

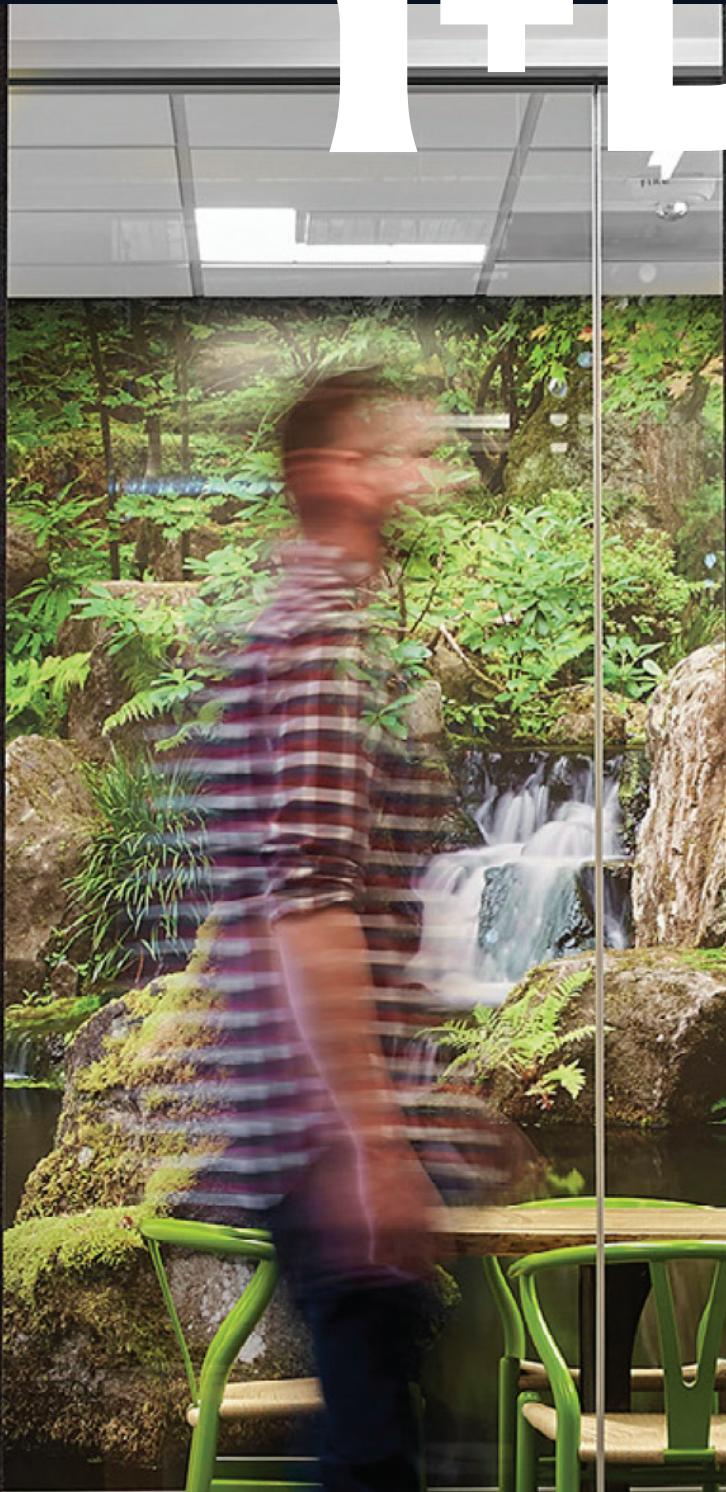
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Image: Eventscape

22

THINK TANK

Experts speak to the importance of genuine communication both during and after a crisis.

BY DIANA MOSHER



Image: Courtesy of Benjamin Hunington/Veritate Design

18

ALL IN

In the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, design professionals and manufacturers rallied to aid in the production of protective and essential equipment.

BY JENNIFER QUAIL



Image: Steve Tsai Photography

28

DESIGNING THE FUTURE

Design professionals from varied disciplines weigh in on design's role and responsibility in a post-pandemic world.

BY BRIAN LIBBY

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COVER IMAGE:
Courtesy of Mackenzie

36

BRAVE NEW WORLD

The future of building codes and zoning includes spaces that are able to quickly pivot to serve a variety of needs.

BY JESSICA GOLDBOGEN HARLAN



Image: Courtesy of space/place



42

CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE

Stay-home measures have emphasized the very human need for time spent outdoors and exposure to nature.

BY BRIAN J. BARTH

Departments

- 14 Inside View
- 16 Design Pulse
- 20 Design by the Numbers
- 27 Contributors
- 49 Resources & Advertisers
- 50 Up Next

ON THE COVER

One-way foot traffic, exposure to nature, and touchless entries are just a few of the ideas interdisciplinary design firm Mackenzie illustrates in its *COVID-19 Design Guide*.



