

The Boston Real Estate

COVID CONSORTIUM



A knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in code and regulatory amendments in the post COVID-19 world.

OUR MISSION

Boston’s Real Estate COVID Consortium’s mission is to conduct a knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in codes and regulatory amendments in the post-COVID-19 world. Its members include professional multiple disciplines of real estate industry, including architecture and interior design, audio visual integrator, code consultants, commercial real estate brokerage, commissioning agents, environmental engineers, general contractors, furniture dealers, MEP/FP engineers and owner’s project managers.

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU

Since March 10th, when Governor Charlie Baker made the difficult decision to shut down large portions of Massachusetts, we have all been bombarded with a steady stream of COVID-19 impacts to the real estate industry, best practice guidelines and prognostications. Our mission is to curate this information and distill it down to the best of the best to help simplify & streamline your return to work planning process.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

We aim to be a trusted resource for our valued Boston real estate community. If you have any questions or ideas for content, please don’t hesitate to reach out to Denise Pied (denise.pied@stvinc.com).

Please note, that although our current focus is limited to standard office space, we plan to cover special considerations for Life Science/Pharma, Healthcare & Academic markets in future publications.

ISSUE 01 RETURN TO WORK TOOLKIT

Our first digital issue features a Return to Work (RTW) checklist of things to consider as we focus on The Now (today – 60 days). Our goal is to provide practical and user-friendly information designed to shore up any gaps in your immediate RTW plan.

Future issues will take a deeper dive to spotlight relevant and timely topics including:

- A Guide to Restarting your “On Hold” capital construction projects
- Change Management & Communication Plans
- Ongoing Facilities + Operational Changes
- Workplace Standards + Furniture
- Enhanced Cleaning Protocols and Technology
- Long Term Real Estate Strategies

CONTENT

04	Change Management / Creating A Communication Plan
05 - 06	Workplace Strategy
06	HVAC + IAQ - Things To Consider
07	Technology Enhancements
07	Enhanced Cleaning Protocols
08 - 10	Meet the Team <i>Team Directory + Contact Info</i>

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CHANGE MANAGEMENT

CREATING A COMMUNICATION PLAN

Life in this COVID-19 Era is Full of Change and with this Change Comes Anxiety.

Incorporating a change management process into the development of new workplace guidelines and policies will help to make employees emotionally comfortable and physically safe as we transition back into the workplace.

The use of a robust communication plan will be essential to build awareness and knowledge of new workplace guidelines and the practices designed to help keep workers safe. That communication will give staff the ability to participate in creating and maintaining a healthy work environment. A framework to reinforce compliance with the new policies will further help to mitigate employee concerns.

To Successfully Navigate This Change Process, We Recommend that Employers:

- Inform and engage employees as plans are being developed, and communicate that since the situation is changing daily, the information may be fluid.
- Consider conducting a “Return to Work Survey” prior to the transition to identify, quantify, and mitigate concerns.
- Keep corporate leaders at the forefront, delivering messages to the company as a whole.
- Have managers provide one-on-one communication with their teams and individual staff members.
- Provide transparent and consistent messaging through multiple resources on a weekly or bi-weekly basis in order to reach everyone and to provide effective reinforcement of messages.
- Reinforce changes when staff return to the office by providing a handbook or materials outlining new guidelines and cleaning materials, etc. to encourage personal responsibility for supporting the clean environment in personal workspace and common areas.
- Assign change champions to encourage compliance with new procedures and feedback on success and diagnose gaps or need for policy adjustments.
- Provide focus group or survey opportunities to understand how staff is adapting once they have returned to work. Additional surveys to complete a suite of surveys could be “Working in the Post-COVID-19 Office Environment,” followed by a survey on “Your Remote Work Experience”.



WORKPLACE STRATEGY

ESTABLISH INTERNAL TASK FORCE TO LEAD YOUR COMPANY’S WORKPLACE RE-ENTRY EFFORTS

As we consider what a return to work looks like, there are likely more questions than answers. The workplace environment of today will surely evolve over the next several weeks, months and beyond.

