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The Growing Case for Neurospatial Design:

INVESTING IN HEALTH
AND PROSPERITY

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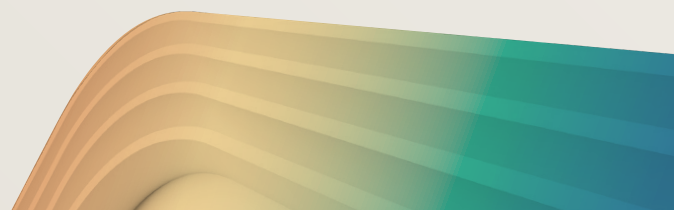
The Milken Institute's Science Philanthropy Accelerator for Research and Collaboration (SPARC) works to develop, launch, and lead initiatives that fund medical research and invest to accelerate the development of tools and treatments that will bring better health to millions of people. Our expertise lies within a number of medical research fields, including neuroscience, mental health, oncology, rare diseases, and immunology. We partner with philanthropists, leading them through complex medical research and clinical systems and guiding pathways for philanthropy to create a healthy, equitable world.

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Table of Contents

Shaping the Future: Harnessing Neurospatial Design to Enhance Where We Work, Heal, Learn, and Live	1
Driving Impact Today: Enhancing Where We Work and Heal	3
Expanding Impact Tomorrow: Strengthening Communities Through Where We Learn and Live	11
Unlocking Health and Economic Value Through Neurospatial Design—Today and Tomorrow	16
Endnotes	17
Acknowledgments	22
About the Authors	22



Shaping the Future: Harnessing Neurospatial Design to Enhance Where We Work, Heal, Learn, and Live

We spend a staggering 90 percent of our lives inside buildings, including the places where we work, heal, learn, and live.¹ As our needs and society evolve, so do the demands we place on these spaces that shape us. Workplaces that focus on health, flexibility, and social connection are increasingly important to employees. Health-care settings must support patients and avert provider burnout, all while meeting the growing demand for care. Schools shape students' brain development, mental health, and social connection while influencing educators' well-being and effectiveness. Finally, our homes are increasingly expected to serve as multigenerational spaces for work, caregiving, and learning.

These societal shifts point to a broader challenge—and also opportunity. Growing concerns about lifespan and healthy aging have increased interest in the role of environmental exposure, including the built environment, in shaping our health.² A growing body of neuroscience and public health research shows that the design of the spaces and buildings we occupy influences factors such as stress, cognitive performance, and pleasure, which underscores an opportunity to design spaces that promote health and recovery from illness or injury.

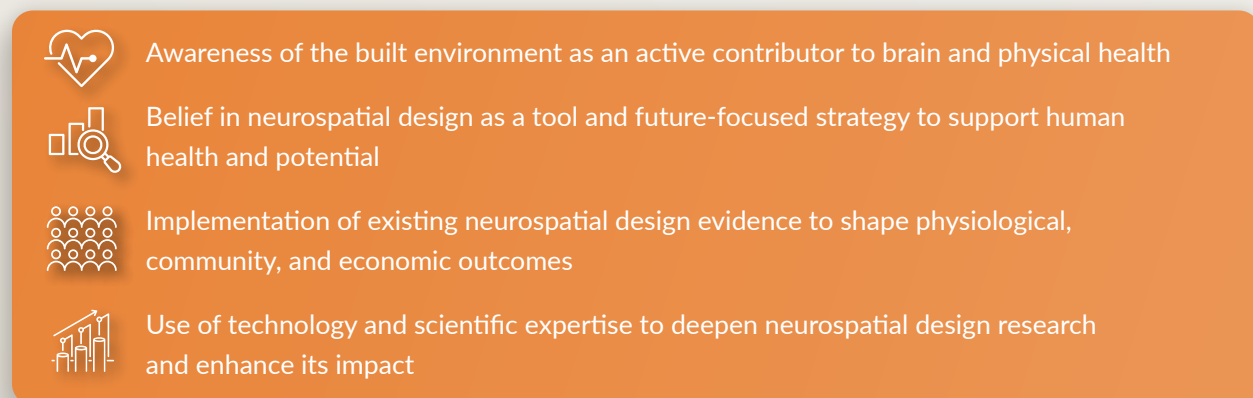
Designing spaces that benefit the brain and body also benefits economies. The [McKinsey Health Institute](#) estimates that prioritizing brain health can yield \$26 trillion in global economic opportunities, equivalent to roughly 80 percent of the US gross domestic product.³ Neurospatial design, an emerging approach to supporting and advancing brain health, applies research insights to improve the health, experiences, and lives of every member of society while delivering measurable returns to communities and organizations.

