

# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF “HOSPITABLE THINKING”





Traditionally, real estate development has involved scaling value through land and buildings. Increasingly, that value is dependent on scaling emotion. We accomplish this through a philosophy known as “hospitable thinking.” As the designer and architect Charles Eames once said, “The role of the designer is that of a very good, thoughtful host anticipating the needs of his guests.” This mindset pervades everything we do at Presidio Bay Ventures.

We design spaces that catalyze emotional, meaningful and memorable experiences. We transform physical locations into coveted destinations where people are eager to congregate, connect, collaborate, create, relax, and play. Our buildings provoke a sense of arrival and inspire an innate feeling of ease and welcome. We complement space design by programming immersive experiences that amplify the ambiance. We apply this philosophy to all projects, regardless of product type.

The term hospitable thinking was trademarked in 2017 by AvroKO, a New York-based firm renowned for its world-class design in hotels, restaurants, and bars across the globe. We have collaborated with AvroKO on several projects, as we share their values and philosophy around design and purposeful placemaking. In recent years, hospitable thinking has crossed over to office, residential, and retail spaces. “Hospitality has definitely gotten more multi-experiential and more layered,” William Harris, an AvroKO co-founder, said in an interview. “People are looking for more experience, more variety, more options. Often in spaces we’re creating many different experiences through different parts of the day so people can really craft their own experience and tell their own story.”

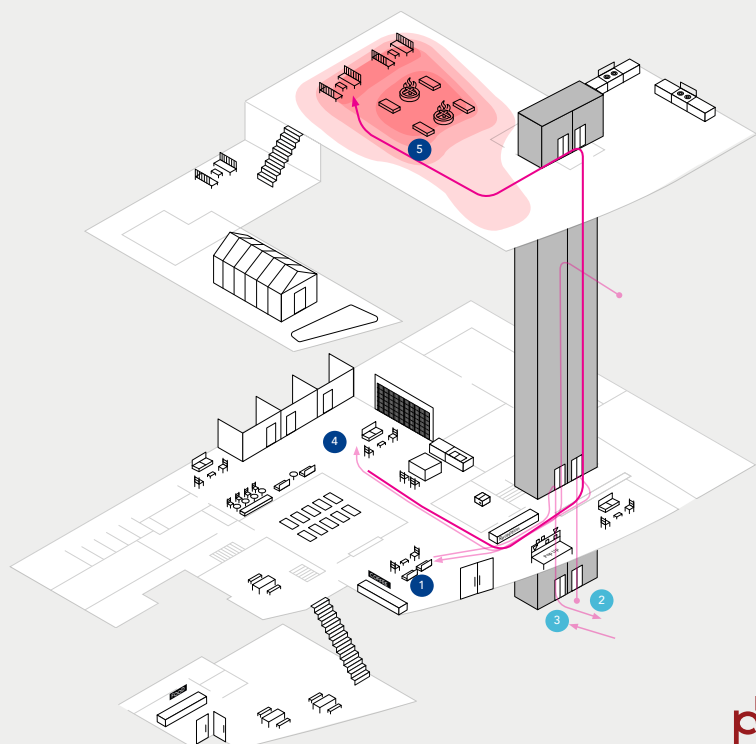
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## EXPERIENCE MAPPING

We partnered with Rapt Studio to study the experiences of core demographics to understand their needs and build better amenities and interactions tailored to them.

- 1 Carla has coffee / breakfast at the cafe
- 2 She rents Zipcar to Marin
- 3 She returns Zipcar to garage
- 4 Grabs some wine from storage
- 5 Carla hosts gathering around rooftop firepit





## THE RISE OF DESIGN AND SERVICE CULTURE

The trend in hospitable thinking began with the democratization of design. The explosion of media in the 20th century — newspapers, magazines, movies, radio, television, cable, the internet — not only launched the information age but promoted celebrity, luxury, high fashion, status. Designer brands were reserved for the wealthy until the 1980s, when technology made supply chains more efficient. Global manufacturers, dominated by firms in China, began to successfully “knockoff” runway looks and get them into stores in the same season as the originals. The quality, selection, and availability of goods exploded, and lower labor costs made them affordable to the masses.