Understanding that a portion of us may return to the office in some capacity sooner than later, what can be done now to properly prepare? Consider the following:

Establish Criteria for Go/No-Go Workplace Re-Entry:

- Government guidelines | guidance from medical experts.
- HR considerations (individuals’ ability and/or eagerness to return to work will vary based on personal circumstances).
- Determine whether a safe environment can be provided not only in your tenant space, but in the building common areas.

What Does “Safe” Re-Entry Look Like? Consider:

- Transportation to/from the office.
- Availability of PPE.
- Are protocols in place in common areas of the building, including but not limited to:
 - Cleaning regimens
 - Health screening via temperature checks/thermal scanners
 - Limiting density in elevators
 - Density control in building amenity/common areas

How Can Your Office Support a Phased Re-Entry?

- Conduct plan studies to determine social distancing opportunities.
- Consider furniture modifications such as introducing screening elements.
- Introduce environmental graphics to support and encourage behavioral and operational protocols:
 - Directional arrows to indicate traffic flow
 - Cleaning and hygiene protocols
 - Visual cues to indicate social distancing dimensions

Cleaning + Hygiene Protocols

- Follow CDC guidelines for hand washing
- Provide gloves for use in common spaces
- Incorporate sensors and hands-free technology wherever possible and practical
- Institute “clean desk” policy for easy desk cleaning
- Post cleaning checklists throughout the office, by space type, including time markers to indicate last cleaning



Rendering courtesy of SGA.

Strategies for Limiting Workplace Density:
Potential Short Term Adjustments to the Physical Space

- Allow employees to continue to work from home in the short and/or long term to the extent practical.
- Designate “A” and “B” teams so that employees can alternate attendance.
- Stagger work hours.
- Update seating chart to align with “A” team “B” team approach in order to ensure proper distancing.
- Consider “one way” walking paths/circulation in open office areas.
- Prohibit or limit number of outside visitors into the office.
- Leverage technology for virtual meetings with those inside your organization as well as outside your organization.
- Common + gathering space protocols:
 - Discontinue access or limit density in meeting rooms. If allowing access, designate seating protocols to ensure social distancing.
 - Consider instituting an “order and deliver” process so a single individual or limited number of individuals are accessing spaces such as copy rooms and supply closets.
 - Restrict or stagger access to pantry/café spaces to limit density.
 - Discontinue communal food
 - Provide gloves

Potential Furniture Adjustments

- Incorporate screening element at reception desk.
- Introduce personal boundary elements between workstations.
- Reconfigure workstations to create a larger footprint per user.
- Identify Assigned or Unassigned - A couple options to consider:
 - **Option 1:** all desks are “owned” desks. Orchestrate “A” team and “B” team attendance to align with seating chart, ensuring proper distance between occupants.
 - **Option 2:** remove or block access to a portion of workstations to ensure proper distance between occupants. Assign the remaining workstations to two alternating users (one from “A” team and one from “B” team).
- *Stay tuned for more detailed furniture considerations in upcoming releases.*

HVAC + IAQ

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Tenant Return to Work Checklist:

- Have you reviewed your lease to understand the IAQ (Indoor Air Quality) language?
- Do you understand the industry standard for IAQ?
- Do you understand how your base building and supplemental HVAC (Heating Ventilation & Air Conditioning) units serve your space?

Building Owners Return to Work Checklist:

- Have you confirmed you are maximizing the OA (Outside Air)?
- Have you completed all the Monthly, Quarterly, Semi-Annual, and Annual PM (Preventive Maintenance) activities?
- Have you considered increasing the MERV (Minimum Efficiency Rating Value) from the current value to the maximum that your fan system could support?
- Have you considered UVGI (Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation), PCO (Photocathodic Oxidation), and Ionization to improve IAQ?