In July 2026, the Milken Institute [Science Philanthropy Accelerator for Research and Collaboration](#) (SPARC), in partnership with The Pedersen Foundation, released [Bridging Neuroscience, Health, and the Built Environment: A Giving Smarter Guide](#), which provides an overview of neurospatial design, its core principles,

Neurospatial design is an interdisciplinary topic at the intersection of neuroscience, health, and the built environment, leveraging neurological and physiological insights to inform how spaces are designed for brain, body, and community health.

and its key stakeholders. The guide also outlines four priorities aimed at advancing the ecosystem and realizing its impact across sectors. As the neurospatial design ecosystem grows, several trends are shaping its momentum and adoption by cross-sector leaders (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Trends Influencing Cross-Sector Leaders to Embrace Neurospatial Design Across Building Types



Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Neurospatial design can be used to shape any type of building, but its implementation is not a one-size-fits-all approach; it should be tailored to the evolving needs of different individuals and organizations. SPARC identified four key building types—workplace, health care, education, and residential—where neurospatial design is poised to have the most immediate or greatest impact. Today, these building types shape two pathways to impact based on existing momentum, immediacy, and scale (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Pathways to Realizing the Impact of Neurospatial Design Across Key Building Types



Source: Milken Institute (2026)

To date, philanthropic capital has catalyzed innovation in neurospatial design, but transformative change will depend on leaders across sectors choosing to invest together in a shared vision. Building on the philanthropic opportunities identified in the [Giving Smarter Guide](#), this investment case for cross-sector leaders highlights the value of neurospatial design and provides actionable approaches to realizing its impact today and for generations to come.

Driving Impact Today: Enhancing Where We Work and Heal

Forward-thinking, innovative workplace and health-care leaders view the built environment as a strategic asset for promoting brain, physical, and social health and for building capacity within their organizations. This section describes the current momentum and case for applying neurospatial design across workplace and health-care settings. It also highlights opportunities to leverage neurospatial design to maintain agility, strengthen competitive advantage, and stay responsive to evolving employee, client, and patient needs.



WHERE WE WORK: WORKPLACE LEADERS ADOPT NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN TO PROMOTE EMPLOYEE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

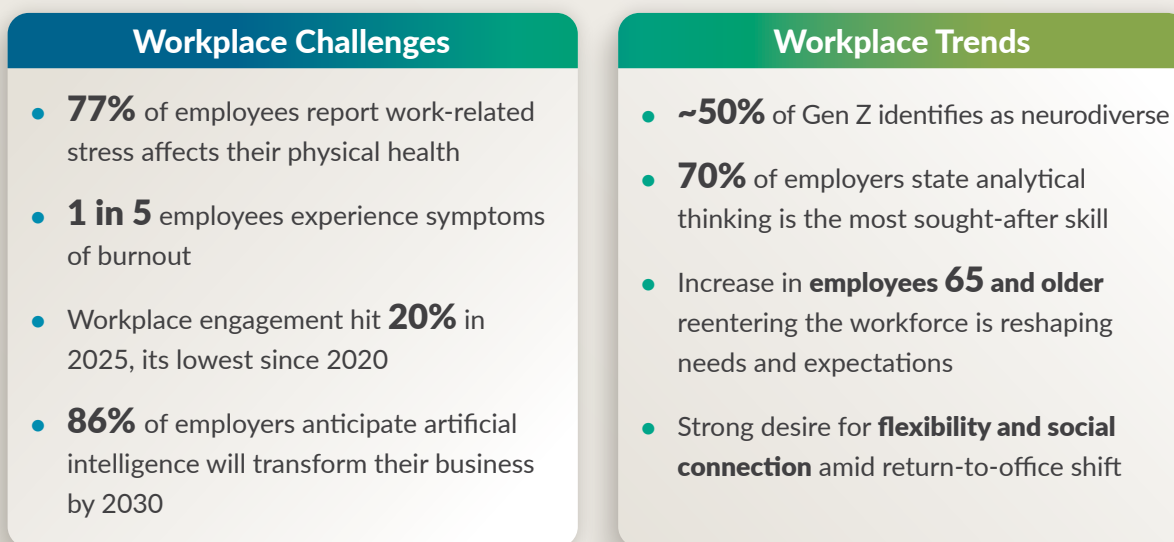
Employees spend approximately one-third of their lives at work. Employers have significant influence over employee health and a moral and organizational responsibility to support their workforce. **Through investment and partnership, workplace leaders can leverage neurospatial design to advance core organizational priorities, such as flexibility, belonging, productivity, and market competitiveness, while also prioritizing employee health.**

Challenges and Trends Driving Investment in the Workplace

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, workplaces have needed to adapt to challenges and trends that directly affect employee well-being, organizational performance, and, ultimately, profitability (**Figure 3**).⁴ Specifically, C-suite leadership, strategy officers, and human resources executives play central roles in responding to these challenges and shaping workplace strategies in response to emerging trends. This is particularly important amid the rapid integration of artificial intelligence in the workplace, which will continue to shape employees' brain and mental health.

