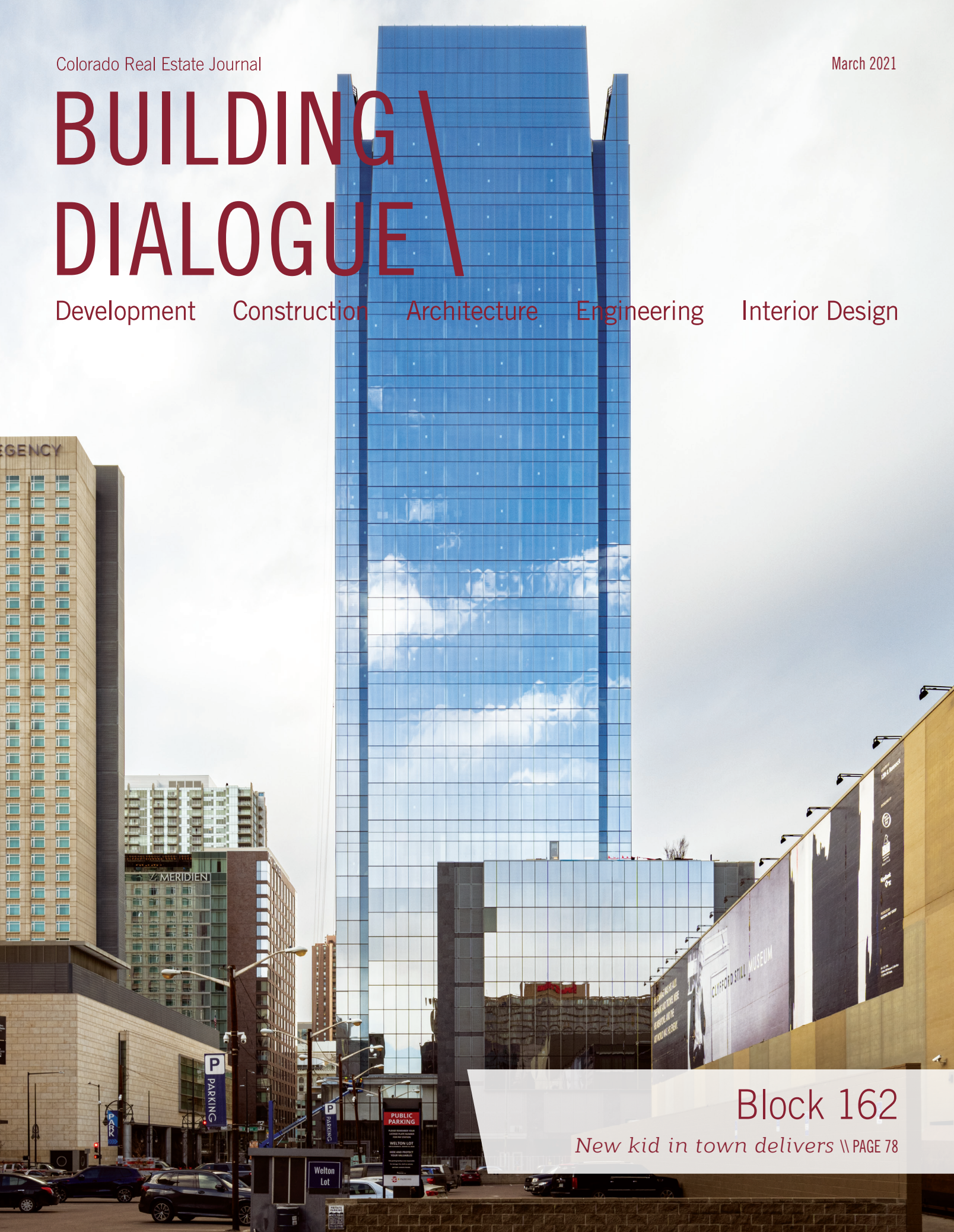


BUILDING DIALOGUE

Development Construction Architecture Engineering Interior Design



Block 162

New kid in town delivers \ \ PAGE 78

Harnessing the Power of Place: The Experience Matters



Why do people love to travel? Why do we take pictures on the side of a mountain or in front of the ocean?