TECHNOLOGY ENHANCEMENTS

THINGS TO CONSIDER

COVID19 has forced a paradigm shift in the way people use video conferencing. Some people will never fully return to the office. In order to maintain productivity **going forward our organizations will likely have to make some changes that will result in new technology spend.**

The video conferencing experience broadly needs to evolve or change. Employees will be connecting with a whole host of new stakeholders (inside and outside of the company) and as a result that experience will reflect on a company’s brand. And just as important, because it is not just “your company” that is doing this, your VC platform needs to be as flexible and inter-operable as possible to enable your team to effectively collaborate with the outside world.

Here are some High-Level Considerations Needed to Ensure Your Tech is in Alignment with Workplace Policy:

- Does your leadership support making video conferencing the company norm and will those leaders model that behavior? (i.e. be on camera & use virtual platforms)?
- Has the work from home policy been updated to reflect post Covid19?
- Are best practices being identified and documented?
- Is proper training in place to educate employees on how to get the value out of your tech investment?
- Have strategies to prevent work from home burnout been identified?
- What are the technology needs to enable a good at home experience?
- Can your current collaboration spaces work with technology adopted during crisis?
- Is there “risk” with current hardware (table mics vs. in ceiling etc.)?
- Is there appropriate occupancy sensor coverage?
- Are there appropriate analytics measuring room usage etc.?

ENHANCED CLEANING PROTOCOLS

- **There are three criteria to consider when evaluating disinfection products:**
 1. The product should be listed and registered with EPA as a disinfectant for use against SARS-CoV-2;
 2. The product efficacy should be measured in terms of its listed kill time for the virus. The lowest contact time is the most desirable as it will assure adequate contact time with the virus during the disinfecting process and not slow down the cleaners.
 3. The product should have a minimal risk of a negative impact on the health of the occupants and users.
- For owners with predominantly office-focused portfolios, hydrogen peroxide is best of class because it is the safest and has the shortest contact (kill) time (aside from bleach wipes). Soap and water is good for hands but not practical for facility cleaning. Bleach and other products have their place, but can cause various illnesses, have strong odors, and can stain or corrode surfaces.

MEET THE TEAM

HEAR FROM THE INDUSTRY EXPERTS

STV|DPM has brought together a multidiscipline industry team (Project Management, Construction, Commercial Real Estate Brokerage, Commissioning, Code Review, Design, Environmental Engineering, Technology & Furniture) to conduct a knowledge share of current industry best practices and due diligence around workplace design and construction requirements adapting to changes in codes and regulatory amendments in the post-COVID-19 world. We strongly believe innovative project strategies & checklists around these disciplines could assist our active clients and other Real Estate leaders in assessing new in office & remote work requirements as they bring their employees back to work and going forward. The ultimate goal is to develop a "Toolkit" of best practices resources that could be rolled out as part of ongoing & new project work.



Owner's Project Manager
Denise Pied

Vice President, Project Executive | STV|DPM

Denise is a co-founder of the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium. Denise leads STV|DPM's Corporate Market sector. Denise has over 20 years of experience leading project teams & advising clients' real estate project delivery strategies.

denise.pied@stvinc.com



Owner's Project Manager
Sandra Gucciardi

Director of Business Development | STV|DPM

Sandra is a co-founder of the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium. At STV|DPM, Sandra is responsible for client strategy and development initiatives, and assists with the strategic direction to develop new business and product offerings.

sandra.gucciardi@stvinc.com



Owner's Project Manager
Eva Hamori

Senior Project Planner | STV|DPM

Eva Hamori is an industry leader in the management of complex client relocation projects. With her experience as a certified Change Management Advisor, she is able to create and implement change strategies which maximize adoption and minimize resistance.

eva.hamori@stvinc.com

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Denise Pied at denise.pied@stvinc.com



Architect
Gable Clarke

Partner, Director of Interior Design | SGA

As a Partner and Director of Interior Design at SGA, Gable oversees corporate interiors projects of all scales. She is responsible for design oversight, client relations, business development, mentoring and firm leadership.

gclarke@sga-arch.com



Audio / Visual
Phil Muscatello

SVP, Marketing + Business Dev. | Adtech Systems Inc.

