are often compact, connected, and walkable, attributes a study by the University of Texas found to be attractive to knowledge workers and small firms for building affinity, sharing resources, acquiring talent, and networking.

## WHO'S DOING IT?

The MIND Milan Innovation District is set to be a major new precinct for science, knowledge, technology, and innovation for Future of Health and Cities of the Future. The precinct, developed by Lendlease, is anchored by a hospital, research institute, university, and features office, residential, retail and public space. Innovation ecosystem models form the foundations of this Innovation District: Federated Innovation is a public-private collaboration model to accelerate the translation of ideas into new products and services; and Fondazione Triulza is an innovation network for the third sector.

While the Innovation District is often curated and managed by real estate developers, organisations can play a key role in attracting collaborators. For example, Ford is creating a new innovation district in Detroit. Michigan Central Development will bring world-class talent, start-ups, entrepreneurs, and partners to join Ford in designing mobility solutions. The ground floor of Ford's workplace connects the district, serving as a boulevard for the community.

Innovation districts evolve with new partnerships. Within Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, Lendlease's Stratford Cross development (formerly IQL – International Quarter London) continues to evolve within a vibrant ecosystem of corporates, universities, and start-ups. Part of SHIFT London, Stratford Cross brings together business, academia, government, and local communities to address major climate, health, and mobility challenges facing our cities.

SHIFT focuses on inclusive innovation, partnering with Here East, Plexal, University College London, Loughborough University, the University of the Arts, and London College of Fashion. Stratford Cross is thus located at the heart of this new type of Innovation District, with strong social and sustainability goals, fostering collaborative innovation by inviting innovators to form partnerships, trial ideas, be creative, and scale solutions.

## WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT IT

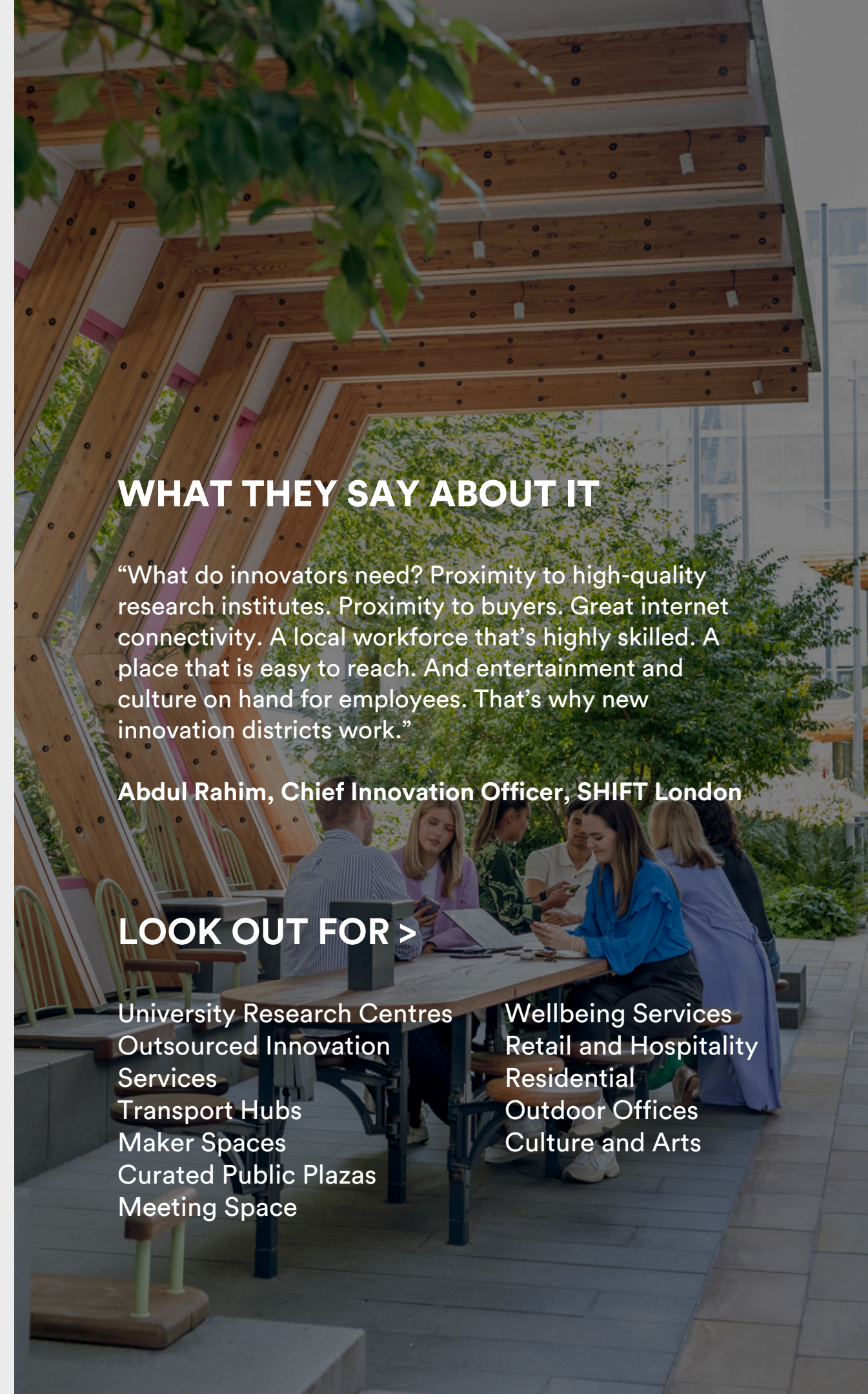
"What do innovators need? Proximity to high-quality research institutes. Proximity to buyers. Great internet connectivity. A local workforce that's highly skilled. A place that is easy to reach. And entertainment and culture on hand for employees. That's why new innovation districts work."

