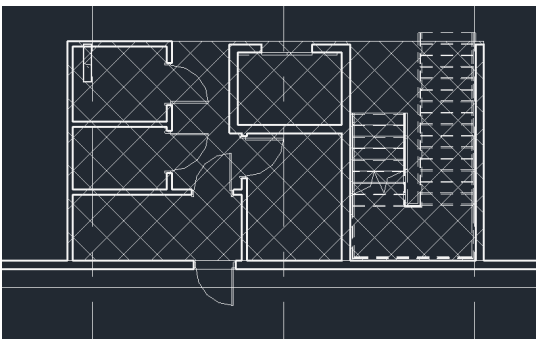


GENERAL REMINDERS

1. Professors will be responsible to self-jury their students and only submit the best two projects (2) per independently taught class/studio for judging in this competition
2. All final submittals are to be sent to: design4next@gmail.com All submittals are due by December 9th.
3. Submittals must be in PDF format and be **no greater than 24MB in file size** (no min/max on number of pages)
4. As a reminder, all student participants must be currently registered as juniors or seniors in their design program, 5TH year students enrolled into a 5-year Master's program, or in a Master's Program where there is no bachelor's degree offered or a master's program where the students have no bachelor's degree in design or other previous design experience.
5. Students must submit an entry as an individual, not as part of a team.
6. **All questions must be submitted by October 2nd**, and all questions must be submitted to: design4next@steelcase.com
7. Each student participating **MUST individually register no later than October 2nd** to be considered eligible. Students can register by going to this link: [STUDENT REGISTRATION LINK](#)
8. **If a student hasn't registered themselves via the link above and they are submitted into the competition as one of the two entries per independently taught class/studio, their project will not be considered eligible; therefore, please ensure each student participating registers themselves before the deadline of October 2nd.**

(NEW) Q+A QUESTIONS + ANSWERS – Questions submitted through September 25, 2026

New clarification for all programs. It has been identified that there was a discrepancy between the PDF and the Revit file regarding an exit door on the South side in the NIC area. The exit door was inadvertently left off the PDF; however, is shown on the Revit file which was communicated in the Q+A published on 9/23/2026. We have learned that many students have block planned accordingly and were using this exit as part of their egress strategy; therefore, in the space that was designed as (room C – water closet) in the diagrams shared on the document dated 9/23/2026 we are going to revert this back to a storage room with an exit door. Below shows how the door is shown in the design file:



We have also indicated that this does not align with the student's design intent and if another exit door is necessary to meet code requirements/egress strategy – or if door swings in the NIC area need to be configured differently – for the student's space planning, another exit door is permitted to accommodate this if necessary. Please note, this would be in addition to the door that is being added on the Northeast Corner – per the prior published Q+A – as well as the door mentioned above.

Q: Regarding the change to the North façade and addition of the exterior egress door on the Northeast corner that was omitted, we are asking if this door could remain a fixed window if an alternative location for an egress door is identified.

A: Considering this door is actually in the current built condition by the occupying tenant, also as shown by Google Earth, and identifying it was inadvertently switched to a fixed window from the exiting door in error when the revit file was being built from a CAD file and scrubbed to base building core and shell, this door should remain in place. As we mentioned in the published Q+A, if an additional exit door is needed to accomplish code compliant egress, they may add the door in a location of their choice to facilitate their design intent and meet code.

Q: Are we able to split up the print/storage room, into two separate rooms/floors?

A: Yes, this is permitted as long as the requirements are met for these spaces.

Q: Are students allowed to use one of the fire stairs as their monumental staircase?

A: No, the students should design and incorporate a new monumental staircase in a location of their choosing based on their design intent for the space they are creating.

Q: Can the stated square footage requirements for CEO, COO, and conference areas also include staging or lounge space outside of the formal space? Or is the square footage requirement for the enclosed office and conference space only?

A: If the students design the offices and conference spaces to meet the SF requirements and they wish to include a staging or lounge space outside of these spaces to meet their design intent, this is permitted if this is the direction they wish to take while meeting the SF requirements in the program.

Q: Since the stairs to the north can be open, and this is a prime location, can this be the monumental stair in the space? If so, can students redesign the stair to fit with their design intent? We assume the new design will be code compliant.