[Existing initiatives](#) provide a platform for forward-thinking leaders to discuss how investments in organizational culture, health benefits, community, and raising industry standards can improve employee health, address emerging risks, and enhance organizational performance. Additionally, investment in neurospatial design can reinforce and amplify the impact of these investments through workplace design, particularly office design. Office design is a powerful yet under-recognized investment that can have an outsized impact on employees' brains and mental health and improve organizational performance through evidence-based, cost-effective design decisions.

Figure 3: Challenges and Trends Influencing Investment in Workplaces



Source: Milken Institute (2026)

“Every leader [...] is already spending on workplace capital, whether it be leases, renovations, or technology. The question is not whether to invest. It is whether those investments are working for your people’s brains or against them.”

—Upali Nanda, Executive Vice President, Global Sector Director of Innovation, HKS⁵

The Cost of Inaction: How Neurospatial Design Reduces Risk and Creates Value

Employers bear the financial and operational consequences of work environments that overlook design as a strategy to improve employee well-being, engagement, and performance. The value of neurospatial design in the workplace hinges on its ability to address core challenges while increasing revenue and reducing costs. **Table 1** outlines the current costs of select workplace challenges, some of which the built environment may influence, and presents neurospatial design as a tool to address them by providing physiological and financial benefits. To date, interdisciplinary research in neurospatial design remains limited, and further studies are needed to directly link design to its long-term physiological and economic impacts. Priority 1 of the [Giving Smarter Guide](#) outlines approaches to building the evidence base for the human and financial effects of neurospatial design.

Learn more about the science and physiology behind neurospatial design in [Building Brains: Exploring the Intersection of Neuroscience and Architecture to Position the Built Environment as a Strategy for Brain Health](#).

Table 1: The Cost of Inaction and Benefits of Adopting Neurospatial Design in Workplace Settings

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL	CHALLENGE AND CURRENT COST	VALUE OF ADOPTING NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN AS A SOLUTION	
		PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFIT	ECONOMIC BENEFIT <i>(based on a general organization/office with ~200 employees)</i>
 INCREASE REVENUE	Productivity: Organizations frequently focus on productivity because it plays a critical role in driving revenue. While the definition of productivity can vary by workplace, Gallup and the Global Brain Economy Initiative (GBEI) estimate that impaired brain health and lost productivity cost the global economy ~\$8–9 trillion annually. ⁶	Neurospatial design can enhance employee and organizational productivity. Affordable design interventions, such as incorporating plants and natural sounds, can reduce physiological stress , as measured by heart rate, and help improve cognitive performance. ⁷	Design elements such as views of nature and natural soundscapes have been shown to increase productivity by an average of 11% , resulting in an estimated increase in annual revenue of over \$36,000 per employee, or \$7.29 million for an organization. ⁸
	Recruitment and retention: Investment in design yields not only improved performance but also higher job satisfaction, which directly affects retention rates and recruitment strategy. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, the average cost per non-executive hire exceeds \$5,400 , underscoring the importance of retention-focused investments in reducing workforce-related costs. ⁹	Acoustic comfort is a critical consideration for workplace design because of its effects on stress, performance, and well-being. Studies show that lowering workplace noise can reduce employee stress and cognitive strain , as indicated by electroencephalogram (EEG) and stress hormone levels, and can influence job satisfaction. ¹⁰	Design can help reduce stress, contributing to improved job satisfaction and fewer voluntary job separations. It is estimated that a 10% reduction in job separations would yield annual savings of over \$400,000 in recruitment costs for an organization. ¹¹
 REDUCE COSTS	Absenteeism: Mounting stressors and increased burnout affect employee absenteeism and workplace engagement. The American Institute of Stress estimates that around one million workers per day experience stress-related absenteeism. ¹²	Different desk configurations in open offices influence physiological stress signals , as measured by EEG, highlighting a role for neurospatial design in reducing stress-related absenteeism and creating environments that boost social connection and employee engagement. ¹³	Environments can prioritize design features with demonstrated effects on absenteeism. Employees with tree and landscape views used 16% less sick time , a reduction estimated to yield an organization \$605,000 in annual revenue. ¹⁴

Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Companies Leveraging the Benefits of Neurospatial Design to Build More Resilient Organizations

With growing evidence and scientific expertise, as well as new tools in development for applying and measuring the impacts of neurospatial design, the time to invest is now. By leveraging existing research and/or funding internal research, the employers listed in **Table 2** already use neurospatial design to shape their workplaces and drive meaningful physiological and business outcomes for employees, clients, and customers.