Abdul Rahim, Chief Innovation Officer, SHIFT London

## LOOK OUT FOR >

University Research Centres  
Outsourced Innovation Services  
Transport Hubs  
Maker Spaces  
Curated Public Plazas  
Meeting Space

Wellbeing Services  
Retail and Hospitality  
Residential  
Outdoor Offices  
Culture and Arts



# MAKING COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION HAPPEN

**As organisations rethink, reimagine and relocate their workplace, there is now an unprecedented opportunity to raise the bar in terms of collaboration innovation.**

Organisational leaders are therefore asking questions. What new connections can be made? Are there academic researchers, subject experts or smart start-ups in the neighbourhood? Will our employees have access to new ideas, to culture and creative inspiration? What about digital connectivity? Will the space and location enable us to build collaborative networks?

Looking at the challenge through the lens of the three models described in this report allows organisations to devise an innovation strategy appropriate for their needs.



# INNOVATION LAB

## STAGE 1:

The first typology, the contained Innovation Lab, is a core building block on terra firma: it guarantees security of information and full ownership of IP, it targets improving internal innovation, and the Lab can often be set up by reconfiguring existing resources. Learning from failure, which is an integral part of the innovation process, can also be more easily contained and not exposed to the wider world. As Sir James Dyson says: “Success teaches you nothing. Failures teach you everything. Making mistakes is the most important thing you can do.”

However, there is a risk that the flow of new ideas will be limited. For organisations contemplating setting up an Innovation Lab, it is important to identify which groups or functions should make use of its facilities, and on what basis. Would it help to hold leadership meetings in the Lab to encourage new thinking? Is there the right mix of digital and analogue tools to support on ideation and experimentation? Open, flexible floorplates that create the settings for innovation activities are important too. Critically, the Innovation Lab should look different and operate in a different way from standard workspaces, making it a more compelling proposition for the return to the office in the hybrid eras.

The key benefits of this contained innovation model is that single organisations can test new ideas in fast sprints, identify key agents within the company and build an internal community around innovation. The Innovation Lab is best for companies seeking to turn around a culture, signal the importance of innovation within the organisation, and conduct quick, intense bursts of innovation, aspiring to the motto ‘fail fast to succeed sooner’.

