



Robin Ault
Principal and
Director of
Design, Clutch
Design Studio

50 Fifty: Designing the Office Park of the Future

One are the days of working 12-hour shifts in a windowless office. "Work-life balance" has proved to be more than just a millennial buzz-term; it's a movement that impacts the way we think, live and create. For many, this balance is a requirement during a job search, and rightfully so - it decreases stress, prevents burnout and ideally increases employee retention.

As companies and workforce culture change, so must the buildings they inhabit.

Take a look at the Denver Tech Center, for example. The once-landmark development was originally conceived in the 1970s in reaction to the boarded-up buildings, drifters and high crime that occupied Denver's central business district. Owners of reputable businesses were wary of the dilapidated downtown areas, so a cleaner, more open office environment was established in south Denver.

New construction in the DTC boomed in the '70s and early '80s before plateauing to a halt in the late 1980s and early '90s. So many new buildings in such a short span of time resulted in carbon-copied lot



JC Buck

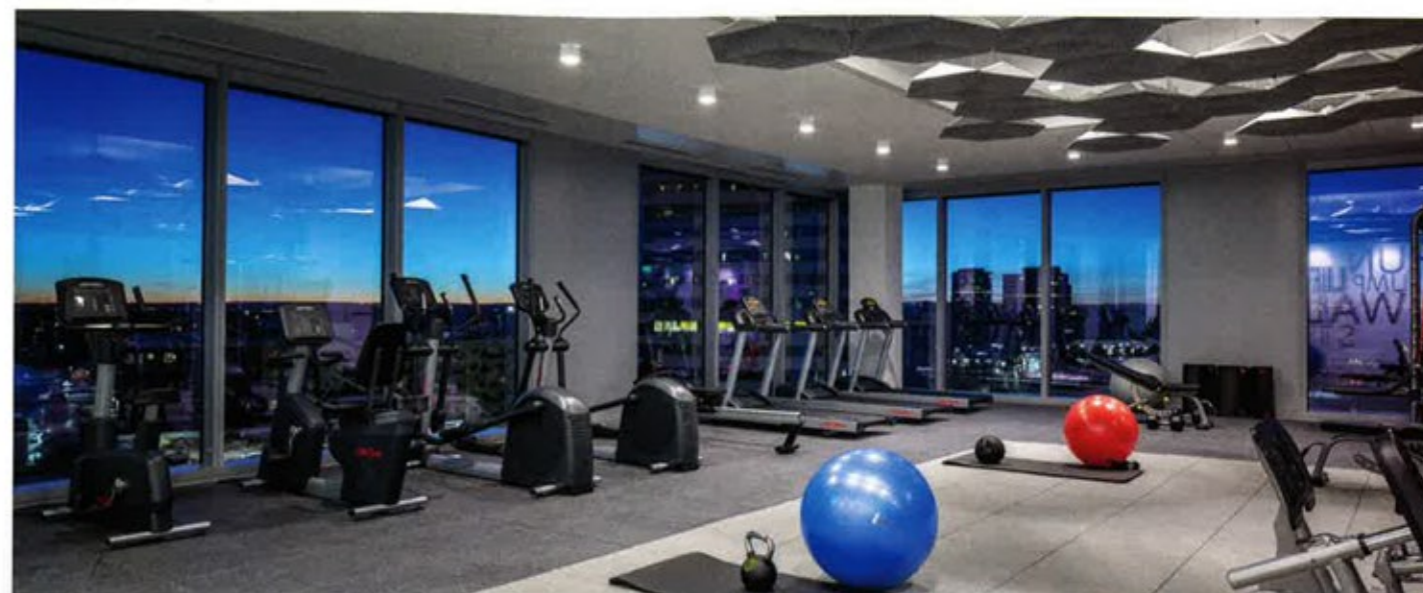
50 Fifty breaks the "archaic" mold of 1970s era buildings.

formulas: boxy building with small windows and low ceilings, detached parking garage, asphalt parking lot and an expansive lawn.

Now, 20 years later, this typical office park design concept looks and feels dated. With the revitalization of Denver's downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, the DTC needs to re-imagine what the area can and should be for the next generation of workers. 50 Fifty is one of the first DTC office buildings to break this archaic mold and set the new standard for the future.