Table 2: Select Employers Setting the Precedent for Investment in Neurospatial Design

COMPANY <i>(listed alphabetically)</i>	ESTIMATED SIZE AND REVENUE ¹⁵	RECENT INITIATIVES RELATED TO NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN
Amazon Technology Industry	Size: ~1.6M employees Revenue: \$716.9B (2025)	Amazon designed its headquarters in Seattle, WA, and Arlington, VA, with employee health and well-being in mind. Both headquarters incorporate plants, natural materials, and natural light—neurospatial design features shown to influence physiological outcomes—along with a balance of spaces designed for collaboration and focus to bolster employee creativity. Two innovative architecture firms, ZGF and NBBJ , were heavily involved in each project.
Google Technology Industry	Size: ~190,000 employees Revenue: \$402B (Alphabet, 2025)	Google’s Bay View Campus , designed in partnership with Bjarke Ingels Group and Heatherwick Studio , integrates neurospatial design through features such as natural light, nature-inspired elements, and acoustic control to create a healthy, creative workplace for employees. In addition to the organization’s commitment to the design of its workspaces, Google continues to invest in research and innovation related to neurospatial design. Through initiatives such as the Google R+D Lab for the Built Environment and the Google Experience Institute, the company explores how design can advance organizational goals for health, experience, sustainability, and creativity.
HKS Architecture and Design Industry	Size: ~3,000 employees Revenue: \$662M (2024)	Named Fast Company’s Most Innovative Architecture Firm and one of the 2026 World’s Most Innovative Companies, HKS incorporates neurospatial design research and evidence into workplace projects while advancing its own research initiatives. The leading architecture and design firm has turned its Chicago and London offices into living labs to understand and prioritize evidence-based workplace design to improve employee health and experience, applying the insights gained to its own offices and client projects.

Table 2: Select Employers Setting the Precedent for Investment in Neurospatial Design *(continued)*

COMPANY <i>(listed alphabetically)</i>	ESTIMATED SIZE AND REVENUE	RECENT INITIATIVES RELATED TO NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN
Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) Commercial Real Estate Industry	Size: ~113,000 employees Revenue: \$26B (2025)	JLL, a leader in commercial real estate, continues to invest in neurospatial design and leverage neuroscience research to better understand how work environments shape brain activity, productivity, and stress, including a recent partnership with University College London. By investing in both research and translation of neuroscience insights, JLL demonstrates commitment to its employees while empowering and equipping its clients—workplace leaders—to leverage neurospatial design as an adaptable strategy and tool for their organizations.

Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Large organizations are leading investments in implementation and research; however, neurospatial design is relevant and accessible to workplaces of all sizes, capacities, and budgets. Whether through low-cost updates to existing spaces or incorporation into new construction projects, workplace leaders can leverage neurospatial design to advance their companies’ unique goals, priorities, and interests.



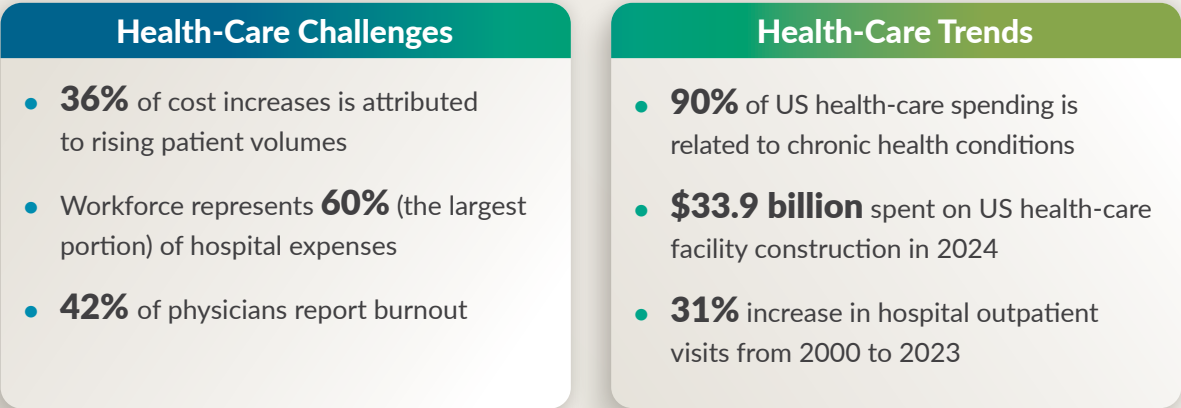
WHERE WE HEAL: HEALTH-CARE LEADERS INVEST IN NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN TO ENHANCE PATIENT AND EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

Health care is among the fastest-growing sectors of the US economy, driven by new technologies, advances in treatment approaches, and growing recognition of how factors such as the built environment contribute to health. **The diversity of health-care environments, ranging from community care centers and outpatient clinics to hospitals, positions neurospatial design to support the unique needs of different patient populations and health-care workers across settings.**

Challenges and Trends Driving Investment in Health Care

Rising rates of age-related brain disorders, mental health conditions, and chronic diseases are increasing the demand for health-care services in the US, while evolving patient needs and workforce trends are reshaping how care is delivered (**Figure 4**).¹⁶ In response, health system executives, clinicians, patient experience leaders, and built environment professionals are leading efforts to transform health-care environments, especially as care shifts toward outpatient and community-based settings to address evolving cost and access barriers. Building on evidence-based design, neurospatial design can revolutionize how health-care environments facilitate patient care, workforce well-being, and operational performance.

