



## First Taste

### Nestlé USA introduces modernized workplace approach at renovated Harper Road Building

By Doug Bardwell | Photos by Kevin Reeves

It's a familiar sight to many in Northeast Ohio. Just off Route 422 in Solon sits Nestlé's production facility and an iconic 13-story freezer, where the Stouffer's logo looms high. Acquired by Nestlé in 1973, Stouffer's was the first of many brands on the now 82-acre campus, located near the intersection of Harper and Bainbridge roads in the eastern Cleveland suburb.

Over the years, more Nestlé businesses – and employees – have moved to Solon. Soon, more than 2,300 people will work on the campus, now home to Nestlé USA's Food and Baking divisions, Nestlé Development Center Solon, and several other businesses and corporate functions.

To accommodate continued growth in business and people, the Harper Road Building, which opened in 1969, has undergone a complete renovation and is the first Nestlé corporate site in the U.S. to adopt the Nestlé Global Smarter Workplace standards and guidelines. This "smart office" design features an open workspace with natural lighting and meeting spaces designed to foster enhanced

communication and collaboration. The 103,000-square-foot, \$21 million project houses some of Nestlé USA's most critical functions.

#### Creatively accommodating growth

In 2016, Nestlé announced that its Technical & Production organization (which includes business functions ranging from quality management and regulatory, to engineering and safety, health and environment) as well as all Supply Chain teams (including procurement and supply chain finance) would transition to the multi-functional Solon campus. The move would bring these critical functions closer to Nestlé USA facto-

ries, 75% of which are located in the eastern half of the country.

These teams, which were assigned to the Harper Road Building, will be the first Nestlé employees in the U.S. to utilize the global New Ways of Working/Smarter Workplace concept.

"Our goal was to create a hub for both Technical & Production and Supply Chain to bring their teams under one roof in Solon without adding real estate, and to not only optimize space, but also provide unique amenities for employees that allow them to choose where and how to work in order to be most productive," says Nestlé USA Head of Corporate Facilities and Security Kira Kabo, LEED AP+.





**WORKABLE ARRANGEMENT** The flexible office environment incorporates work stations with sit-to-stand desks (top), intimate huddle rooms (middle) and conference rooms with the latest in computer and A/V technology (bottom).



To help bring the project to life, Nestlé engaged Westlake Reed Leskosky/DLR Group for interior design and Infinity Construction for interior construction services.

While many firms approach space optimization as simply including more workstations in the same square footage, Nestlé looked at it differently. Utilizing the New Ways of Working/Smarter Workplace global guidelines, there are no offices; instead, everyone works in a common, open and collaborative environment. Employees have access to a variety of areas beyond their workspaces, from huddle rooms, conference rooms and HUB spaces for team work to quiet rooms, a yoga/meditation/prayer area and a mother's room for added privacy.

"It's a global concept, but still unique in Northeast Ohio. Everyone, including senior leadership, works together in the same space," Kabo says. "In creating a more open, flowing work environment, our maximum building occupancy will jump to 700, up from 250 in the previous configuration, where the entire space consisted of large offices and test kitchens in the past. But this project is about much more than maximizing space – it's about working smarter."



### Customizable options

From the beginning, Nestlé wanted to involve employees and take feedback into consideration, so a robust and people-oriented Change Management program was implemented. A diverse group of "space champions" were selected from across the Technical & Production team to share input on major workplace protocols and decisions. Employees ranged from new hires to seasoned veterans, and represented different genders, ethnicities and demographics. All "space champions" were flexible, adaptable and committed to making the adjustment as smooth as possible for the organization.

To introduce the campus to the new set-up, Nestlé organized a workplace





**ENCOURAGING COLLABORATION** Multi-purpose HUBs offer a place to gather for lunch or informal meetings. With a variety of tables and seating, mostly from Herman Miller and Steelcase, these spaces can be customized depending on the size and purpose of a gathering.

fair for employees to see the workspaces under consideration and to talk with the architects, furniture vendors and the in-house Facilities Management and Design team about the floor plan and amenities. The goal was to create a pleasant and productive environment that employees felt good about.

As part of the new global standards, each employee is assigned their own personal workspace, and can also utilize dozens of additional areas within the office, each with unique characteristics for specialized work situations.