# SHARED HUB

## STAGE 2:

The second model, the more permeable Shared Hub, takes companies out of their comfort zone but not too far. It introduces start-ups and specialists, entrepreneurs and disruptors, clients and customers within a neutral space which may be managed by an external academic, governmental or coworking partner. This requires considerable planning and is less ad hoc. It is also inherently less stable and secure, although that aspect can be managed. Some IP will be shared rather than owned. However, the flow of ideas will be faster and stronger, and opportunities to innovate should be enhanced.

For businesses contemplating this move, it is important to be in the right place to be able to identify those agile external partners and find an environment in which they can flourish. Curation, hospitality and events, including immersive exhibitions, will be important to create a real sense of community. The Shared Hub should be sited in a building or on a campus that is smart and adaptive, with high-tech collaboration tools, maker spaces, investor pitch spaces and other accelerants for innovation.

This shared model of innovation allows companies to be exposed to external catalysts and concepts and reality-check ideas before committing to them, thus retaining some measure of control. It promotes a more spontaneous type of innovation where serendipitous encounters occur between people who would not likely meet otherwise and share unique perspectives which blossom into innovative solutions.

# INNOVATION DISTRICT

## STAGE 3:

Full participation in the wider Innovation District is the most permeable and may be a less secure model for the corporate organisation, with caveats. There will be many IP-sharing arrangements. However, the potential for collaborative innovation is greatest, the options for engagement are diverse and many, and there is unequalled focus on a social agenda around more equitable and inclusive innovation.

Mixed-use innovation districts use the city itself as a landscape for engagement with universities, cultural institutions, retail stores, and wellness services all part of a dynamic mix. New office occupiers should look at the academic expertise, entrepreneurial clusters, and availability of public and meeting space in the vicinity. The models are not mutually exclusive and the intersection of all three is potentially the most powerful – i.e. an Innovation Lab (model 1), with access to Shared Hubs (model 2), located within an Innovation District (model 3).

