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## Science + Technology Perspectives

### Four Key Ideas from the 2023 Lab Design Conference

Hixson Interior Designer Lauren Michaels and Project Architect Shuting Zhao attended the 2023 Lab Design Conference in San Diego this year. The conference offers a wide variety of sessions and speakers regarding key topics and trends affecting the state of lab design. After attending sessions and meeting with other industry professionals, Lauren and Shuting walked away with these key insights:

**1. Re-use of existing buildings is ongoing.** Lab owners are continuing to choose to convert existing spaces, such as unused office space, into labs. This provides several key benefits, including lower initial costs and speed to market. Plus, says Shuting, "in some markets, particularly dense urban areas where the labor pool may be large, there just may not be available land to purchase."

Of course, converting office spaces to labs is not without challenges. How will lab air be ventilated? How will your operations affect the neighbors, or vice versa? Where will the additional mechanical equipment be located? [Make sure you read Hixson's Workplace Insights on converting existing office space to labs!](#)

**2. Mixed-use developments.** Just as with the re-use of existing buildings, lab owners are increasingly considering mixed-use developments for their new labs. The appeal is obvious. "It's all about the amenities, which, of course, help attract a workforce particularly in areas where there are multiple job options," said Lauren. "Things such as restaurants, gyms, childcare, public transportation, even walkability...all of which may not be in, available, or near a traditional business park setting."

**3. Artificial Intelligence.** Everyone is talking about AI these days, including at the Lab Design Conference. And like other applications, the use of AI in lab design right now is, at best, murky. "Using AI to generate lab



layouts with defined criteria is not something that is truly feasible for lab design at this time. In addition, AI doesn't really 'create' but instead pulls and re-stitches parts and pieces together from existing designs/ideas," said Shuting. "Therefore, many conversations still need to be had regarding copyright and intellectual property."

- 4. Flexibility and Adaptability.** The idea of making lab spaces flexible to be able to adapt to changing business demands continues to be a talked-about topic in the lab design space. "Spaces need to be 'generic' enough that they can change over time," said Shuting. "This means considering every aspect of the lab space for its adaptability, from ceiling heights all the way down to the structural system that is used." Lauren agreed. "From an interiors perspective, we're looking at things such as furniture layout. For example, can workstations and lab benches be moved around into other configurations?"

Attendance at events such as the Lab Design Conference are part of Hixson's commitment to Continuous Improvement...a commitment that helps us improve and grow our knowledge for our clients' benefit. [Learn more about Continuous Improvement at Hixson, and what it can mean for your next project, here.](#)

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