

Design Trends

20 trends in hotel design

By Jena Tesse Fox | Mar 31, 2020 9:09am





*The AC South San Francisco, designed by CallisonRTKL, has spaces designed for a range of uses.
Photo credit: CallisonRTKL*

What do hoteliers need to know to keep up with the latest trends in hospitality design? We spoke to several designers to get their insights into what's happening now and what hoteliers can expect for the future.

1. **Keep Things Hyperlocal:** “We will continue to see an evolved need for hotels and resorts to be of-the-place they ‘live’ in,” said Clay Markham, SVP and sector leader for CallisonRTKL’s hospitality division. “Being more integrated into the look and feel as well as with the community they serve is a growing ‘must.’”
2. **Clean is King:** White linens and materials make spaces look clean and sanitized, but a hotel shouldn’t look like a hospital. “You need a mix of warm and neutral hues that are timeless to keep it fresh for a longer period of time,” said Scott Rosenberg, president of Jonathan Nehmer + Associates.
3. **Balance Work and Life:** Business hotels are providing lounges and common areas with more flexible areas for a “WeWork” vibe, said Michael Pandolfi, principal at Jeffrey Beers International. ←
4. **Get Creative with Lights:** The current technology of LED strips and panel lighting lets designers create sources of light unlike before and in every shape possible, said HBA Los Angeles partner

Kathleen Dauber. “Rope light can be strung, pooled and twisted to create flowing forms to encircle any space.”

5. **Take Advantage of Technology:** High-tech lighting controls in guestrooms are gaining ground. “Yet owners are trying to be aware of which functions the guest will care about or not use, so as not to overuse technology,” Rosenberg said.
6. **Incorporate Voice Command:** Guests will be able to access a range of spaces and communicate hands-free with hotel devices such as TV remotes, phones and more. Use of sensors will increase as more people avoid touching handles and door pulls, said Dauber.
7. **Rooms go Deskless:** Traditional desks are disappearing from some rooms in order to appeal to the laptop users who can work from a bed or a couch—but some properties are keeping the classic desk in place for traditional business travelers.
8. **And Dressers go Drawer-less:** “You don’t have any hidden places in the room to hide dirt or leave your belongings behind,” Rosenberg said.
9. **Small is the New Big:** Now that TVs are smaller and dressers and credenzas don’t need to be 24 inches deep, Rosenberg said hoteliers can make the room narrower without feeling like the room is smaller. “This helps construction costs come down as well.”
10. **New Lobbies go Bigger:** While guestrooms may be shrinking, lobbies are getting bigger. “Creating opportunities for more communal moments in the public spaces of hotels allows for smaller rooms to function as havens rather than spaces guests will spend most of their stay,” said Markham.
11. **Let Technology do the Check-in:** “We are designing one hotel with a front reception-desk area that has more electronic check-in stations to have your keys made for you than there are people stationed at the front desk,” said Rosenberg.
12. **Incorporate Food and Beverage:** Designers are curating moments within hotels that celebrate local food and drinks in a way that’s personalized to the hotel’s locale, said Dauber.
13. **Bring on a Branding Firm:** As authenticity and individuality become important elements, brands are hiring branding firms as another layer with interior design, to set the tone of the story, its relationship to the neighborhood, and the influence on colors, fonts, proportions of graphics, uniforms, distinctive art, lighting and music, said Rosenberg.
14. **Take Cues from Other Markets:** Brands across different industries, like Baccarat, LVMH and Equinox, are dipping their toes into the hospitality game. “Building loyalty among guests is the key to success, and the more companies can immerse their customers in their unique brand experience, the more likely they are to return,” said Markham.
15. **Add Unique Perks:** In one lobby, JBI added a “pseudo-recording booth” where guests could conduct their podcasts or host video conferences using their own phones and laptops, said Pandolfi. 
16. **Design for Health and Well-being:** Travelers have an intrinsic need for wellness beyond the spa or gym, Dauber said. Hotels are getting spaces for workouts including an entry “get ready” area in the guestroom and areas for group fitness. There might even be dedicated outdoor space to connect fitness and nature.

17. **Keep the Staff Healthy:** Healthy, happy staff help keep guests healthy and happy, too. “Details such as break rooms that have access to natural daylighting are seemingly small, but make a huge difference for an employee’s day-to-day experience,” said Markham.
18. **Design for Communities:** “Lobbies are being designed to accommodate coworking spaces that are open to communities as well as guests,” said Markham. These environments can double as event spaces, letting the hotel further engage with its neighborhood.
19. **Change Throughout the Day:** “We have seen interest in redesigning space to provide more flexibility, moments where you can transform the look of a space to reflect a menu change during different hours of the day with a change of artwork, partitioning off areas for smaller service or redressing table-top accessories,” said Pandolfi. 
20. **Build for Future Use:** “Hospitality spaces also must consider a fluctuating economy, and be equipped with agile spaces that can withstand a shift,” said Markham. Designing building envelopes that can assist with potential changes—such as moving a rooftop deck to street level spaces—can ease the strain of having to adapt.