### Talent:

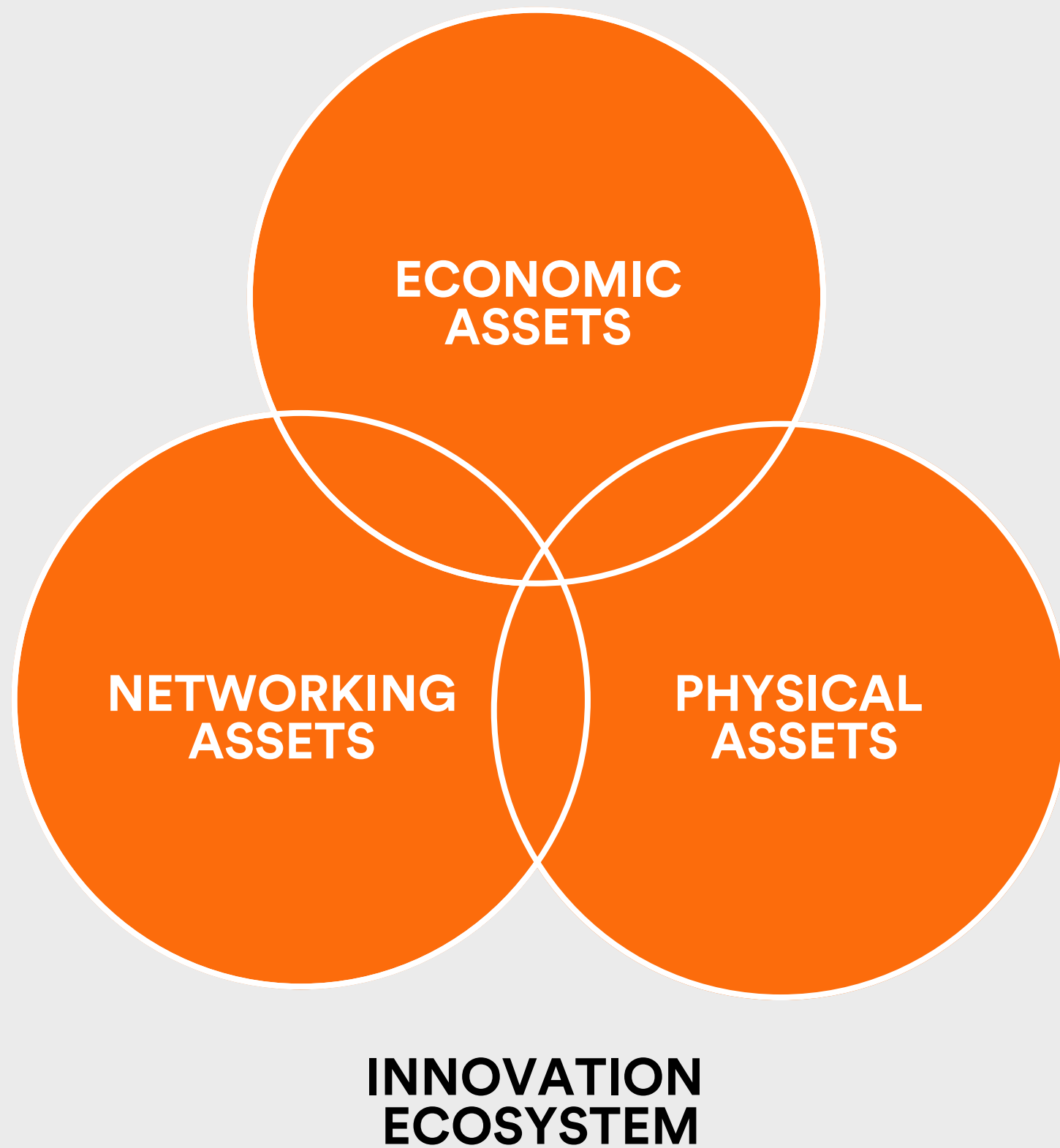
For companies engaging with this model, there is access to a breadth of diverse and unexpected talent across a range of expertise, including access to new academic research, with such foresight enabling better future-mapping of innovation. Evidence suggests that the complex networks of the Innovation District work particularly well with more speculative, longer-range innovation activities – especially around emerging technologies. There is also an impact on the talent agenda as premium new recruits looking to start their career in vibrant workplaces will increasingly look to the mix and scale of innovation districts and the ‘sense of place’ they create.

### Curation:

Placemaking is critical to the Innovation District networking concept, according to Geoff Mulgan, Professor of Collective Intelligence, Public Policy and Social Innovation at University College London, who has closely studied innovation districts. Mulgan observes that this aspect is essential to “ensure sharing of data, insight, ideas, creativity between large numbers of people, firms, universities and other institutions, using both online and offline links, formal and informal connections.”

SHIFT London’s Chief Innovation Officer Abdul Rahim reinforces this point. “The partners in SHIFT, Stratford London may all have different agendas but collectively the district is developing at a faster rate than Bloomsbury did 100 years ago. You’ve got academics, creatives and corporates all saying – let’s do things!”

Physical proximity between collaborators is still a key factor in making successful collaborative innovation happen, despite the rise in hybrid and remote working. Some aspects of the city never change even with the reinvention of central business districts as mixed-use hubs and a ‘flight to quality’ to new developments which can offer more amenities, smarter connectivity and better sustainability credentials. The Innovation District combines traditional face-to-face interactions with these new trends, creating an entire collaborative ecosystem in which universities, start-ups, large corporates, entrepreneurs, consultants and customers can all play their part.



“All innovation districts contain economic, physical, and networking assets. When these three assets combine with a supportive, risktaking culture they create an innovation ecosystem—a synergistic relationship between people, firms and place (the physical geography of the district) that facilitates idea generation and accelerates commercialization.”