When my latest ski day went awry and we decided to grab a cup of coffee instead, why did I choose the local coffee shop that sits on a river rather than the chairs in front of a Starbucks parking lot? Place is powerful.

Why have the number of bowling alleys declined severely in recent years while Top Golf has thrived? The experience is viewed differently despite the similarity of the foundation. The same could be said for movie theaters. People are either trading the traditional experience for the comfort of viewing from home, or they're upgrading to a premium experience that includes drinks and dinner served at their seat. Experience matters. And place shapes experience.

• **The failure of the workplace.** A similar analogy can be used for conventional workplaces. American businesses consistently have undervalued the power of place in workplace design.



Undervaluing the power of place.

Aly Song



The Print Collector, Getty Images
The evolution of the workplace.

Given the choice, we all gravitate toward beautiful places. An inspiring workplace design means a happier workforce that feels valued, and in turn, performs its best work. The length of the present pandemic coupled with the distributed workforce has made clear the importance of place in our daily lives. Place builds community.

While some will argue that individual productivity can thrive remotely, innovation, culture, collaboration and morale ultimately will suffer. Even when teams are operating at their best, serendipitous encounters and strategic planning sessions that lead to new ideas are challenged in a remote-only environment. In fact, patent filings in the United States are



Space matters. The misaligned cubicle farm.



M Moser

Place shapes experience: Citi Chennai Workplace Interior.

declining as collaboration has decreased. One could argue that the minimal workplace occupancy has played a significant role.

Equally important are broader corporate goals that support employee development and culture. Culture is essential to creating an engaged workforce, and remote work does not cultivate the behaviors and norms that combine to produce thriving cultures. Zoom is a tool. It is not a place.

• **The future of the WORK-PLACE.** Eating takeout never will replace the feeling of going out to dinner at a beautiful restaurant with friends and family. Seeing pictures of exciting places will never replace experiencing those places and cultures for ourselves. The power of place in all aspects of our lives has been made clear by this pandemic. As workplace design experts, we must recognize that while some things certainly will change as a result of all we've learned over the past year, place remains important. We must shift to viewing the workplace as a PLACE – a destination with a purpose beyond just housing desks. Knowing they can get their assignments done remotely, workers will choose to



Fora Great Eastern, London

The flexible workspace.



Rockwell Unscripted by Knoll

Blurring the boundary between work and play.

come to a workplace if they are inspired and feel a sense of community. And where there is community and a strong culture, there is loyalty.

The battle for top talent will soon resurface. Knowledge workers will have more choice than ever before about where they want to work. Unless they see that a company is offering them a superior place to help them drive results and achieve their personal career goals, they will choose remote work with their current employer, or a different one.

Think of the future workplace as an amenity to attract and retain the best of the best. Following a human-centered design approach, organizations will invest in the right methodology to understand what humans need to perform at heightened levels. With increased choice around where to work, flexible workplaces where users can determine the best setting for their preferences and performance will become the new standard. Moments full of rich cultural content will be designed into the spaces and will spark innovation and creativity like never before. Energy levels fostered by inspired teamwork will rise to new heights.

Just as important as design will be the opportunity to find and build a diverse community in the workplace. Organizations will incorporate workplace design into their diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Placemaking starts with the needs of people – all people. Inclusive placemaking involves fostering a sense of belonging and celebrates a sense of self. The built environment will be enhanced to support diverse communities.

The workplace will additionally be viewed as an extension of wellness initiatives. Organizations that focus on a people-centric workplace and the wellbeing of their employees will thrive. Outside of human needs like nutrition, financial health and love, there is nothing more powerful than place. We will all be inspired workers as special places provide the foundation to support creativity, unity and diversity. Businesses in the United States will finally understand how powerful the workplace is to their success.

2022 will be the year of the destination-worthy workplace.\