

ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS FOR OFFICES POST-PANDEMIC

A guide to creating an office environment that reduces the spread of communicable illness and supports the physical and emotional health of employees during and after a global pandemic like COVID-19.

How do you address employees' needs to feel physically and emotionally secure in the workplace? How can architecture and space planning help reduce viral transmission and promote a sense of security, safety and control that leads to a healthier, happier workplace?

In this guide, we will explore short and long-term design methods, material and product solutions, and management practices to help bolster physical safety and employee well-being in the workplace.

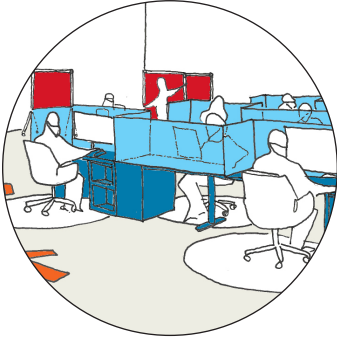
Defining measurable goals such as reduced transmission of all communicable diseases as well as intangible goals like boosted employee morale, this guide seeks to relieve workers' anxiety and increase feelings of personal security through architectural and space planning solutions.

Moving forward, work spaces must evolve to meet changing needs of employers and employees as flexible and remote work becomes more mainstream. The office environment may become part of an organization's talent attraction and retention strategy as employees seek opportunities that compete with the amenities, flexibility and quality of life offered by working remotely.



CCR ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS

SOLUTIONS THROUGH DESIGN



PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Employees and employee workstations should remain at least 6' feet apart. Reducing occupancy to 50% or working in rotating shifts can allow for the proper amount of distance between employees. Reworking your open office floorplan to address density with space planning allows for maximum occupancy at appropriate social distances.

COMMUNAL SHARED SPACES

Short-term solutions include removing chairs from conference rooms and training spaces to control the number of attendees in meetings or re-purposing these spaces to accommodate individual workstations. Provide easily accessible sanitizing products and signs that remind staff to frequently use them in shared areas like kitchens and workrooms. Consider turning multiple occupancy restrooms into private restrooms with the use of occupancy signs.



CLEAR TRAVEL PATHS

Create clear, directional ingress and egress pathways to avoid contact between staff. Ensure that the pathways provide ADA accessibility.* Seek out permanent or temporary solutions for each type of flooring including vinyl application for hard surface flooring and custom cut directional arrows and stop signs for carpet flooring.

SANITIZING STATIONS

Stand alone hands-free sanitizing stations positioned in strategic locations throughout the office space encourage good practices. Stations come in variety of sizes and colors to match your office space.



SOLUTIONS THROUGH DESIGN



PRIVATE COMMUNAL SPACES

Create physical private spaces away from communal work areas for virtual meetings for employees to connect with clients or staff working from home.

OUTDOOR SPACES

Take advantage of natural daylight and increased airflow by using outdoor spaces to hold physically distanced meetings and breaks. Provide seating at least 6' apart in these spaces.



TECHNOLOGY

Within private meeting spaces, provide power and multi-media outlets. Consider use of permanent screens in these areas that can be connected via hands-free screen sharing or AirPlay.

SIGNAGE

Promote healthy hand washing and personal hygiene practices through signage. Direct staff and clients to sanitizing stations. Post reminders to thoroughly clean communal spaces after each use. Use occupancy signs for restrooms and other previously communal spaces.



SOLUTIONS THROUGH CULTURE



FLEXIBILITY

Employees want the freedom to work outside on a nice day, to stand at their desk or work in a communal space. Identify opportunities to rethink underutilized or misused spaces to give employees abundance in their work space selection. Creating islands, pods, patios and telephone booths gives employees options they desire.



COLLABORATION

Informal interactions with co-workers improve organizational culture and offer opportunities for collaboration that are not available in fully remote work. Take advantage of the decreased need for personal office space and find opportunities within your office to create space for collaboration. Create informal café space, creative thinking space and relaxed, conversational space. Place monitors and smart boards in areas with moveable seating and up your technology to accommodate a quality hybrid conferencing experience.



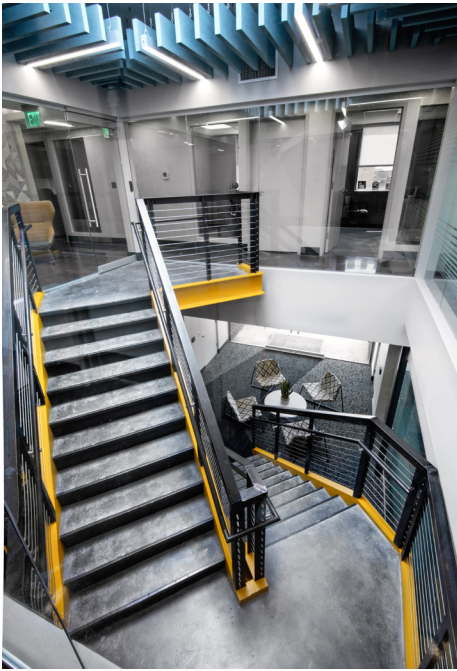
EXPERIENCE

Post-pandemic offices should provide an experience that employees can't get working from home. Consider what makes spaces like coffee shops successful—ambiance, attractive décor, natural light, comfortable seating, live plants, music and good coffee. Identify opportunities to create more positive, enriching experiences for your employees. Providing easy access to comfortable outdoor spaces is key for working, meeting and socializing at a safe distance and fostering comfort, joy and fulfillment.



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SOLUTIONS THROUGH MATERIALS & PRODUCTS



CLEANABLE SURFACES

Provide cleanable, transparent films over surfaces like elevator buttons and other highly used communal surfaces. Install physical barriers such as clear plastic sneeze guards.*

MATERIALS WITH ANTIMICROBIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Materials such as copper, brass, bronze, nickel, and others are natural antimicrobial materials that have intrinsic properties to destroy a wide range of microorganisms.**

HANDS FREE DEVICES

Replace manual door locks and handles with touchless entry systems, light switches with occupancy sensors, faucet handles with touchless devices, towel and soap dispensers with touchless dispensers. Employ technology that allows for hands-free screen sharing or AirPlay.

HVAC FILTRATION

Increase ventilation and air changes. Create negative air pressure. Consider having a fixed maximum number of occupants per HVAC zone. Change HVAC filters prior to re-occupancy. Consider the use of portable room air cleaners with HEPA filters.*



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SOLUTIONS THROUGH MANAGEMENT



COMMUNICATION

Develop an emergency communications plan. Identify necessary revisions to human resources policies. Provide up-to-date education and training on COVID-19.*

ENCOURAGING GOOD PRACTICES

Post hygiene signage. Provide tissues, touchless hand soap, towel dispensers, and garbage can. Provide readily available alcohol-based sanitizer and disinfectants. Educate staff on respiratory etiquette. Encourage self-monitoring for symptoms.*

STAFFING PLANS

Implement occupancy-reduction policies including alternating days or shifts to reduce total number of employees in the workplace at a given time. Define telework policies.*

SEEKING ASSISTANCE

If you need help creating and implementing any of these changes or new policies, reach out to your local architects, designers, or business organizations (REV Birmingham, Birmingham Business Alliance) for guidance.

Sources: *[AIA ReOccupancy Assessment Tool](#); **[Antimicrobial Surface](#)

Disclaimer: CCR Architecture & Interiors does not practice medicine, nor does it provide medical advice. Please discuss medical questions with your physician or other qualified healthcare providers.



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