**The Brookings Institute:  
‘The Rise of Innovation Districts’,  
authored by Julie Wagner and Bruce Katz**

STRATFORD  
CROSS

ABBA ARENA

WESTFIELD  
STRATFORD CITY

EAST BANK

LONDON  
STADIUM

STRATFORD

LONDON  
AQUATICS CENTRE

VICTORIA PARK

STRATFORD INTL.

COPPER BOX ARENA

QUEEN ELIZABETH  
OLYMPIC PARK

HERE EAST  
INNOVATION CAMPUS

# STRATFORD: AN INNOVATION DISTRICT IN ACTION

Successful Innovation Districts will evolve over time. However, at their heart are curated environments, designed to bring together business, education and lifestyle. Here we examine two examples of Innovation Districts in action: Stratford Cross, London and MIND, Milan.

“The innovation economy is transforming the world of work and the physical manifestation of workspaces rapidly. Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford represents the blend of different innovation ecosystems from the macro to the micro. This is no longer simply a question of real estate – this is a much bigger model of practice that unites governance, leadership, collaboration and design with place to help unlock real value.”

Emma Frost, Chair of UK  
Innovation Districts Group



# A PHYSICAL PLATFORM DESIGNED TO FOSTER CONNECTION

As part of Stratford, the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in East London, is a prime example of where education, lifestyle, culture, and business meet in a powerful innovation ecosystem.

Shared workspaces, open education campuses, and outdoor offices are all examples of this ecosystem landscape.

The physical topography of Stratford is the connective tissue (physical assets), supported by many layers of networking curation, that trigger connection and collaboration between players in the Innovation District ecosystem (network assets).

Examples include:

- **The SHIFT innovation district** operating across Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park as a catalyst for innovators
- **East Bank** – the new director of Stratford's culture and education centre will actively programme connection between the institutions and find reasons for collaboration across initiatives ranging from innovation projects to open community events
- **Stratford Cross** – the Explore Stratford Cross app connects businesses located here as well as visitors, to activities and events that encourage engagement
- **Plexal's incubator** and accelerator at **Here East**, a shared hub within the Innovation District, offers bespoke networking and accelerator programs for innovation



SHIFT is a catalyst for innovation that brings together business, academia, government and non-profit/communities to tackle major challenges of city life, across 3 global challenges:



## Tackle the Climate Emergency

Supporting London's 2030 net-zero mission, adaptation and resilience



## Boost Health & Wellbeing

Improving physical and mental health outcomes



## Upgrade Mobility Systems

Scaling mobility systems that are low-carbon, safe, accessible, affordable and efficient

## 7 FOUNDING PARTNERS



HereEast



# EAST BANK, STRATFORD

**A new model for place partnership, with a culture of collaboration to solve the worlds biggest challenges**

**V&A East** will create a new museum to explore the V&A's renowned collection with pioneering exhibitions, gallery displays and spaces for community-led projects.

**University of the Arts London: London College of Fashion** has created a new campus for 6,500 students and staff with state-of-the-art facilities including public open spaces, galleries, library and archives.

The **BBC Music Studios** will be a new home for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, BBC Symphony Chorus, BBC singers and rock and pop recording facilities. The public will be able to access performances.

**Sadler's Wells East** is creating a 550-seat theatre to present the best dance from the UK and the world. Including a choreographic centre and hip-hop theatre academy there will be engagement programmes for artists, audiences and local communities.



**UCL East's** pioneering new campus marks the largest single expansion since UCL was founded nearly 200 years ago. The first phase comprises two buildings – One Pool Street and Marshgate – providing cutting-edge laboratories and research space, teaching facilities, student accommodation and accessible public spaces. The campus is a direct response to the biggest challenges facing people and the planet. It is designed to accelerate breakthroughs in areas such as robotics and AI, sustainable cities, decarbonised transport, green manufacturing, fair finance and global health.

