

# LD+A

LIGHTING DESIGN and APPLICATION

Foundational Changes  
Where the Griz Gather  
The Twain Shall Meet

MAY 2026



## COME TOGETHER

Crafting connections in commercial and  
institutional environments



# Foundational Changes

**A journey of progression, transformation, and connection**

**W**hen Foundation Medicine relocated to a new 580,000-sq-ft space in Boston's Seaport District, its goal was to expand its laboratory capacity while reinforcing the company's growing brand within the precision medicine industry. To achieve this, it assembled a comprehensive architecture and design team that included Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting (SFIL).

"One of the biggest design drivers of this project was the idea of the journey, specifically the patient journey," said SFIL Principal Reiko Kagawa. While no patients pass through the headquarters, this idea of "progression, transformation, and connection" informed both architectural and lighting decisions from the beginning of design conception through completion.

Designed by architecture firm Gensler, the new 16-story headquarters features open circulation paths and sweeping vertical movement. On the lower levels, large windows connect laboratory spaces to circulation areas, bridging science

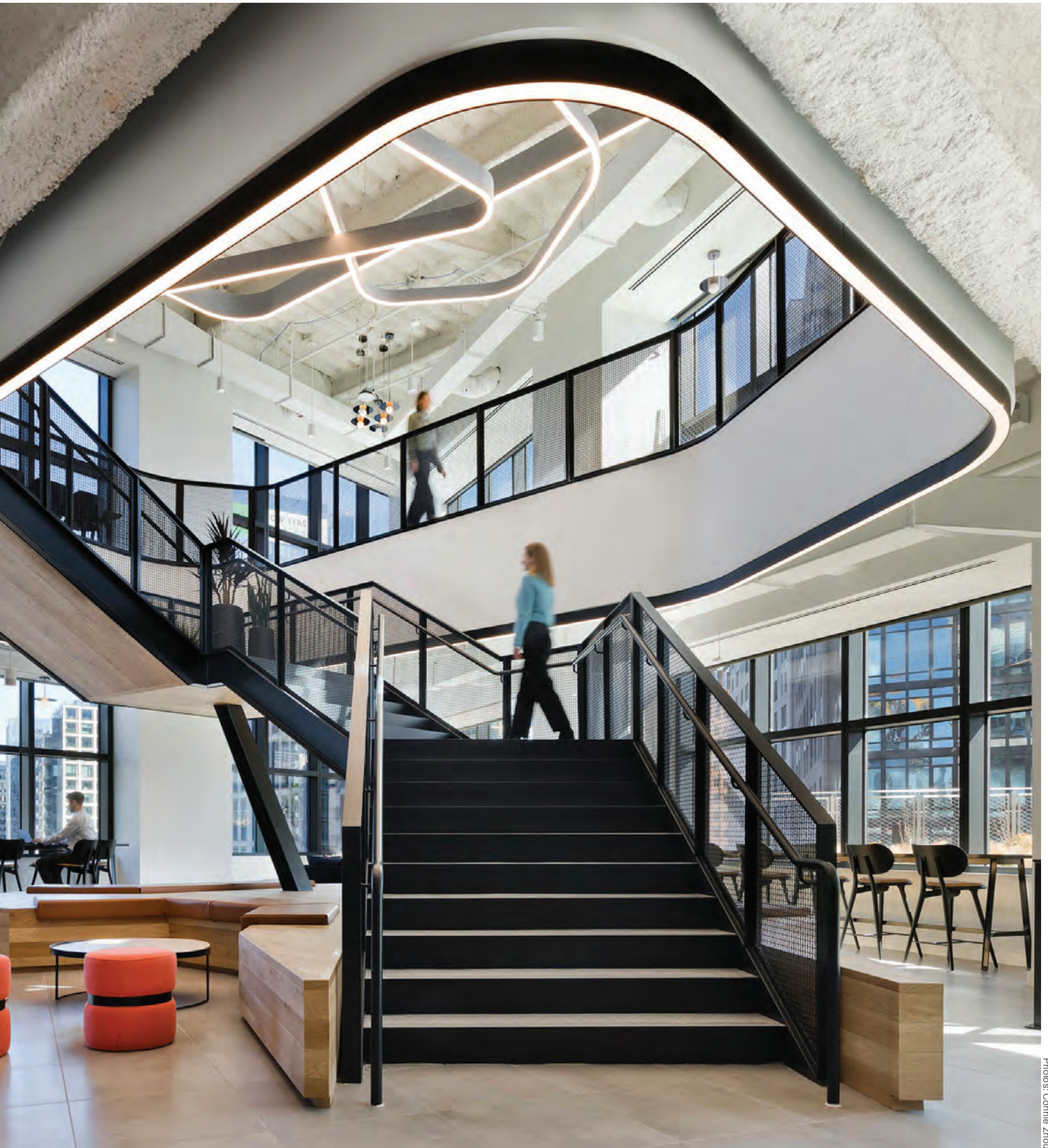
and people. Throughout all floors, shared spaces encourage not just collaboration but chance meetings. Open stairs act as the spine of the building, progressing upwards through floors that are designed around unique themes such as "innovation," "resilience," and "optimism."