Figure 4: Challenges and Trends Influencing Investment in Health Care



Source: Milken Institute (2026)

The Cost of Inaction: How Neurospatial Design Reduces Risk and Creates Value

While publicly funded health systems prioritize patient outcomes and experiences, private US health systems often use financial performance as a key metric. Neurospatial design offers value across the spectrum of health-care settings, models, and systems as a strategy to improve patient outcomes and satisfaction, prioritize employee well-being and performance, and ultimately enhance financial returns. **Table 3** outlines the current costs of select health-care business challenges, some of which may be influenced by the built environment, and presents neurospatial design as a flexible tool for addressing these challenges.

Table 3: The Cost of Inaction and Benefits of Adopting Neurospatial Design in Health-Care Settings

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL	CHALLENGE AND CURRENT COST	VALUE OF ADOPTING NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN AS A SOLUTION (focused on hospital and/or intensive care unit settings)	
		PHYSIOLOGICAL BENEFIT	ECONOMIC BENEFIT
 REDUCE COSTS	Patient outcomes/length of stay: The built environment plays a critical role in shaping patient outcomes, experiences, and costs associated with hospital care. According to KFF, the average expense per inpatient day for US hospitals was \$3,297 in 2024 . ¹⁷	Design can affect patient recovery time and length of stay. Natural light, views of nature, and reduced noise have been shown to improve patient outcomes, reduce the need for pain medication after surgery, and shorten patient stays . ¹⁸	Designs that incorporate greenery and other natural elements have been shown to shorten patient length of stay by an average of 18% (about 1 day). This is estimated to reduce per diem costs to hospitals by approximately \$12.4 million annually , highlighting the value of integrating design solutions to enhance patient outcomes and drive cost reduction. ¹⁹
	Health-care worker performance and burnout: Over 45% of health-care workers report being in states of high or extreme stress. ²⁰ The American Medical Association estimates that physician burnout can cost organizations from \$500,000 to over \$1 million per doctor . ²¹	Design plays a role in supporting provider performance and reducing burnout. Access to outdoor spaces and optimization of light and noise levels in health-care settings, such as operating rooms, can improve providers' alertness and performance while reducing stress , as measured by EEG and cortisol levels. ²²	Natural light and views of nature have been shown to reduce absenteeism by ~38% and vacancies by 25% among clinical providers, highlighting how neurospatial design can contribute to broader retention strategies. ²³
 INCREASE REVENUE	Patient experience and satisfaction: While patient satisfaction scores vary widely by region and health-care system, patient experience correlates with revenue and financial performance. ²⁴ A recent Deloitte study found that hospitals rated "excellent" by patients have nearly 3% higher average net margins than those rated lower. ²⁵	Design that prioritizes natural light in hospital settings has been shown to promote healthier sleep by supporting normal circadian rhythms and melatonin production. Additional features, such as simulated views of nature, have been shown to increase patient satisfaction while decreasing high blood pressure. ²⁶	Several factors, including design, length of stay, and provider performance, can shape patient satisfaction. Neurospatial design interventions that improve inpatient experience and willingness to recommend by 3.4% are estimated to increase revenue from patient services by \$3.6 million . ²⁷

Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Health-Care Organizations Harnessing the Benefits of Neurospatial Design for Patients and Employees

Neurospatial design can shape patient and staff outcomes across a variety of contexts, from preventive-care settings to emergency rooms. Several health-care settings leverage evidence from neurospatial design and our deepening understanding of the brain to create spaces that provide neurological, physiological, and experiential benefits for both patients and employees. Priorities 2 and 3 of the [Giving Smarter Guide](#) outline approaches to drive both implementation of neurospatial design and exposure among leaders across health-care settings.

