



4 Times Square Food Hall, New York

Whereas the lighting in New York's Times Square is cacophonous, it's subtly soothing on the fourth floor of 4 Times Square, otherwise known as the former Condé Nast headquarters and cafeteria. At the start of Y2K, the employee cafeteria was a sensation partly because Frank Gehry—hot off the heels of his Guggenheim Bilbao fame—designed it. Today, Condé Nast no longer resides there, and the exclusive dining space is now inclusive thanks to a renovation and expansion by STUDIOS Architecture and a new human-centric lighting concept by Loop Lighting and USAI.

With current "residential" workplace trends in mind—the most popular ones being occupant wellness and flexible spaces—the building owner, Durst Corporation, sought to provide an amenity that could meet such criteria. At the same time, it desired to keep the architecturally significant cafeteria. The client finally concluded that the rest of the fourth floor should be an extension of amenities—only for all building tenants to enjoy as opposed to one company.

The architects transformed the remaining space into a hospitality suite comprising a farm-to-table artisanal food hall, coffee bar, and garden-evoking flexible space. (The south end of the floor, however, features a drastically different group of bookable meeting and event spaces run by Convene.) To visually connect the dining and lounging zones with Gehry's signature undulating forms, the project team incorporated elements ranging from sinuous seating to a 180-degree curved living wall.

Meanwhile, the original moody cafeteria received a brightened face-lift tying it to the new biophilic spaces—while still being respectful of Gehry's design, of course. The team kept the undulating glass but refinished the blue titanium ceiling panels and twisting columns in white, reupholstered the original banquettes in a light greige hue, replaced the laminate flooring with white oak, and swapped out the yellow tables with crisp white thermoformed Corian tables.

Finally, STUDIOS worked with Loop Lighting and USAI to develop a lighting program that could promote wellness. "With a much larger floor plate, we weren't looking at one room," says John Newman, a partner at Loop Lighting. "We were looking to solve a design problem that reimaged the one-of-a-kind architectural element and weave it through the new food hall, dining area, café, meeting spaces, and other areas."

The resulting program mingles layers of color LEDs and USAI's Color Select tunable-white LEDs to mimic the sun's natural cycle throughout the day—in turn tapping into emotional connections to the outdoors and circadian rhythms. From 6 a.m. to 7 a.m., a warm white (2700 Kelvin) paired with amber accents mimics a sunrise to gently wake up the early birds. When people are breakfasting in the next few hours, the lights shift to a more neutral warm white without the added colors. At noon, the LEDs transition into an energizing cool white (3700K), accompanied by light blue tones to evoke blue skies. Mid-afternoon, the white lights transition back to a more neutral tone (3200K) while the light blue gradually deepens into more saturated blues. At 5 p.m.—the building's happy hour—the lighting returns to a warm (2700K) white but with magenta accents, simulating sunset. The luminaires dim to candlelight levels from 6 p.m. onward, when the space becomes a bar and lounge. Aiding one's circadian rhythm, the lighting scheme is a far cry—and respite—from the Times Square illuminations outside. ■