In the 2000s, the creation of social media — from Facebook to Instagram to Pinterest — cemented aesthetics as a cultural priority, and trends began proliferating instantly. Meanwhile, the evolution of personalization, reinforced by better and better algorithms, led to a desire for customization, authenticity and an artisanal quality in both goods and experiences — food, travel, health and wellness. These days, discerning consumers aren’t looking for knockoffs. They don’t want to live in cookie-cutter homes, work in drab office buildings, eat at chain restaurants, vacation like tourists, or workout in mass-market gyms.

Meanwhile, service culture also evolved. The grand downtown department stores of the early 1900s were staffed by professional counter clerks who catered to the elites of the Gilded Age. The phrase, “the customer is always right” originates from this era. Rapid post-war suburban growth, self-service discount stores, and overbuilding in the mid-20th century led to the decline of the department store — and with it, the idea of customer care. The notion was revived in the 1980s and ‘90s by companies such as Disney, which launched the Disney Institute in 1996 to train other businesses in its insights and practices. Service technology also mushroomed, from call centers and email to live chats, chat bots and Twitter; along with convenient, customer-friendly tactics such as easy product returns, free shipping, and overnight delivery.

In short, consumer expectations for both design and personal experiences have never been higher.

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## A DEEP FOCUS ON THE END-USER

A growing body of research in behavioral psychology has documented the effects of the built environment on human well-being. We are fundamentally social beings, yearning for interaction and unique experiences. Physical spaces that resonate can have a profound physiological effect, enabling our consciousness to flourish. At Presidio Bay, these insights inform all our design efforts, including land planning, architecture, building materials, art, interior layouts and features, common spaces, technology, amenities, and activity programming. We believe a holistic, organic approach to engaging the end-user is at the heart of purposeful placemaking.

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Presidio Bay Ventures starts the hospitable thinking process by defining our target audience — demographics, psychographics, and personas. Given the lengthy development cycle, especially in California, we forecast future behavioral patterns and push the envelope of design and operational innovation, so our properties set trends and exceed expectations when they open. At Presidio Bay, our diverse team, global perspective, and thoughtful curiosity keep the firm a step ahead of cultural, behavioral and aesthetic trends.

We also deploy meticulous scenario mapping, anticipating a day in the life of each of our target groups. We predict behavior patterns through the flow of space, so we can enhance daily routines and promote an innate feeling of security, convenience, and frictionless enjoyment. “Studies have shown that the brain can perceive even social discomfort as threatening and can trigger certain primal responses,” AvroKO co-founder Harris pointed out. “All it takes could be as simple as losing your way in a space or not having a logical, instinctual flow. It’s very important to bring a sense of anchoring, grounding and protection.”

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## ENGINEERING A BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE

In addition, we combine intentional exterior and interior planning to develop a cohesive visual identity for our properties. We incorporate storytelling, variety, and drama to activate the senses and provoke an emotional response. We also signal subtlety, with quiet and refined design elements and passive experiential design. Each amenity space, room, vibe, scent, and accessory is purposefully placed to tell a story and encourage an intended feeling. By doing this everywhere — on even the smallest scale — we can engineer behavior and support the calm and relaxing emotional response that people seek while on vacation, as well as a feeling of significance. “It’s about making people feel that their identity is noticed and matters; that they’re worthy and perhaps part of the space,” [noted Harris](#).

For example, our amenity spaces, both inside and outside, are grand and inviting to maximize the variety of experiences available to occupants and invite them to “choose their own adventure.” To this end, we think about our building design in moments or themes, like a play, with tiered story lines across interior “neighborhoods.” If any one space or place is used for the exact same function 24 hours a day, we have failed; spaces should enable and inspire flexible uses and spontaneous meetups. A final element of our hospitable thinking strategy is purposeful programming. Through curated, scheduled activities we inspire a sense of community, elevate the environment, and broaden its appeal.

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Interactions with beautifully designed, authentically curated, and comfortable spaces that trigger an emotional response and inspire meaningful and memorable experiences form the root of any successful placemaking strategy. When hospitable thinking is effective, end-users want to share the feeling with others — both in person and through social media platforms. This initiates a virtuous cycle, transforming the physical location into much more than a place. If Presidio Bay can inspire an emotional, visceral response to the places people live, work, or spend their free time, we can unlock something new — the next generation of experiential design.

Hospitable thinking makes our projects special. It serves as the keystone of placemaking. The interplay between design and emotion creates a gravitational pull that brings people back again and again, dynamics that lead to price elasticity and outsized returns. With all its energy focused on the end-user, hospitable thinking becomes a powerful differentiator, and creates an unequivocal advantage.

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