- [Maggie's](#) 33 cancer care facilities focus on how design influences the cancer patient experience, leveraging neurospatial design features such as natural light, green space, and natural elements to promote healing, recovery, and connection. This design-focused approach, combining advanced treatments with a positive, patient-centered environment, has drawn considerable international attention and led to 22 of its centers becoming major National Health Service cancer centers, with additional international centers planned.
- The [John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center](#) at UTHealth Houston accommodates patients across the full continuum of care, from acute treatment to residential services, throughout the surrounding region. To create an environment conducive to healing, [Perkins&Will](#) drew on insights from neurophysiology and biomedical research on acoustics, natural light, and circadian rhythms to better assist patients. Importantly, the center is a model for cross-sector advancement of neurospatial design, [established](#) through a partnership among state, academic, and philanthropic partners.
- The [Ohana Center for Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health](#), designed by [NBBJ](#), applies neuroscience research to its physical environment to prioritize patient and staff health and well-being. Through views of nature, use of natural materials (cross-laminated timber), and private spaces for caregivers, the Ohana Center promotes patients' sense of safety, reduces stress, and supports the immune health of patients and staff.
- The [Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center](#) implemented a [wayfinding system](#) to help people better orient and navigate the hospital campus, recognizing the impact of wayfinding on patients' experience and care. By leveraging existing neurospatial design evidence and working with diverse patients and employees to understand accessibility, sensory, cognitive, and language needs, [BA Design](#) developed a strategy to implement wayfinding approaches that improve the patient and employee experience.

Opportunities to Invest in Neurospatial Design as a Tool for Employee, Patient, and Organizational Health

Forward-thinking workplace and health-care leaders leverage neurospatial design as a flexible, adaptable tool to drive meaningful outcomes for their most critical stakeholders—employees and patients. Strategic investments in research and implementation can help unlock its potential to improve outcomes across a range of organizational priorities by:

- partnering with design professionals, architecture firms, real estate developers, and philanthropic partners eager to implement neurospatial design evidence into projects to enhance employee and patient-centered outcomes and organizational goals
- investing in research to evaluate the current and long-term neurological, physiological, and behavioral effects of design interventions to inform organizational strategy for workplace and health-care design

Priorities 1 and 3 of the [*Giving Smarter Guide*](#) outline specific approaches to pursuing these opportunities. Importantly, the success of these initiatives depends on strong research partnerships with academic experts in neuroscience, public health, psychology, and economics who can provide subject-matter expertise to ensure scientific rigor and credibility.

Expanding Impact Tomorrow: Strengthening Communities Through Where We Learn and Live

Educational and residential environments lay the foundations for lifelong health and well-being and represent strategic, long-term investments in human potential, economic opportunity, and community health.

- K-12 students spend 180 days in school each year (nearly half the year), making schools a critical space for brain, physical, and social development.²⁸ Across the educational spectrum—from elementary schools to universities—the built environment and its design play critical roles in shaping health, education, and community outcomes. Schools also serve as workplaces for teachers and staff, amplifying their overall impact on individual and community well-being.
- Americans spend an increasing proportion of their time at home, which can take the form of single-family homes or multifamily residences.²⁹ As communities face emerging challenges, including a shortage of affordable housing and the loneliness epidemic, neurospatial design offers an innovative approach to meeting growing community and social needs while creating environments that support brain, mental, and physical health at a biological level.

The design of these spaces, however, is often an afterthought because funding and regulations prioritize function and cost over human health and experience. **As a result, investment in neurospatial design represents a significant opportunity to shape healthier learning and living environments to improve educational outcomes, address key community challenges, and sustain healthier communities through the built environment.**



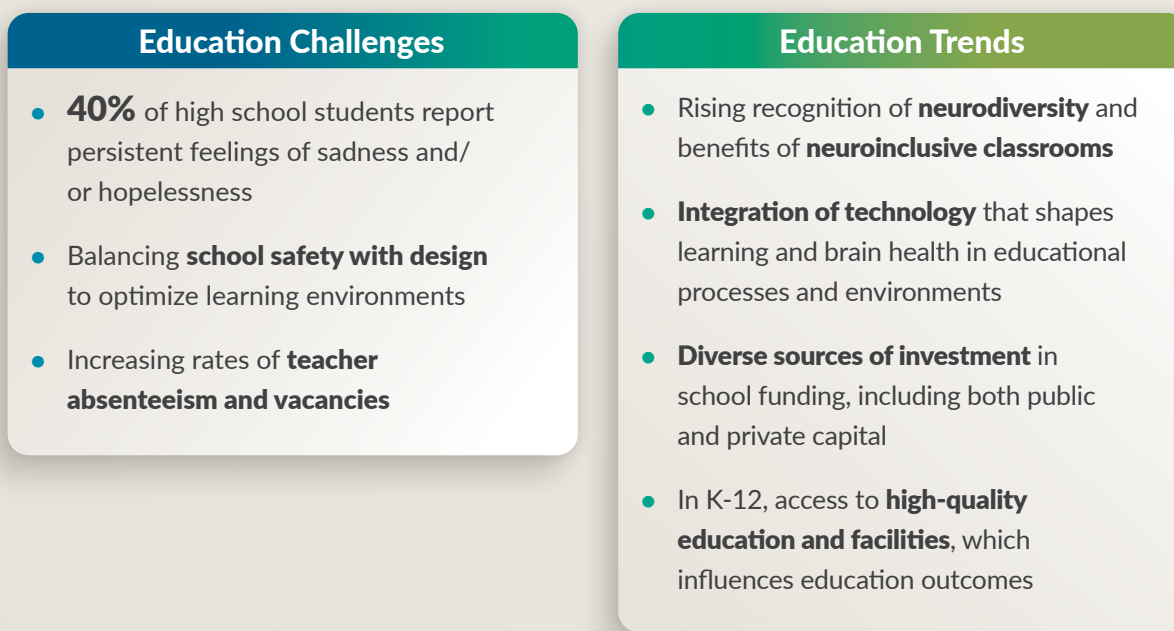
CHALLENGES AND TRENDS DRIVING INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION AND RESIDENTIAL SPACES