Each individual workstation features a Herman Miller Sit-to-Stand desk and Herman Miller Aeron chair with adjustable lumbar support, along with tackable walls and storage behind and under the desk. Worktops are electronically raised or lowered with the touch of a button; when the desktop is in the raised position, the sleek Aeron chair slides easily underneath for storage. To maximize natural light, distances

from all workstations to the exterior wall line were minimized wherever possible.

Each employee receives a touchscreen laptop with dual monitors. Atop each monitor, a small light can be illuminated

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**Kira Kabo**  
Nestlé USA

green or red as a visual cue to encourage respect for those deep in thought. Red means “please do not disturb,” while green indicates that the employee is approachable.

#### **Space for collaboration or quiet**

When employees are working on confidential projects or need to concentrate

without interruption, they can opt to utilize quiet rooms where a variety of workstations are offered.

“We encourage employees to embrace the entire floor as their workspace,” Kabo says. “You decide where you want to work and when you want to work there. If you have a conference call at 10 a.m. and you want to sit in the most comfortable chair with your feet up on an ottoman, please do so. We don’t want anyone to feel like they are glued to their desk.”

Conference rooms fall into two classes – assigned and unassigned. Small conference rooms and huddle rooms that have seating for fewer than six people can be used without making reservations. Different types and combinations of tables and chairs are available for customized meetings.

Three conference rooms are available in the front lobby area without having to pass security. Providing rooms outside of the secured area allows for easier access for visitors and vendors and more





**IDEA BUILDING** An innovation area offers global teleconference capabilities and comfortable, movable seating to accommodate large groups as well as informal meetings.

efficient meetings. Each room is walled with glass, with an ivory film simulating the trademark Nestlé “Nest” pattern. A long horizontal strip of film on the glass is printed with numerous, well-known Nestlé brand logos.

An innovation area and all conference rooms are equipped with the latest in computer and A/V technology suitable for groups of any size. Teleconference rooms also open to adjacent conference rooms to increase capacity. Glass storefronts provided by Haworth bring natural light to conference rooms within the space.

Quiet rooms are available for tasks requiring concentration or privacy. Workspace protocol dictates that when working in a quiet room, you cannot be interrupted or disturbed. Brody WorkLounges from Steelcase are scattered throughout the quiet rooms, akin to the first-class seats used for international flights. These small pods have curved, half-height walls that wrap around reclining seats with comfortable

footrests and swing-around tabletops for tablets or laptops.

For quiet moments and uninterrupted focus, a prayer/meditation/yoga room was created. Comfortable pillows dot the hardwood floor in this room, which is situated at the end of a short corner corridor to assure a quiet, contemplative area.

Several HUB areas offer large communal spaces where entire departments might meet for a town hall-style meeting. These versatile areas also lend themselves as break rooms, lunch rooms or places to display larger projects with many people gathered around to collaborate. The spaces feature high top tables, standard round tables, booths, large work surfaces and serpentine, comfortable seating from Herman Miller and Steelcase that can be customized depending on the meeting size and purpose.

Stainless steel kitchen appliances can be used for food preparation and storage, and a variety of Nestlé coffees from Nespresso, NESCAFÉ Dolce Gusto and

Nestlé Professional are available, plus dozens of snacks and refreshments.

### Challenges of low-ceiling space

In using existing space with low floor-to-ceiling dimensions, the concern is always to maximize natural light and keep the space as open as possible. In doing so, the architects paid considerable attention to the choice of ceilings.

“From our perspective, ceilings are one of the most important components of architecture,” says Ronald A. Reed, FAIA, principal with Westlake Reed Leskosky/DLR Group, which designed the space. “Ceilings are how you gauge the size and proportions of a space. Floors are generally deceptive because they are full of furniture, and you can’t see the intersection between floor and wall. By running ceilings continuously above the full height glass walls of the conference rooms and the huddle rooms, the walls cease to exist and the ceilings flow continuously. This type of design makes the space feel more expansive. We can then



**FINDING FOCUS** Several huddle rooms offer a private space for small group conversations, conference calls and projects that require uninterrupted focus.

alter the feel of a space by using the ceilings as a visual yardstick.”

Open office spaces, including work stations and conference rooms, utilize 2x2 and 2x4 lay-in LED lighting, while public and HUB spaces, including walkways and lobbies, feature design element lighting. The lights in the open office area are self-dimming to allow more daylight to naturally fill the space on bright days and save energy.