We knew this project provided an incredible opportunity when our client stated, "I'm not interested in designing just another building." So, not only did we create a tower that was extraordinary in style and level of finish, but also responded to the shifting paradigm of work culture. The idea is simple enough - eight stories of parking positioned at the base of six stories of office space - but the innovation lies within the details.

• **Integrated parking.** We transferred a design narrative historically found in dense urban environments to DTC's suburban landscape. By uniting the parking and office space in a single building envelope, we expanded the office footprint while maintaining the aesthetic qualities of a singular structure. As our city expands and the DTC area grows



JC Buck

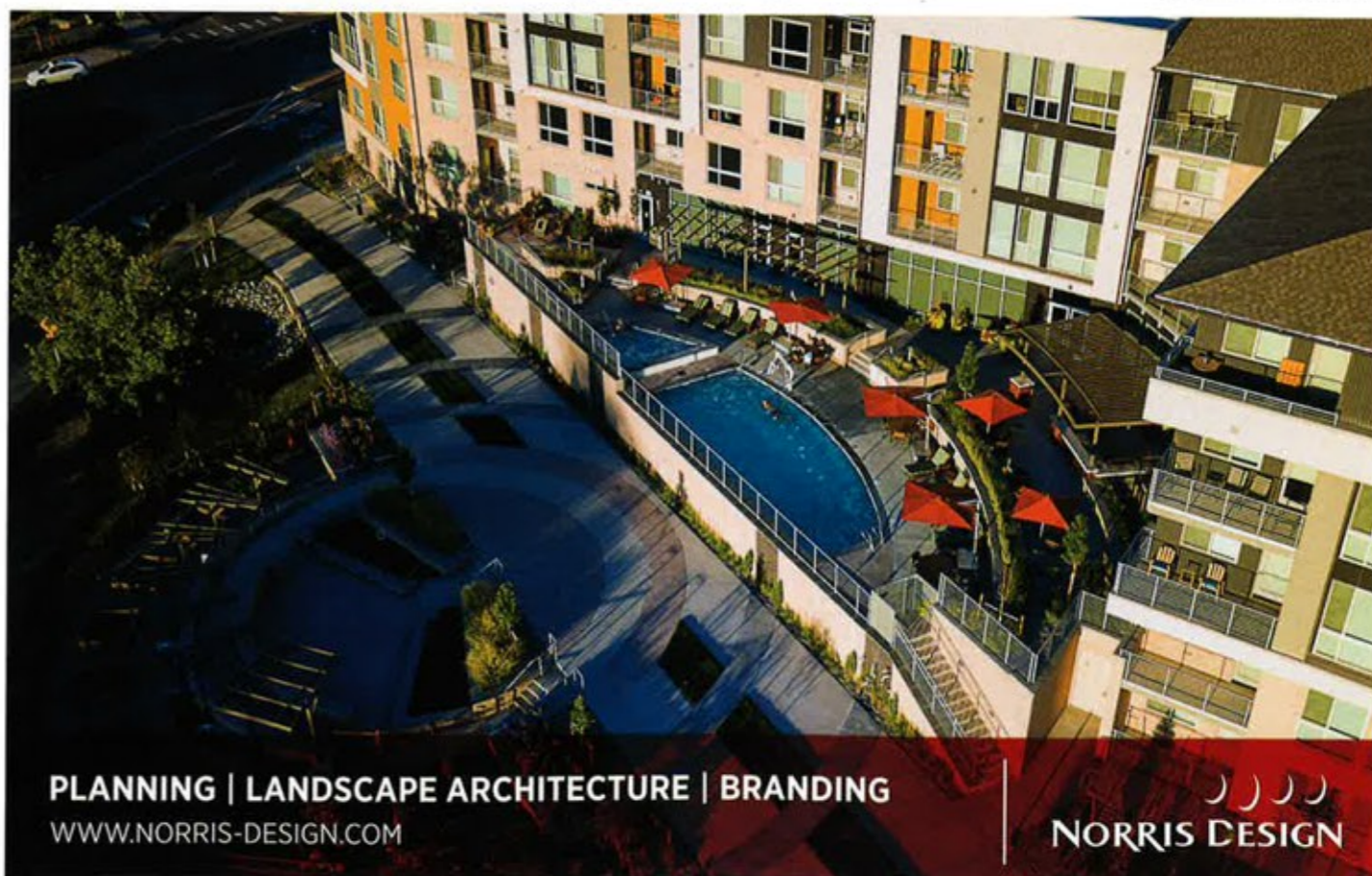
The fitness studio has 360-degree views.

more dense, we find that this building formula is an effective space-saving solution.