A: No. We want the students to identify a location to design and incorporate a monumental staircase that is independent of the fire egress stairs and they can locate it anywhere that meets their design intent and it needs to be code compliant.

Q: Can the Wild Card designated square footage be broken down into smaller components and distributed throughout the proposed space?

A: Considering the Wildcard space is left completely up to the students interpretation and we have not provided a SF requirement, yes, this can be done; however, since this space is specifically something that is receiving evaluation and points by the judges, they would need to clearly communicate how they have addressed and distributed the wildcard spaces and how it benefits the NEXT team.

Q: Can the Wellness Rooms be broken down into smaller components - i.e. individual pods - and distributed throughout the proposed space?

A: If the requirements for these spaces are met and does not exceed the SF allotment for these spaces, this could be done if this meets the students design intent.

Q: Can video screen be suspended from ceilings?

A: Yes, assume this is possible.

Q: In your recent Q&A, you indicated that the north stair is open and the south stair is enclosed, and that the south stair enclosure has been confirmed by the current occupant. However, this is not reflected in any of the provided documentation (Revit model or PDF). On the first floor, the south stair has no enclosure or door. On the second floor, the stair is completely open, including the run up to the roof access.

- Could you confirm whether the south stair is open, as shown in the Revit model, or enclosed? If it is enclosed, we will need additional documentation indicating the wall and door locations, as well as the egress path from the building.
- Could you also confirm that students are not required to enclose either stair, but may do so if they choose?

A: As we have stated in the published Q+A, the existing occupant of the space being used for the NEXT competition indicated the north stair as open and the south stair enclosed as their current built condition; however, we have recognized there is now a discrepancy when the revit file was scrubbed and returned to the assumed base building core and shell. Therefore, given this, and the codes for Florida that we provided, students are at liberty to leave these both as open, make both as enclosed, or a combination of both to meet their design intent for the space and they can provide the necessary door locations and swings for egress as necessary. **However, as a reminder, technically, both of these areas are in the NIC areas but we recognize this must be determined for egress strategies and spatial planning of the workplace.**

Q: There also appears to be a discrepancy between the program and the available square footage in the building shell. The Revit model shows 12,800 usable SF. The program includes 6,075 SF, and assuming a 25% efficiency factor adds approximately 1,500 SF, for a total of roughly 7,575 SF.

- Can the remaining 5,225 SF be allocated as additional space for any of the program requirements, including new program elements?
- Or is the expectation that this square footage be used entirely by the wildcard space, the content studio, and the product review room at the student's discretion?

A: We provided a much more generous circulation percentage than 25% to provide the students ultimate flexibility as well as knowing a monumental staircase would also be added within the space and eliminating USF. The students are welcome to make their wildcard space any size they wish that meets their design intent and provides for the needs of the NEXT occupants and how they organize and lay out the required spaces is left to their discretion.

Q: Thank you for referring me back to your September 14 email. I now understand that **A is the designated main entry into NEXT** and that **B represents architectural swinging gates providing access to the interior courtyard without entering NEXT.**

There is one aspect of the plan that I am still having difficulty interpreting spatially, and I want to make sure I provide the students with accurate information.

We understand the intended **function** of B; what we cannot determine from the supplied floor plan is its **architectural configuration**.

If B provides independent access from the exterior to the interior courtyard without passing through NEXT, could you please clarify the **physical circulation path from B to the courtyard**? On the plan, we cannot identify a corridor, passage, or opening connecting the east exterior side at B to the courtyard.

This is important for space planning because any independent passage would necessarily have a location and width and would affect the usable floor area and adjacencies along the east wing. If the route from B to the courtyard creates an independent passage through that wing, it appears that it could separate the area near A from the remainder of the east wing. **Could you please confirm whether that is the intended condition?**

If possible, could you provide an **enlarged floor-plan detail, marked-up diagram, photograph, or other visual** showing:

1. the exterior → B gate → courtyard circulation route; and
2. the main entry at A, since Steelcase has confirmed that A is the NEXT entry but the actual door/opening is difficult to identify on the supplied floor plan.

A: Regarding the courtyard access and the circulation, the area highlighted in yellow is the open air courtyard that can be accessed through the gates that were identified in location (B) as shown on the published Q+A. The area highlighted in green is the interior space of NEXT on the first floor. This shows that a person could enter/exit the courtyard through the gates without entering the interior of NEXT. Regarding your question about access from the east side, please note that the door shown with the red circle is a door that enters the courtyard as well as numerous sliding doors around the perimeter of the courtyard.