The diversity of educational and residential spaces presents a range of emerging challenges and trends that are reshaping investment priorities and redefining the role of homes and schools as critical infrastructure for community health and well-being.

Educational Spaces

The US spent an estimated \$981 billion on public K-12 education in 2024.³⁰ Despite significant taxpayer investment, much of today's educational infrastructure is designed to remain durable rather than to maximize student learning, teacher well-being, and long-term health outcomes. An evolving landscape of trends and challenges in K-12 and higher education (**Figure 5**) continues to shape how educational settings are designed and used and how they affect students and teachers.³¹ Given the long-term impact of educational environments on workforce readiness and economic prosperity, these environments must increasingly adapt to evolving student, workforce, and community needs. Educational leaders, school districts, school boards, principals, policymakers, and parents are all critical to advancing solutions that address these challenges and create lasting returns for individuals and communities.

Figure 5: Challenges and Trends Influencing Attention to and Investment in Educational Spaces

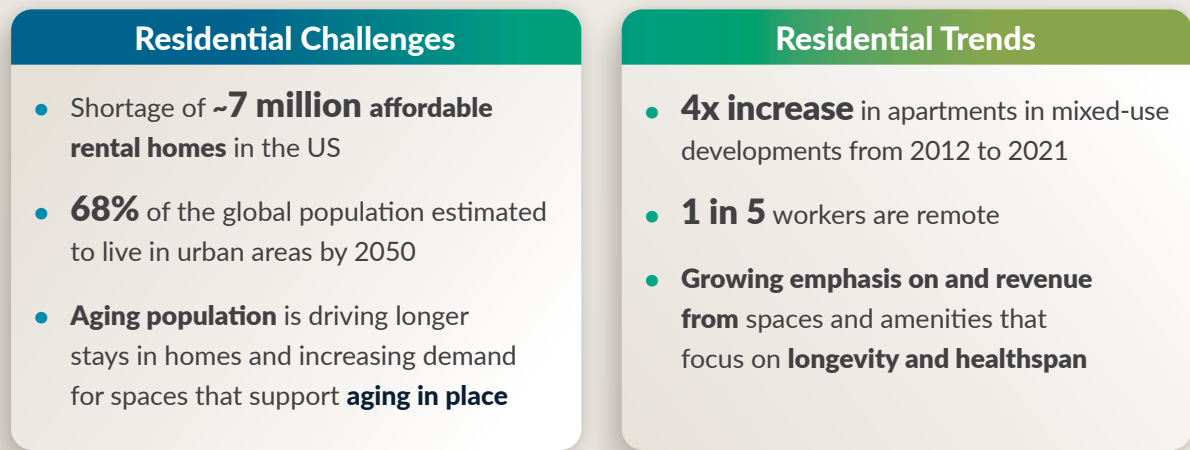


Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Residential Spaces

Residential spaces exist within a highly complex ecosystem shaped by local economies, policies, schools, workplaces, and health-care facilities. Several challenges and trends continue to shape the residential market (Figure 6),³² including the personalized nature of housing, coupled with a wide variation in housing types and access, which can amplify existing economic and health inequities. Against the backdrop of an affordable housing crisis in the US and rising rates of loneliness, the built environment has a critical role in bolstering individual health while fostering community well-being. Real estate developers, investors, and policymakers should prioritize neurospatial design to positively shape individual health and community well-being.

Figure 6: Challenges and Trends Influencing Attention to and Investment in Residential Spaces



Source: Milken Institute (2026)



INVESTING TODAY FOR IMPACT TOMORROW: NEUROSPATIAL DESIGN BENEFITS INDIVIDUALS, COMMUNITIES, AND ECONOMIES

Neurospatial design alone cannot solve the challenges facing educational and residential spaces; however, it can play an important role in individual health, community well-being, and long-term economic outcomes.

Table 4 provides examples of initiatives related to neurospatial design, contributing to the growing case for its impact on educational and residential environments.