**Marshgate, UCL East**, is a new breed of academic building, designed by Stanton Williams to enable new interdisciplinary ways of working. To achieve this the design has focussed on highly flexible spaces that encourage collaboration between teaching, research, academia and the public. As well as creating an environment where this collaborative spirit can flourish, Marshgate is both robust, flexible and able to adapt to changing needs as new ways of working emerge.□

“Our new campus will expose students to new ways of thinking and working across disciplines in spaces that encourage people to talk and cross pollinate different ideas.”

**Professor Paola Lettieri,**  
**Academic Director for UCL East**



SHARED HUB EXAMPLE

# INNOVATION LAB EXAMPLE

The role of each innovation lab needs to be set by the organisation that uses it. They rely on both the hardware (physical design) and software (digital infrastructure and networking platforms) in a similar way to the other two typologies.

Designers and developers can support businesses to shape their future Innovation Lab by ensuring the bones of the building, and its digital platforms for insights and experience, are set up as a perfect blank canvas for innovation activities.

For example, the Turing building is situated in the centre of Stratford Cross, at the gateway to Stratford's evolving ecosystem of culture, education and innovation, features:

- A ground floor that is permeable to community beyond, and a prime setting for Exhibition Space.
- Multiple terraces which offer quiet space, for contemplation in between intensive collaboration sessions.
- Level 21, designed as a shared amenity set up with project rooms, presentation suites and collaboration spaces, and perfect for events.
- Working floors designed to maximise access to daylight and views across the park, connecting people to the wider activity of the innovation district they sit in. Plus central soft spots to connect people between floors.

“Today’s Occupiers are focussed on creating people-centric environments, to attract talent and enhance performance of individuals and teams.

The Turing building’s operations are designed to meet the changing demands of the modern Occupier and how people wish to work. With a significant focus on Occupier experience led with seamless connectivity, it will offer exceptional amenity space, digitally enabled connectivity to concierge services and easy access to all operational aspects of the building, plus engagement with the wider estate and neighbourhood.”  
**Slento Little, Asset Manager**



# MIND, MILAN

**MIND Milano Innovation District is built on a foundation of collective wellbeing, sustainability, and social inclusion.**

MIND brings together scientific and technology entities, that share the same values and principles. The goal is to create a large ecosystem of exchange and dialogue between private and public companies, business accelerators, innovative offices and places of creativity, as well as parks and gardens, housing and services.

“For us coming to MIND has been love at first sight. Indeed, we had the confirmation during Berkeley SkyDeck, that in Mind we have the possibility to be embedded in a dynamic environment with all the main stakeholders in the bio-tech field just a few meters from us. We have the clinic in the Galeazzi Hospital, we have pharma companies across the street, we have research at the Human Technopole. This is really the best environment for a company to build the success and the future.”