Q: Can students determine how much of the second floor they open for their monumental staircase? For example, making a large opening to connect the floors visually?

A: Yes, the students can determine as much space as they wish for the monumental staircase as long as all the required spaces are accomplished as well as all codes met.

Q: Can students design a monumental ramp in lieu of the staircase?

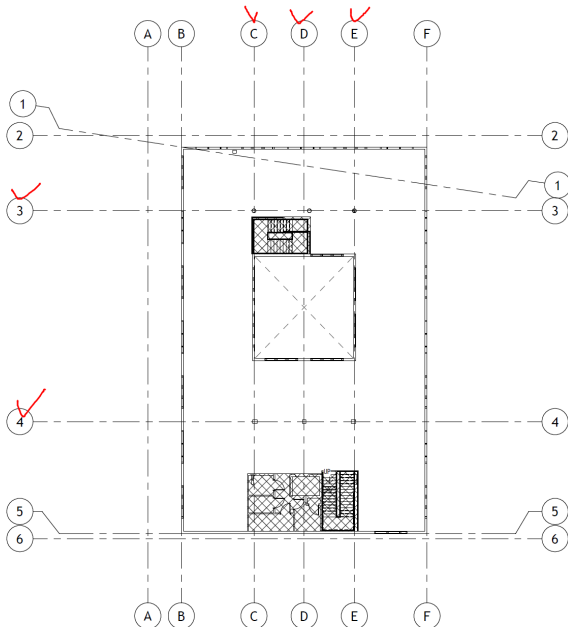
A: Yes, the students could choose to do this as they see it as a monumental ramp versus a monumental staircase if they choose to do so as long as all the required spaces are accomplished and all codes are met.

Q: Can additional openings from the 1st to 2nd floor be added? For example, a floor cut out with a surrounding railing for visual connection.

A: Yes, this is permitted as long as all the required spaces are accomplished and all codes are met.

(Prior) Q+A QUESTIONS + ANSWERS – Questions submitted through September 23, 2026

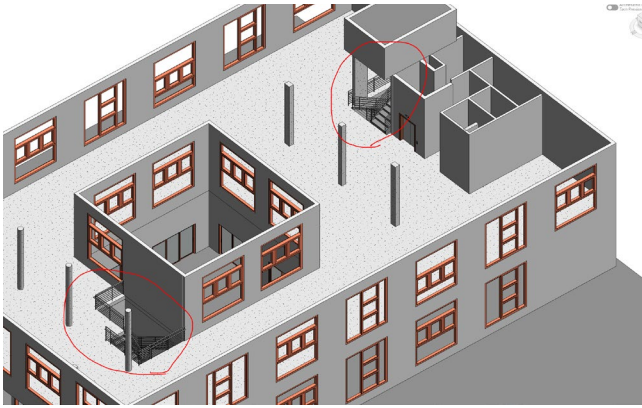
Q: Looking at the reference image below, it looks like a post-tensioned flat plate system, with the core located along grid lines C, D, E, 3, and 4. Are there any structural constraints we should be aware of if we want to cut an opening in the 2F slab for a monumental staircase?



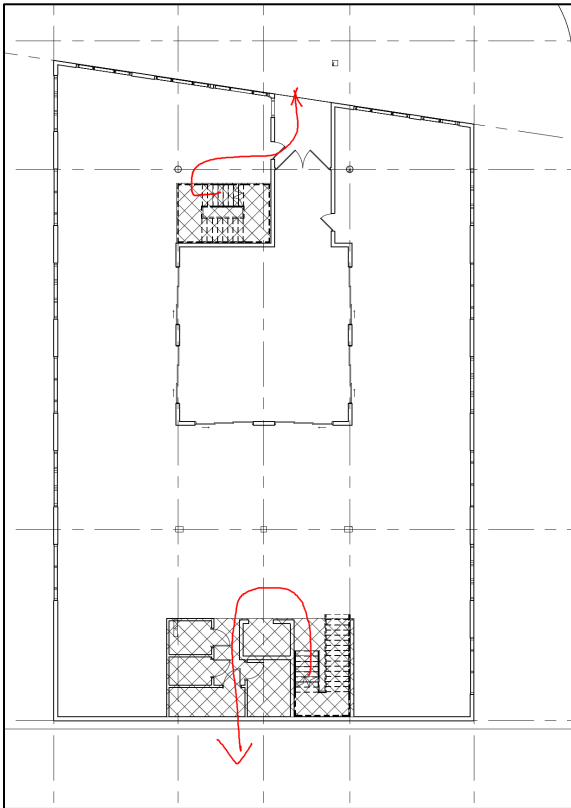
A: For the purposes of the NEXT competition, assume there are no structural constraints in cutting through the slab for the staircase; however, all codes and restrictions must be considered for the staircase.