In this facility where science and humanity intersect, illumination is a tool for clarity, care, and progress. The lighting decisions prioritize occupational wellness, sustainability, and ease of maintenance, while subtly enhancing the integrated patient-centered motif.

Throughout the building, custom curvilinear fixtures, the majority provided by Lumos, hang from the ceilings in organic designs. These large overlapping fixtures are constructed with acoustic felt backing that adds "visual softness and comfort," a feature that was rare for curved-form lighting at the time of the project's design. These curvilinear fixtures provide continuity throughout the space: They are suspended at the top of the



Repeated lines of light  
begin at the central stairs.



Photos: Connie Zhou

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Individually dimmable track heads allow intensity control for throw lengths, graze textural wood walls, and integrate into an architectural pocket beneath interconnecting stairs.



communicating stairs and “ground quiet corners,” encouraging rest and reflection.

Inside laboratories, the work demands lighting that is wet-location rated and ISO appropriate. Rather than defaulting to traditional 1-by-4-ft lab troffers, the design team selected black surface-mounted linear fixtures from Selux Lighting. The slim profile provides a sleek appearance that makes a statement and aligns with the architecture. Each fixture integrates the LED driver and e-board, creating a sealed, streamlined assembly while supporting precise multi-channel control. The system, fitted with BIOS Lighting circadian controls, delivers higher levels of equivalent melanopic lux to support productivity and circadian rhythm for shift-workers. The result is a rigorously technical lighting solution that supports wellness while being “clean and modern at the same time.”

The Stencil, a modular linear LED fixture by Axis Lighting with integrated downlights and wall-wash optics, was used throughout all open circulation areas on workplace floors to illuminate core walls. The building’s irregular geometry meant that fixture lengths and wall-wash directions were constantly changing, resulting in luminaires customized for each space. Downlights were integrated in the centers of each customized fixture. “That approach really helped highlight the architecture and reinforce movement through the building,” said SFIL Principal Ben Strauss.

Selux Piix fixtures installed in seating areas are the “unsung heroes” of the project, noted Kagawa. These micro-baffle downlights, integrated between baffles in the open ceiling, are designed to visually recede. “You almost don’t notice them,” she said. “They create a calm background



that lets the architectural and decorative elements stand out.”

The project isn’t without decorative lighting, but it’s selectively used, explained Strauss: “There aren’t a lot of decorative fixtures, and that’s intentional. They’re used where they have the most impact.” An example is in the collaborative hubs on each floor. Here, selecting the “twisty” Palindrome fixture by Rich Brilliant Willing was an effort between the lighting design team and the architectural design team, with the resulting fixture symbolizing connection and progression. “This fixture visually reinforces the idea of the journey, each point connecting to the next,” said Kagawa.