**Paola Occhetta**  
CEO and co-founder of BioMimX



# INNOVATION DISTRICT

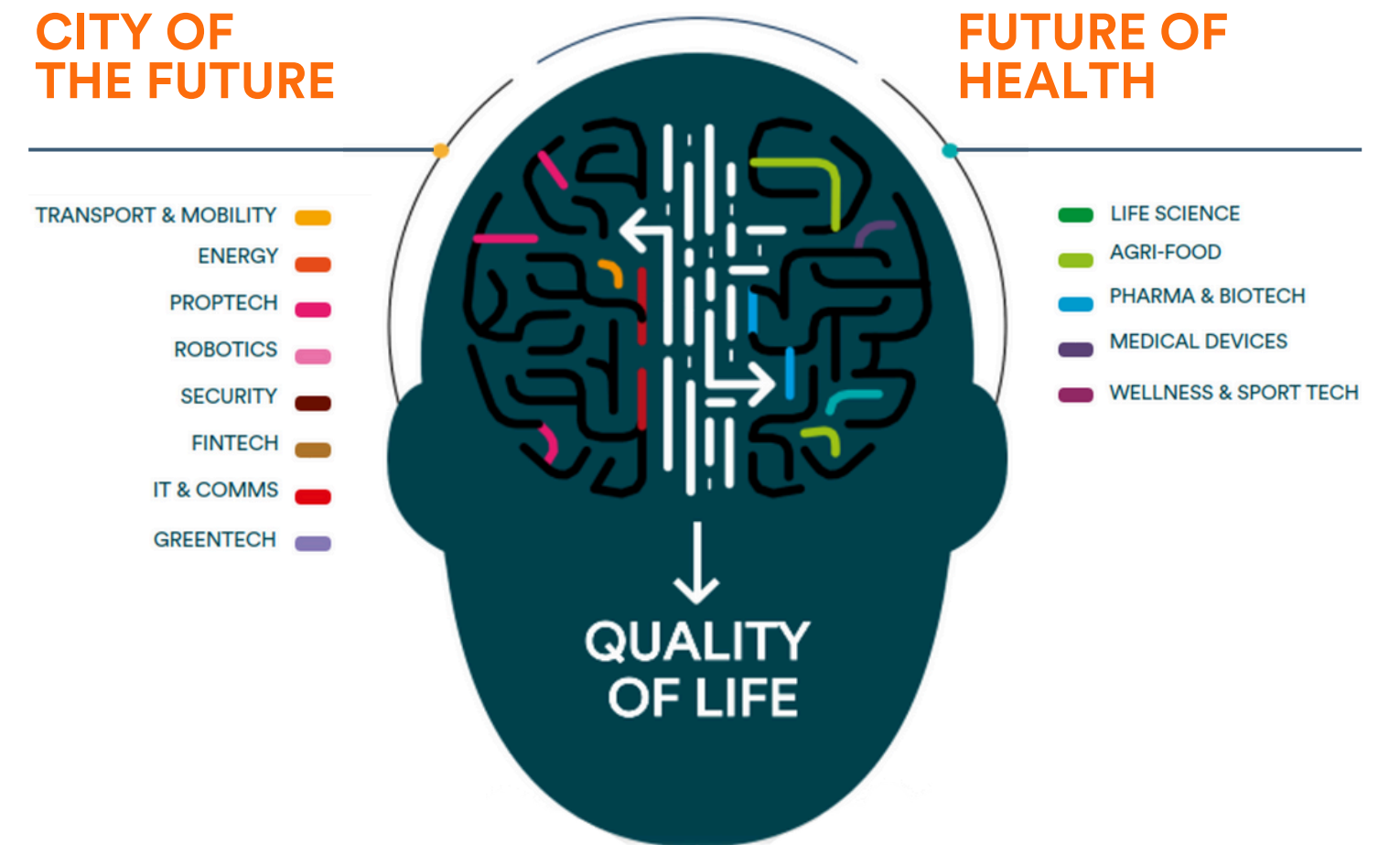
Six anchors are driving MIND's development and will catalyse an influx of innovative companies and excellent projects.

- 1 **Human Technopole**  
The leading research institute for life sciences in Italy.
- 2 **Galeazzi Research Hospital**  
The leading hospital for orthopaedic and prosthetic surgery.
- 3 **University of Milano Statale**  
Public teaching and research university, top performer in the Life Sciences domain.
- 4 **Fondazione Triulza**  
Innovation network for the third sector.
- 5 **Federated Innovation™**  
Innovation ecosystem of private entities in partnership with key public authorities.
- 6 **Politecnico di Milano**  
Public scientific-technological university, leading in teaching and research.

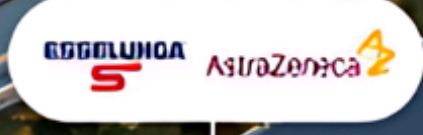


“MIND represents a great opportunity for Illumina due to the proximity of Human Technopole, AstraZeneca and other biotech companies. More importantly with the relocation of the University of Milan in MIND, it is going to be a great opportunity for a company like Illumina to be closer to the university and potentially work with some university spin offs, or directly supporting projects that are driven from the University of Milan.”