Q: Stair Enclosure vs. Provided 3D Model: in the previous Q&A, it was noted: "the assumption is that these are already enclosed for fire-rated egress as a base building as well as these areas are within the NIC areas." However, as shown in the attached 3D model, both existing stairs are currently modeled as open.

1. Question: Could you clarify if the students are expected to design the fire-rated enclosure for these stairs within their scope, or should we instruct them to assume these are completely enclosed by the base building design?



Q: Exit Discharge and NIC Boundary Conflict: if we treat these enclosed stairs strictly as Not In Contract (NIC), we run into an issue with the Exit Discharge. As illustrated in the attached floor plan, enclosing the stairs within the NIC area seems to cut off the exit discharge path to the exterior. Question: To resolve this continuous egress path, how should the students proceed? Should they design a new emergency exit/doorway to resolve the discharge? Or should they plan an egress route that crosses outside the designated NIC boundary?



A: It appears from your drawings shown from the revit files provided that these are not drawn as enclosed for fire-rated; therefore, we have confirmed the actual as built condition from the current occupier of this space. The stairs to the North are open. The stairs to the South are enclosed. **Under the Florida Building Code, you can leave a stairway open and unenclosed between two stories, provided specific design and sprinkler conditions are met.** Given this, our recommendations will be students can leave them as is with one open and the other closed, both open, or both enclosed. The students can choose whatever strategy best supports their design intent. The students should design a code-compliant egress strategy that meets their design intent and if this requires an additional exit door to be added or

if the path crosses outside the designated NIC boundary, this shall be permitted for this purpose as long as all codes and regulations are met.

Q: For the interior egress stairs that are part of the base building area, one stair is shown as enclosed and the other is open on one side. The enclosed stair does not indicate where doors are located. Will these door locations be provided, or is their location up to the designer's discretion?

A: The door locations can be determined by the student if the location they choose meets all codes and requirements; however, remember, technically, this area is NIC for the purposes of the NEXT competition.

Q: The Steelcase privacy walls are 10'-0" high, but the ceiling heights are higher than this. How should students address the difference in height between the top of the Steelcase walls and the ceiling?

A: This would be a design decision just like all prior NEXT competitions. Students can either place a drop ceiling where the Steelcase wall system can connect into a suspended drop ceiling or they could create a header, etc. I see you reference Steelcase Privacy wall; however, please note that that is a first-generation wall product and there are much newer options available from Steelcase like our newest system, Everwall ([Everwall link](#)); however, the students are free to use whatever they choose.

Q: Google Earth and Street View images indicate that there is an existing door on the front corner of building that opens directly onto the sidewalk. In the pdf and Revit model, this door is shown as a fixed window. For this project, are we to assume that this door has been replaced with a fixed window?

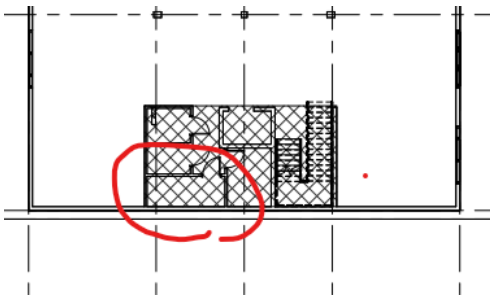


A: This is actually an exit door at the Northeast corner of the building facing Oak Ave. that was inadvertently omitted from the NEXT drawings and the location is in the Northeast Corner of the building. This door should be added back to as built condition of the site.

