

**BROWN UNIVERSITY**  
South Street Landing  
Providence, RI

**Project Partners**

Gensler Architects  
Gilbane Construction  
Fort Point Project Management

**Trends**

Consolidation  
Collaboration  
Brand + Culture

**Solutions**

Furniture



Conference room and open collaboration | Photos © Robert Benson Photography

**Brown renovates historical South Street landing**

Brown University was running out of space on their main campus and needed to accommodate growth for academic departments and classrooms. Committed to the revitalization of Providence and the preservation of historic buildings, the 300,000 SF vacant power plant was selected to undergo a major renovation. Today, the South Street Landing building is the new home of 425 employees from 11 administrative departments that were previously dispersed across the campus. High exposed ceilings, natural wood and steel structures maintain the building's historical look and help create a modern and inviting aesthetic that employees love. By relocating the administrative personnel to South Street landing, Brown has not only created a more collaborative, engaged culture but also contributed to the revitalization of Providence's Jewelry District.

**Opportunity to ignite cultural change**

After the vacant power plant was acquired, Gensler led a 2 year study to determine the approach for the space transformation. The length of the building spans a ¼ mile, end to end. This was a huge change from the small historic homes on campus that administrative staff had previously worked in. Brown's goal was to move people out of private offices and into open workspaces to encourage a culture of collaboration. To avoid a sea of desks in this large space, it was important to create small communities with distinct neighborhoods of 20-30 workstations. Within each neighborhood, employees work closely with each other and create strong personal connections. By locating private offices on the interior, employees can still enjoy access to natural light and views of the river. In the new space, people are excited to choose where to work beyond their assigned workstations. A variety of touch down areas, cubbies, collaborative and common areas give employees the freedom to move around throughout the workday. Many administrators that have only communicated by phone for the past 10 years are now meeting face-to-face for the first time in these common collaborative spaces and hallways.



Common hallway collaboration | Campfire Big Tables and stools



Answer workstations | Migration adjustable height worksurfaces

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**Individual workspaces – personalized & adjustable in height**

Before move-in, every employee had the choice of two workstation designs, the “heads down” workstation, offering the greatest privacy, and the “collaborative” workstation, designed as a U shape for 2 people to interact with one another. Employees also felt empowered to choose from a set of worktools that attach to the slate wall within their workstations – options included binder bins, square dishes, pencil cups, paper holders, hanging file folder brackets and an in/out tray. Each workstation and private office was outfitted with a height-adjustable worksurface and an ergonomic task chair. Along the top of the workstation panels, additional glass panels were installed along main hallways and egresses to provide additional privacy.

**Collaborative spaces – open, closed, reservable, impromptu**

The 3rd, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floors offer a variety of options for planned and impromptu meetings in both enclosed and open spaces. The Steelcase Room Wizard system allows employees to reserve the use of 5-person huddle rooms, multi-purpose rooms, and conference rooms in advance or on the fly when rooms are available. The remaining open spaces can be used on a first come, first serve basis and include 1-person private rooms, collaborative areas along the perimeter, community tables and soft seating in the open hallways, a mother’s room and two pantries per floor.

**Thoughtful communication strategy**

Knowing that the new environment at South Street Landing would represent a huge change in the way employees worked, Brown hired Fort Point Partners to lead a communication strategy to engage employees and foster workplace satisfaction. Every department identified move champions that participated in regular meetings to discuss potential concerns, from parking and security to nearby restaurants and amenities. Employees were involved early in the process and previewed furniture mockups. The move team developed new protocols and etiquette for moving from private offices to an open plan environment. Employees were invited to tour the space, experiencing a sneak peek as the construction progressed. Six weeks before the move, there were several town hall meetings to provide updates and answer employee questions. On move days, each employee received a welcome package with a space map, along with a description of the building amenities and local retail establishments. The welcome center team was ready to answer questions and troubleshoot issues from furniture adjustability to IT support.

“ There were employees who had concerns about working in an open space and being away from the main campus. Having completed the move several months ago, the overwhelming consensus is that most people love the space, the natural light, and are surprised by how much they like it – so much that they would not want to go back to the old spaces on campus. ”

– Joanna Saltonstall  
Program Manager, Brown University



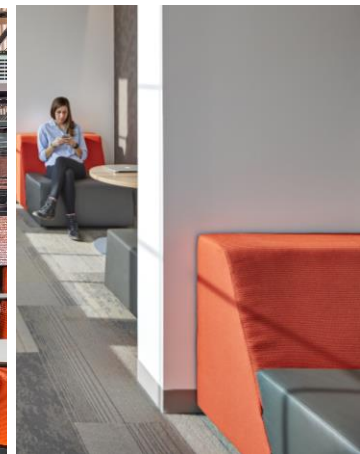
Pantries areas on each floor



Cafeteria



Divisible multipurpose room



Open collaboration nooks