### Creating an Experience

“For us, lighting design isn’t just about selecting features. It’s also about how those fixtures are controlled. The

experience of the space is created through both,” Strauss said. The lighting control strategy was therefore designed to provide adaptable, responsive lighting that supports a variety of work modes across labs, offices, and collaboration spaces.

Jennifer Bean, associate and controls specialist at SFIL, selected a hybrid system manufactured by Lutron Electronics that combines both the Lutron Quantum and Lutron Vive platforms. “Quantum provides centralized, networked control for coordinated facility-wide lighting, scene recall, scheduling, and A/V integration,

**Top:** Black surface-mounted linear fixtures provide a sleek appearance and higher levels of equivalent melanopic lux.

**Bottom:** Organic pendants with connected dots represent the continuing pathway through the patient’s treatment journey.

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Visually discreet micro-baffle downlights define the seating zone and can be viewed from the exterior.



while Vive supports wireless, room-based control for standalone spaces. Digital dimming, preset scenes, and flexible programming—including the open office areas—allow future rezoning,” said Bean. Together, these layered systems deliver “precise, adaptable, and user-friendly control” across all spaces.

This approach “ensures the lighting is not just feature-driven, but responsive, adaptable, and supportive of evolving work modes,” continued Bean. The BIOS Technology in lab and lab support areas promotes occupant comfort, focus, and well-being. Custom engraved wall stations with clearly defined preset scenes allow occupants to select scenes or make localized adjustments while “maintaining overall design consistency and ensuring uniform operation throughout the building,” said Bean. Lighting also integrates directly with the A/V system, enabling seamless scene transitions that automatically respond to presentations, video playback, and collaborative activities.

As Strauss noted, the result is a system where performance and aesthetics are intertwined: “The way lighting responds, adapts, and supports different modes of work is just as important as how it

looks. That’s how you actually create an experience.”

### Supporting Wellness and Sustainability

Design for the project began in February 2020, coinciding with the onset of the COVID-19 shutdowns. Despite the challenges of remote coordination, the project progressed without major modifications and ultimately remained on schedule. The experience prompted deeper reflection on the role of lighting design in supporting health, sustainability, and transparency.

From the outset, the team prioritized healthier materials and greater product disclosure. In 2020, this commitment took shape through an internal initiative focused on improving material transparency across specifications. Approximately 30% of the selected lighting fixtures carried material transparency labels, a level of disclosure well ahead of industry norms. Achieving this required active negotiation with manufacturers, and the three-name specifications for many fixture types requested by the client helped. As Strauss noted, “If one manufacturer agreed to certain conditions, like material transparency, we used that as leverage

to encourage others to meet the same standard.”

Sustainability considerations extended beyond material content to encompass energy efficiency and system integration. The building’s chilled-beam HVAC system, while environmentally friendly, limited where fixtures could be placed. “In the open space areas, the ceiling constraints were very restrictive,” said Strauss. “We studied a lot of different fixtures to balance visual brightness, uniformity, and spacing while working around the chilled beams.” The resulting lighting solution contributed to the building’s overall LEED Platinum certification while supporting demanding workspace environments.

The lighting design for Foundation Medicine transcends simple utility, balancing the technical demands of precision medicine with subtle touches that ground the space in the human element. In this Seaport headquarters, the lighting supports the important work of scientists today while reflecting the “progression and optimism” essential to the patient journeys of tomorrow. **S**

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### THE DESIGNERS

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Reiko Kagawa, Member IES, is a principal at Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting.

Ben Strauss, Member IES, is a principal at Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting.

Josh Feinstein is founding partner and a principal at Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting.

Jennifer Bean, Member IES, is an associate and controls specialist at Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting.

Carol Williams, Member IES, is an associate at Sladen Feinstein Integrated Lighting.

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### THE AUTHOR

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Katianne Williams, co-author of the STEM guide *Count Girls In*, enjoys writing about innovative projects and inspirational people.