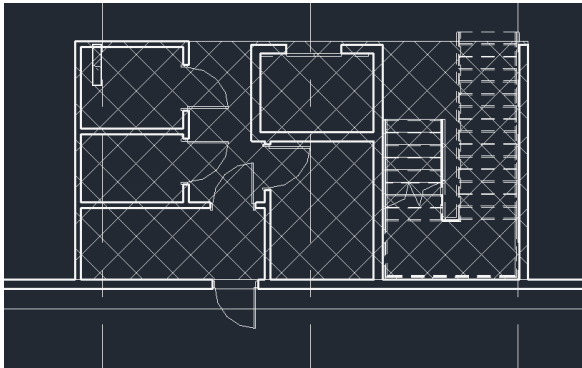
This shows the location based on what we received from the current occupant (see attached) as well as an image from Google of the location of the door.

Q: In the REVIT file, on the 1st floor there appears to be an exterior door from the bathroom. Can you please confirm the accuracy of this door location? Also, this is not shown on the PDF floorplans. Please see images below.

PDF floorplan



REVIT floorplan and 3D



A: Please disregard this door location as that is incorrect and should not be there. Please remove it from your plans and we will communicate that to all programs with the published Q+A.

Q: On page 28 of the program, only 38 total workstations are listed. Should students stick with that count or the 39 on page 29?

[illegible]

A: Sorry about the confusion here. What is stated on page 27 and 28 is accurate. There are 39 employees who will occupy NEXT with an additional four spaces for visitors. There are a total of 34 occupied workstations for NEXT occupants, four Private Offices, and one reception station for a total of 39 before counting the additional four workstations for visitors. The count for workstations is incorrect on page 29 – it should say 34 workstations + 4 visitors (38 total).

Q: I had a question to contribute to the Q&A from a student. I looked in the rules to locate this, but a few students were curious if there were any rules about adding windows to the exterior walls as needed to supplement interior space? Or is that not allowed at all, with no alteration to the exterior walls whatsoever? I know they are not to move or alter the doors or walls, but was curious about additional windows.

A: The exterior of the building should be maintained with the windows as provided in the program; therefore, no additional windows should be added.

Q: Could the window frames and mullions be changed? Specifically, can the existing bright orange frames and mullions be replaced with finishes/colors of our own choosing? We would keep the location, overall dimensions, and configuration of all windows exactly as they are.

A: The finishes of the window frames and mullions may be changed to any color the student chooses. As you have indicated, the windows themselves (shape, size, location, etc.) should not be altered.

Q: There appear to be several sliding doors around the courtyard. Are there any parameters about maintaining access to every sliding door or could some of those be changed to fixed windows?

A: The sliding doors should be maintained as shown.

Q: In plan, there is a second door into the space beyond the courtyard gates. That door doesn't appear in photos found online of the actual building. Is that door "real" for our competition purposes and expected to remain/be used in its current location?

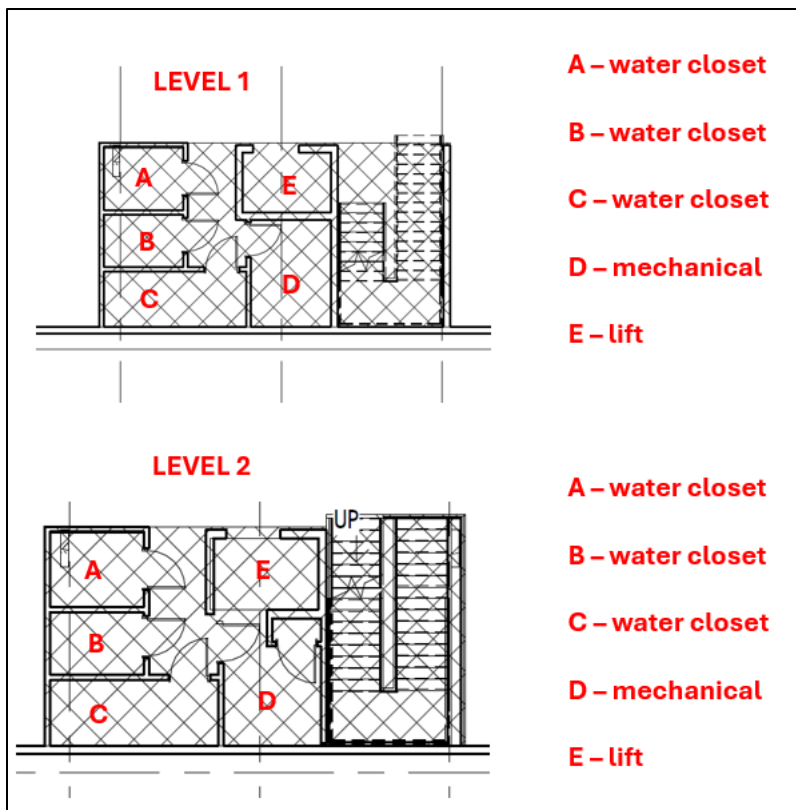
A: Assume the drawings are accurate for this door and it should remain.