“All lighting is LED, and we utilized light harvesting for sustainability in the studio spaces,” says Michael Fant, project manager/senior associate for DLR Group. “We actually used two separate philosophies for lighting. For offices, we used lay-in fixtures in the acoustical grid. Then, Ron [Reed] designed a different type of lighting for the public spaces and the HUB spaces, since both ceilings and flooring determine how you feel about a space.”

Sound control was also handled in a two-pronged approach. Acoustical ceilings have additional absorptive material, and a white noise system was added.

For flooring, Nestlé selected a custom-designed pointillistic graphic-print created by Chicago’s Milliken Carpet. Nestlé blues are incorporated into a gray carpet, with a random pattern and more blue appearing along the exterior walls.

### Building the dream

Nestlé USA engaged Westlake Reed Leskosky/DLR Group in early 2016 to begin planning. Infinity Construction began demolition of the former space during the summer of 2016, and construction commenced in the fall of that year.

The first floor consists of three separate areas that now appear seamless, with finishes that flow from one section to the next. A new entrance foyer was added facing Harper Road to provide a wind break before entering the reception area. Red glazed wall tiles serve to accent the entrance and pay homage to Stouffer’s logo color.

Because Nestlé was on an aggressive timeline to relocate the Technical &

Production and Supply Chain functions to Solon, regular construction timelines were cut in half. The team maintained the schedule despite issues experienced with the space.

When challenges arose, the construction team partnered closely with Nestlé to identify an appropriate resolution. For example, they paid close attention to sorting out utility feeds that connect the buildings at the intersection of Bainbridge and Harper roads, including the frozen foods plant and Harper Road Building along the west side of Harper Road, and Cleveland Clinic Solon Family Health Center and Nestlé USA buildings along the

east side. While accidentally cutting a utility feed is an annoyance, in this case it could have had disastrous consequences. With good planning and precise attention to detail, the project was completed without incident.

Jim Fantozi, vice president of construction services for Infinity Construction, was also faced with maintaining temperatures and minimal noise level for employees on the second and third floors of the Harper Road Building while trying to demolish and renovate the first floor, all as windows and HVAC systems were removed and replaced.

“We were averaging about 90 workers on the job each day, with another





**PEACE + QUIET** A prayer/meditation/yoga room gives employees a space to embrace quiet moments and uninterrupted focus. Comfortable pillows dot the hardwood floor in this room.

crew of 24 working second shift,” says Fantozzi. “It took constant coordination between carpet, furniture and technology installers who were working beside us as we completed each phase of the construction. However, with daily sequencing meetings, everyone was able to accomplish their part and accommodate the aggressive schedule.”

“Because this was a Nestlé pilot project in the North American market, we needed to make adjustments along the way,” Kabo says. “But the entire construction and design team was flexible throughout the renovation process. Also, we’re grateful for our in-house team, who dedicated so much time to making sure there were no delays and that the project ran smoothly.”

### **An employee-friendly space**

After a mere seven months, employees began returning to the space in February 2017. Technical & Production now occupies 55,000 square feet on the first floor, which is the largest of the three in the building. The Supply

Chain team will begin occupying the upper floors in September.

“I just love to see people use this employee-friendly space, where they are free to walk around and do their job in any of several settings,” says Fantozzi.

*“With daily sequencing meetings, everyone was able to accomplish their part and accommodate the aggressive schedule.”*

**Jim Fantozzi**  
Infinity Construction

“It’s very important that everything that comes out of our studio resonates with the people who use it,” adds Reed. “Also, I was impressed with the time the Nestlé internal team devoted to this project, helping to make this uniquely a Nestlé project, and enabling their employees to enjoy

the most creative and collaborative environment possible.”

The first floor was completed first, and the team was able to make refinements as the concept was expanded to the two upper floors.

“As the pilot project, we took the time to get things right so our work can be replicated easily when and if the concept is expanded to other Nestlé workplaces in North America. The space is flexible, so we were able to make a lot of configuration changes on the spot,” Kabo says.

“When we undertake a project of this significance, we hire partners, not just vendors,” Kabo continues. “Our philosophy is to work as a team to build the best space, and we solved problems together. Infinity Construction and Westlake Reed Leskosky/DLR were the very best partners throughout the entire project.” **P**

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