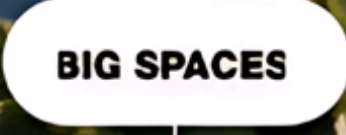
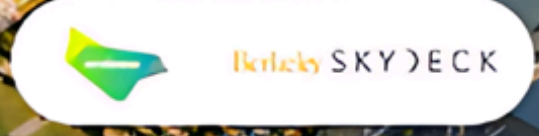
**Marco Cappelletti**  
General Manager MED Europe at Illumina



Visionary corporates  
have already chosen  
MIND as their home.  
They are the minders



FOOD STATION



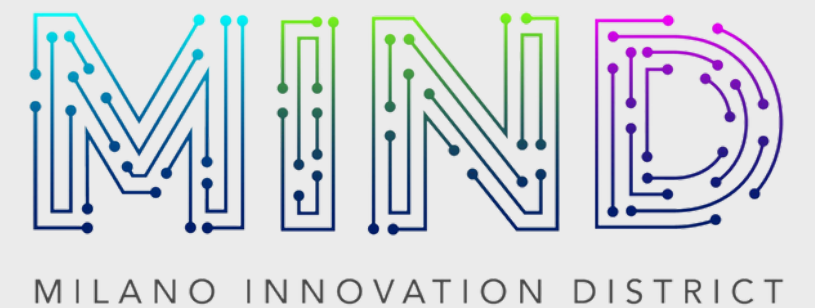
# SHARED HUB

## MIND Village

In the heart of MIND is MIND Village. Designed as long-term meanwhile space to support businesses to grow, it offers a network of timber buildings and complex outdoor space to promote exchange. A nerve centre for relationships and knowledge transfer, the aim is to bring large organisations and start-ups closer.

Home to the HIVE and Village Pavilion, MIND Village provides shared experimentation space to support coworking alongside showcasing innovation prototypes, materials, and products. The Hive offers coworking space and a “beehive” of start-up-friendly services to support businesses to grow, whilst Pavillion’s ground floor is designed for showcases in the ‘Pitch Arena’ and ‘Immersive Space’, both also have community event space.

The neighbourhood is a physical manifestation of the two innovation pillars: Future of Health and Future of Cities, with cutting-edge sustainable design, wellbeing, and social interaction at the core.



# INNOVATION LAB

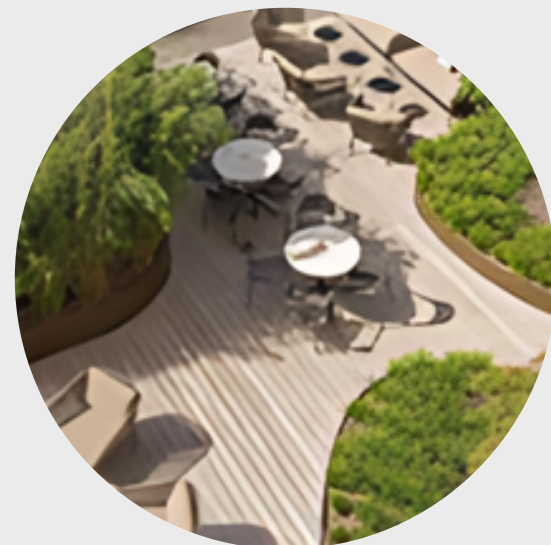
## MIND Yard (Light Industry, R&D Factory)

On completion MIND will offer 200k sqm of next generation workspace plus ~120k sqm of laboratories and light industrial space, designed to offer Innovation Labs.

Phase 1, an area on the West of MIND called Westgate, includes MIND Yard.

The Yard will provide flexible laboratories and office spaces that can be adapted to the multiple requirements of R&D activities. This typically involves a robust infrastructure, highly versatile spaces, and dedicated support spaces for sensitive devices and other special equipment.

The inspiration was the creation of shared spaces designed to facilitate teamwork, through various models of shared workspace, from the more experimental and flexible, to the more traditional, dedicated to research laboratories.







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