Q: The students have done the codes research and know that they need 2 means of egress from the building. This would suggest that we need to add another door to achieve this code requirement, unless the door referenced in the question above serves as that second means of egress. If not, can we insert another egress door somewhere to meet this requirement?

A: We have identified that there is an additional exit door that was inadvertently eliminated from the drawings. This will be shown in the Q+A we will publish and I will be sending this later tonight (before next Monday) to help inform the students of the necessary information. If this doesn't resolve egress and if an additional door is required for codes, it will be permitted.

Q: Can you clarify the spaces not in scope at the back of the plan? We assume 2 or 3 of those are individual restrooms, then mechanical, elevator, etc...but clarity would be appreciated there even though we understand they are not part of the design challenge.

A: Please see this diagram and assume these are the rooms that for the NIC areas on the South end. Please note, we view some of these door swings to potentially be an issue; however, considering this in the NIC areas, the students do not need to concern themselves with changing them if that takes time away from them designing what is in scope.



Q: We also see an exterior exit door out of one of the NIS rooms at the back of the plan? We assume that's from a mechanical space or something and NOT meant to be a primary means of egress for occupants (since it's exiting from an enclosed room)?

A: This would not be a primary means of egress.

Q: Is there any flexibility to move the entry door into the first floor?

A: The entry door should remain as is.

Q: Is it ok to add a door into the courtyard adjacent to the main entrance?

A: Please note there are multiple sliding doors into the courtyard from the occupied space and those should remain as is with no additional door added.

Q: Can the courtyard be covered?

A: The courtyard should remain open.

Q: Can the roof space be used?

A: The room should be considered NIC.

Q: Can we redesign the courtyard?

A: We are unsure what you are asking. If you mean redesigning architecturally (size, shape, entry, etc.) that may not be permitted. However, if you are referring to what may be placed inside of the courtyard without making any changes to the physical structure, that is permitted.

Q: If the monumental staircase is placed in the courtyard, may it be accessed directly from the second floor?

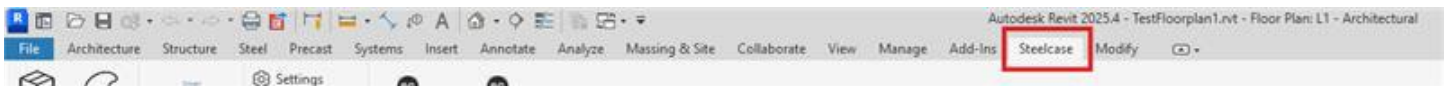
A: The monumental staircase should not be placed in the courtyard, it should be designed within the interior space

Q: Are we permitted to add interior doors on the first and second floors?

A: We will be sharing a Q+A document tonight that shares the information about doors. Any existing exterior entry doors should remain as is. If the doors you are referring to are in the NIC area, they should only be added for egress strategy; however, considering this space is NIC, we wouldn't advocate much time spent on this.

Q: Are there instructions for locating and activating the Steelcase plugin in Revit after installation? Autodesk indicates that installed add-ins generally appear on Revit's Add-Ins tab, and Steelcase provides SmartTools for Revit through the Autodesk Marketplace. [Autodesk](#) · [Steelcase](#)

A: Once installed from the Autodesk marketplace, it will appear in the top ribbon here:



There is nothing else that should need activating as long as the user installed for the correct version of Revit. Until the update coming next month, 2027 Revit will not work as ours will not appear in the Add-ins tab if they are looking for it there on the 2027 version of Revit. We are currently waiting on Autodesk to approve our latest v1.2 of the plug-in and it should be released in early October at the latest.

Q: Are the restrooms code compliant and if not, do they need to be updated?