Table 4: Select Initiatives Building the Case for Neurospatial Design in Educational and Residential Spaces

Who Benefits	Initiative and Impact
 INDIVIDUAL	Investors and Developers Prioritizing Residents' Health Real estate developers are increasingly prioritizing residential design that promotes health. ARCHETYPE Investments is a forward-thinking multifamily residential development firm based in North Carolina. The company reimagines the residential market by creating communities that help residents better monitor their physiological health and incentivize behaviors that underpin long-term well-being. ARCHETYPE was the first adopter of the International WELL Building Institute's WELL for Residential Program, setting a precedent for implementing evolving industry standards that prioritize health in residential spaces. As key drivers of regional development, real estate developers should promote equitable access to healthier residential spaces to shape the future of their communities while establishing a competitive advantage through neurospatial design.
 COMMUNITY	School Investments Produce Positive Spillover Effects on Community Health K-12 schools serve as workplaces for educators and staff and as an essential part of students' development, with design shaping students' social and emotional learning and college readiness. In the US, states such as Ohio have leveraged school design to position public schools as providers of health care for students, staff, and the nearby community through school-based health centers. This model of integrating preventive care into the built environment has been shown to improve academic success and generate economic returns, with societal benefits far exceeding the cost of intervention. Whether through updated interiors, renovations, or new builds, educational leaders, community leaders, and parents should prioritize the integration of neurospatial design into K-12 school environments to ensure they are intentionally designed to prioritize brain health and foster the mental, physical, and social well-being of all students.
 LOCAL ECONOMY	Coordinated Regional Investment in Brain Health Spurs Economic Growth The GBEI has reframed brain health and brain skills as strategic economic assets, providing a framework that helps cross-sector leaders prioritize investments in brain health and reframe the built environment as a catalyst for economic growth. In 2025, the Center for Houston's Future launched Project Metis as a cross-sector initiative to accelerate research on brain diseases, improve community health, and transform Houston into a world-class hub for brain care and research, with unique consideration for the role of the design of workplaces, health-care settings, schools, and residential spaces for regional economic growth. Community leaders—across public and private sectors—should champion neurospatial design as a critical lever for promoting economic prosperity.

Source: Milken Institute (2026)

Investment Opportunities to Transform Community Health Through Neurospatial Design

Building broader momentum and investment in neurospatial design in educational and residential environments will require strategic partnerships across the public and private sectors. Cross-sector collaborations among educational and residential leaders, elected officials, philanthropic partners, and community members will be essential to securing buy-in and funding as the case for neurospatial design continues to evolve in these spaces. The following approaches, outlined in Priorities 1, 3, and 4 in the [Giving Smarter Guide](#), are positioned for investment from impact-driven and future-focused leaders:

- increasing awareness of neurospatial design among parents, educators, school leaders, policymakers, and community members to drive demand
- implementing existing neurospatial design evidence when renovating or building new infrastructure to benefit students and teachers while expanding the precedent for investment
- engaging in research on the neurological and physiological effects of neurospatial design interventions on individual, community, and economic health, building the evidence base for scalable and equitable implementation

Texas has emerged as a regional hub for brain health, with several cross-sector initiatives—the GBEI, Project Metis, and the [Dementia Prevention and Research Institute of Texas](#)—demonstrating how coordinated attention, engagement, and investment can advance solutions that leverage neuroscience and the built environment to drive regional economic and social impact. Municipalities, cities, and regional partnerships can replicate these approaches in partnership with private-sector and philanthropic partners, adapting them to local priorities and communities. Leaders interested in realizing the promise of neurospatial design in their communities can leverage [existing initiatives](#) to build regional partnerships, prioritize community-led development, and align financing with long-term social impact.

Unlocking Health and Economic Value Through Neurospatial Design—Today and Tomorrow

The question is not whether we can afford to design spaces that help people flourish—the question is whether we can afford not to. Philanthropy has been a catalyst for the neurospatial design ecosystem, but additional investment is needed to equitably scale its benefits across building types and communities. Cross-sector partnerships and coordinated investments will be critical in unlocking the value of neurospatial design and fostering a healthier, thriving society.

Workplace and health-care leaders have a significant opportunity to prioritize neurospatial design to benefit their employees, patients, and organizations. By applying neurospatial design evidence and/or investing in neurospatial design research tailored to their priorities, innovative organizations can improve health, experience, and performance while benefiting their bottom line.

Leaders in education, housing, real estate, and community development can harness the power of neurospatial design as a tool to solve local challenges and transform their communities by improving individual health, well-being, and economic prosperity. As the case for neurospatial design grows among these leaders, efforts to raise awareness and demonstrate its impact will expand adoption and ensure that communities benefit for generations to come.

Bold leaders interested in realizing the promise of neurospatial design can engage, partner, and invest in the cross-sector opportunities outlined in [*Bridging Neuroscience, Health, and the Built Environment: A Giving Smarter Guide*](#).

Endnotes

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