Philip is an owner of Adtech Systems. He currently serves as VP of Business Development. Philip received his MBA from Boston College and his BA from Saint Joseph's University.

philip.muscatello@adtechsystems.com



Brokerage
Adam Meixner

Senior Partner | I28 CRE

Adam's focus is on the Office Leasing and Sales sector within the Central I28/95-Mass Pike submarket. Assisting with space acquisitions/dispositions, lease renegotiations/ extensions and strategic planning are among Adam's strongest assets when engaged as a Tenant Representative.

adamm@i28cre.com



Code
Chris Lynch

Principal | Code Red Consultants

Chris is a founding principal at Code Red Consultants and is a practicing fire protection engineer and code consultant. He excels at leading project teams and working with clients to ensure that new and existing buildings are safe and code compliant.

chrisl@crcfire.com



Construction
George McCarron

Project Executive | Lee Kennedy

George has over 40 years of experience in the construction industry. As a Project Executive with Lee Kennedy, his ability to grasp the needs of the client and communicate with design teams make him an invaluable resource and asset.

gmccarron@leekennedy.com



Commissioning Agent
Steven Rizzo

President | Synergy Consultants

Being involved in the design and construction industry for 45+ years, Steven's expertise is in Building Commissioning and operations for HVAC, Plumbing and Electrical Systems. He specializes in complex medical facilities ranging from Gene Therapy development Labs to Patient Care Facilities.

srizzo@synergyconsultants.net



Design Engineers
Michael Camoscio

Associate, Senior Engineer | STV Incorporated

Michael manages multi-discipline projects for several public agencies. Mike leads the mechanical group in STV's Boston office and most recently advised the Convention Center Authority during setup for Boston Hope.

michael.camoscio@stvinc.com



Environmental
Stephan White

President | PES Associates

Stephan White is the founder and President of PES Associates, a national engineering and environmental firm with headquarters in Hingham, MA. Throughout his career, he has gained extensive experience in environmental consulting, property due diligence and industrial hygiene.

white@pesassociates.com



Furniture
Amy Lalezari

Partner, Director of Client Solutions | Environments at Work

Amy has over twenty years of workplace consulting experience. She is passionate about people, well-being, and performance and is dialed into key business drivers, research, and trends impacting the workplace. Her background in design, facility planning, and contract furnishings gives her a unique perspective within the commercial real estate community.

amyl@environmentsatwork.com



Furniture

Tim King

Project Executive | COP / DIRT

Tim King is a construction expert focusing on pre-fabricated, offsite modular construction for Interiors work. With a concentration on the healthcare market, Tim brings pre-fab benefits of speed, flexibility and higher functionality to all market segments.

tim.king@cop-inc.com



MEP Engineers

Mike Quigley

COO | WB Engineers

Michael has 18+ years of experience in the industry, leading projects and people. His natural talent for being able to motivate a team to do great work and address complex scenarios is why he is leading WB's COVID-19 remobilization efforts.

mquigley@wbengineering.com



MEP Engineers

Ray Doyle

Managing Principal, Life Sciences | WB Engineers

Ray is the Managing Principal of WB Engineers + Consultants' office in Washington, DC, and a Practice Leader for Life Sciences. With over 25 years of experience, Ray helps clients find solutions to improve indoor air quality and reduce tenants' exposure to COVID-19.

rdoyle@wbengineering.com

Note: The resources provided in this guide should not be interpreted as legal advice. If you have any questions, please consult your legal counsel. Neither the Boston Real Estate COVID Consortium nor its individual members are responsible to anyone for the contents of this page and shall have no liability to anyone for the same. The views and opinions in this page are that of the author and not necessarily of the author's employer.