A: Assume they are code compliant and not in need of updating, especially since this is in the NIC area.

Q: Can the courtyard walls/doors be modified? Can students use the courtyard as enclosed, conditioned, habitable office space?

A: The walls/doors/windows should remain as is and the courtyard should remain as is as an open space.

Q: Can students change the materiality of existing elements, such as stairs, windows, etc?

A: Materiality may be changed; however, architecturally they may not be changed.

Q: The last Q+A stated that the fire stairs are fully enclosed as shown in the pdf floor plan, yet the model shows them open. Under the Florida Building Code, you can leave a stairway open and unenclosed between two stories, provided specific design and sprinkler conditions are met. Can students open one of the stairs to use as their monumental stairs as long as they meet code-compliance for fire-safety?

A: We will be providing guidance to all programs that they can leave the stairs open or enclose them as long as all codes are met and the assumption will be made that all sprinkler conditions are adequate for their design decisions.

Q: Where are the doors to the fire stairs?

A: Please see the guidance on a Q+A document we will distribute tonight (ahead of schedule) due to the many questions about stairs, courtyard, etc.

Q: There is a column on the top left of the second floor; is this correct, should it be on both floors? Attached is a screenshot of the column that is not shown between floors but only on the second.

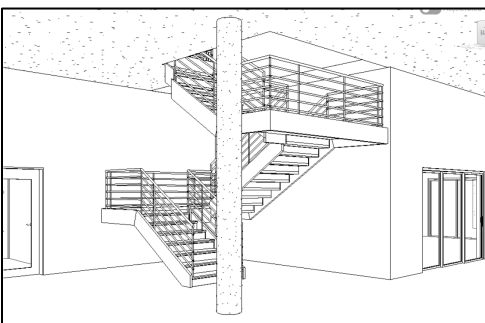
A: We are unsure of what this is; therefore, we are suggesting it be removed from the drawings and the assumption will be made that the existing columns on grid are sufficient for structural integrity.

Q: Code compliance is a requirement of the project, but the base building does not contain two means of egress that achieve the required distance between exits (remoteness of exits – approximately 14' - is less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the diagonal of a sprinklered building, and also less than $\frac{1}{2}$ the diagonal if the building is considered non-sprinklered). Is there intended to be an exit at the rear of the building near the restrooms / elevator / stair? If so, are the students responsible for locating this exit, or will the location of this exit be provided in a subsequent update?

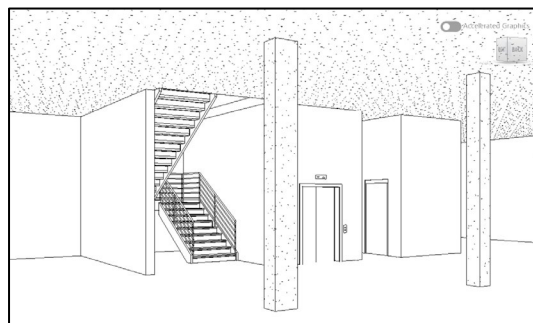
A: The assumption should be made that the building is sprinklered appropriately throughout the building. If an exit is determined to be needed to meet code and aligns with the students egress strategy, the student may determine where to place this exit. Please note, we will be sharing information later tonight with all the Q+A and it will show there is an additional exit door on the front Northeast corner of the building that had been inadvertently eliminated and the students should add this back before determining if an additional exit door is needed for egress.

Q: Is it acceptable to enclose the existing stairs in some way? Since the front stair and rear stair are both open, some students are entertaining the thought of enclosing them in order to place greater emphasis on the required additional communicating stair. Is this acceptable? The reasoning is that multiple open stairs in the space may create confusion or appear visually cluttered.

Front stair as provided in base Revit model:



Rear stair as provided in base Revit model:



A: The assumption should be made that the building is sprinklered appropriately throughout the building. If an exit is determined to be needed to meet code and aligns with the students egress strategy, the student may determine where to place this exit. Please note, we will be sharing information later tonight with all the Q+A and it will show there is an additional exit door on the front Northeast corner of the building that had been inadvertently eliminated and the students should add this back before determining if an additional exit door is needed for egress.

Q: Can the presentation be a larger scale and without the title block, to allow for a better scale of plans? Is there a limit to the “sheet size” if the file size is maintained? If a larger scale is used and side to side scrolling is needed, is that problematic?