• **Lightwells.** We thought outside of the "box," designing 50 Fifty to have more dimension, depth and intrigue. Two 45-foot-deep lightwells pulls natural light into the core, an area that traditionally receives very little light. Floor-to-ceiling windows throughout allow mood-boosting light to

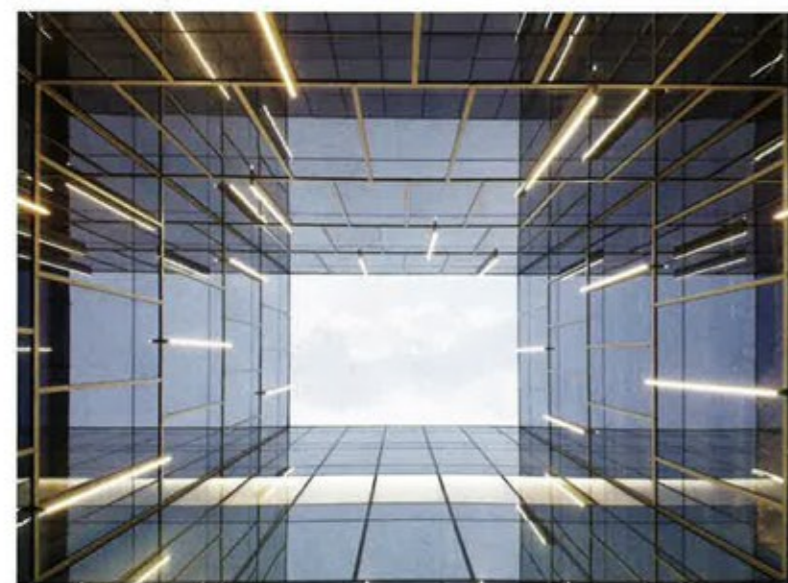
flow from one space to the next, so every conference room, private office, hallway and restroom is naturally illuminated.

The lightwells also provide exposure to the outdoor environment at several levels without the need to exit on the ground floor. Both lightwells open to the sky, and provide an exposed landing with outdoor seating, gardens and art.



PLANNING | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | BRANDING
WWW.NORRIS-DESIGN.COM

NORRIS DESIGN



JC Buck

Two 45-foot-deep lightwells pulls natural light into the core, an area that traditionally receives very little light.



JC Buck

50 Fifty's design responds to the shifting work culture paradigm.



JC Buck

The inspiration behind 50 Fifty's external appearance was found at sea.

- **Cohesive exterior skin.** The inspiration behind 50 Fifty's external appearance was found at sea. The visual of waves crashing against the side of a boat and dissipating into the horizon inspired the facade. To conceal the parking garage and make the building a cohesive form, we clad both segments in the same skin. At the garage level, solid panes of white granite mimic the rough wake, while floor-to-ceiling glass provides the blue hue of the ocean. This approach is a significant departure from the tired buildings found throughout DTC, and appeals to the younger, more design- and style-driven workforce of the future.

- **Prime fitness studio placement.** The in-house fitness studio has become a mainstay in modern office buildings, but often these wellness spaces are situated in a windowless basement or ground floor. We designed 50 Fifty's fitness studio on the seventh floor, surrounded by 360-degree views of Denver and all the way to Pikes Peak. Tenants are immersed in natural daylight, even on the treadmill.

As daily work schedules trend toward flexibility, the elevated in-office fitness studio allows office dwellers to unwind after a big meeting or recharge their creative energy in an inspiring space.

- **Bicycle-friendly environment.** To accommodate more workers choosing cycling over driving for their commute, we designed a bicycle storage facility on the ground floor of the building. An outdoor courtyard leads directly to the storage area, so tenants don't have to lug their bikes up the elevator or across the building lobby.

Immense natural light, exposure to the outdoors and fresh air, expansive views - all of these elements were incorporated into Fifty 50 in order to ease stress, ignite motivation and ultimately create a happier and healthier work environment. The result is a space that has elegantly adapted to the modern demands of the workforce, and acts as a blueprint for the office park of the future. \\\

robin@clutchdesignstudio.com