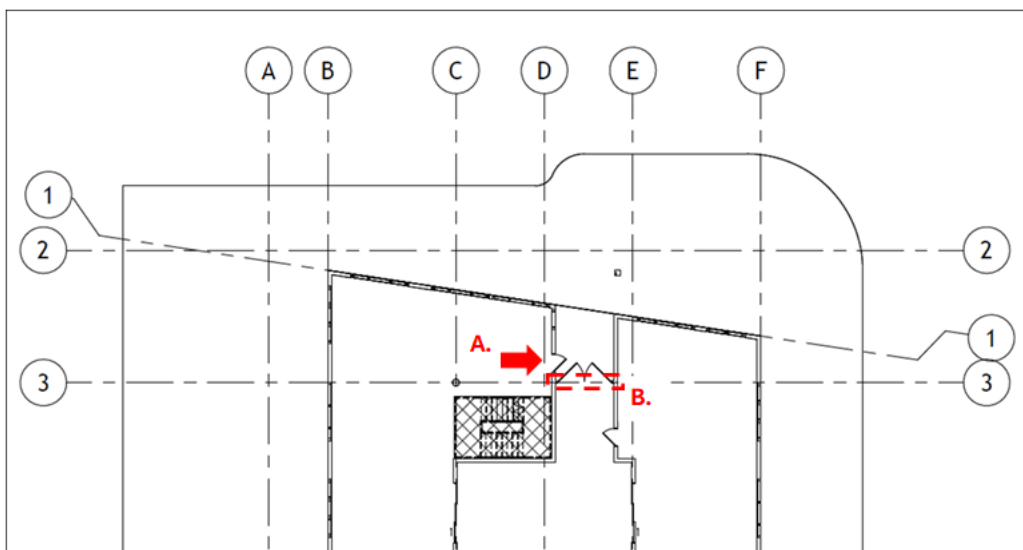
A: This is permissible; however, consideration should be made about the user experience of the judge reviewing the presentation and if they will need to physically move their mouse side to side and up/down to see the content in total. We have seen this done in the past – as if it was a digital version of their project boards from studio and we have found that judges do not prefer this format and things may be missed as you are leaving it to the liberty of each judge to move themselves versus viewing an a page. I suggest having your students review the formats of the presentations we have shared from last year’s winner and four additional semifinalist as these formats were all received very well by the judges; however, I’d only use the size as inspiration and not be overly influenced by their style...each student should set their own mood/style based on their concept and design intent and convey that visually.

Q: In our code review, there should be a 2nd egress in the building based 1/3 of the diagonal distance because the 2 existing exits are too close to each other. Occupants may not be permitted to exit through a Shipping/receiving room. Can we add a second exit opposite the main entry next to the Shipping/receiving room?

A: If an exit is determined to be needed to meet code and aligns with the students egress strategy, the student may determine where to place this exit. Please note, we will be sharing information later tonight with all the Q+A and it will show there is an additional exit door on the front Northeast corner of the building that had been inadvertently eliminated and the students should add this back before determining if an additional exit door is needed for egress. Also of note, students should make the assumption that the NEXT is fully sprinklered throughout the space.

Q: We received several questions about the location of the main entry door.

A: See below. (A) with the red arrow indicates the main entry into NEXT. There have been questions about the doors shown where I marked a (B) below with a dashed line. Please know, these are not standard doors, these are architectural swinging gates that allow the interior courtyard to be accessed without entering NEXT and the same for exiting. Students may use their discretion on the design and materiality of these gates.



Q: Additional questions have been asked whether the interior courtyard can be used as the wildcard space.

A: The answer is yes; however, if this is the design decision your students wish to make please note that this is a nice amenity specific to this building which provides a lot of natural light and view of natural elements and anything designed as a wildcard space should be something everyone that works at NEXT can access and benefit from. Considering we are now allocating points for the wildcard space, consider how this would be creative and unique.

Q: The program says the CEO and COO need to be in close proximity to each other and their teams. Which teams work under them?

A: Disregard the “their teams” reference. The CEO and COO, as well as their Executive Assistant should be in close proximity to one another; however, they do not lead any of the teams; therefore, they do not need to be close to any specific team. The Executive Assistant works with these two executive leaders. Sorry about any confusion this may have caused.