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BE THE CHANGE

Design is a profession that focuses on solutions. In everyday circumstances and extraordinary ones as well, designers endeavor to solve problems through adaptability, inventiveness, and resourcefulness. Over the past few months, as the design trade—and all businesses—strived to revise and reinvent under the strains of the COVID-19 crisis, so too did we pivot this issue of *i+D* to reflect all that was around us in the design world and beyond.

Design businesses of all sizes and focus rallied not only to aid front-line and essential workers through the design and manufacturing of masks, gowns, face shields, protective barriers, respirators, and more (“All In,” p. 18), but also to design temporary overflow medical facilities, and to help one another through the formation of support groups, participation in webinars outlining best practices for during and after shelter-in-place orders, and the creation of uplifting newsletters and social media to help us all get through.

When the 2020 editorial calendar was planned, this issue was programmed to investigate urban sprawl and the changing faces of cities, suburbs, homes, and offices (“Designing the Future,” p. 28); the importance of a connection to nature (“Changing the Landscape,” p. 42); and the codes and zoning that go along with these crucial topics (“Brave New World,” p. 36). When evaluating what a design magazine should cover in the midst of a global health emergency, these topics seemed more relevant than ever. In fact, design itself, seemed more relevant than ever. Amid the pandemic, these discussions shifted to tackle an emerging reality that could not have been predicted even earlier this year, but as the stories developed, a commonality prevailed: Faced with this new world and all the questions it raises, design will find the answers.

Mahatma Gandhi is regarded for the insightful directive that we should all be the change we wish to see in the world. Design always has looked to inspire a positive shift—be it in an individual, a neighborhood, a major city, or the planet overall. That innate shared desire among design professionals to incite progressive impact will be center stage as we forge ahead together and design the solutions that will lead the world into an entirely new future, one that keeps us connected, keeps us inspired, and, most of all, keeps us safe. ●

Randy Fiser,
CEO, ASID, and
Tony Brenders,
CEO, IDC.
(Image: Lindsay
Cephas)



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1. A home office by Daun Curry sets an organized and dedicated space for work. (Image: Emily Gilbert)
2. Toma Clark Haines (Image: Susanne Ollman)
3. David Cordell
4. Thomas Lavin (Image: Don Flood)
5. Eric Yorath

THE CURRENT AND FUTURE STATE OF WORK

WHEN THE COVID-19 CRISIS LED TO SHELTER-AT-HOME MANDATES ACROSS MUCH OF THE CONTINENT, *i+D* BEGAN REACHING OUT TO THE DESIGN WORLD TO EXAMINE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF OUR NEW SHARED EXISTENCE.

Over the course of 10 weeks, about 60 design professionals from all areas of the field took time to share their thoughts, experiences, recommendations, and predictions on the new work-, live-, and exist-at-home lifestyle and the eventual return to actual offices and life in a world forever changed. Topics tackled varied from art for the home office and background settings for video conferences to wellbeing while working from home (WFH), what to expect when we head back to offices, and the role design will play in the future.

Following is just a sample of the insights shared during this time. For the complete 10-week series, go to [asid.org/resources/covid-19/article](https://www.asid.org/resources/covid-19/article).

— Jennifer Quail

How have you incorporated ideas of wellness and wellbeing into your work-from-home space and routine?

Daun Curry
*Founder and Creative Director,
Daun Curry Design Studio*
dauncurry.com | [@dauncurry](https://twitter.com/dauncurry)

Like many companies all over the world, our entire team at Daun Curry Design Studio is now working from home. While it's no substitution for working side-by-side, we make use of the technologies available to communicate with each other and keep our projects moving. We are also mindful of the importance of the "watercooler element" of working in the same physical space. Even if it's not entirely work-related, a little bit of chit-chat and a shared joke is important for our mental wellbeing, so we make sure to keep this team camaraderie going via phone and video calls throughout the day.

While productivity is key, so is our wellbeing—both mentally and physically. It's important to create a dedicated workspace at home and not just open a laptop at the dining table. Having a specific work area—even if it's small—creates consistency and familiarity, which helps in drawing a line between working efficiently and when it's time to switch off and spend time with your loved ones.

How have you used art and decorative objects to enhance your WFH experience?

Toma Clark Haines
*CEO, The Antiques Diva & Co.;
CEO/Founder/Designer, Republic of Toma*
antiquesdiva.com, republicoftoma.com |
[@theantiquesdiva](https://twitter.com/theantiquesdiva)

In quarantine, I chase the sun. Moving from room to room with the cats as the sun sneaks into windows. Last week I rearranged my office, dragged my Louis XV bureau plat and moved my patinated period giltwood fauteuil into the sun. The chair and desk date to the 1760s. Sitting in history brings me comfort and reminds me this too shall pass. I've always loved the curves of Rococo, but now they feel like a firm embrace.

Virginia Valentini

Architect/Designer/Co-founder, LATOxLATO
latoxlato.com | @latoxlato

The first thing that comes to mind on the subject of personalizing spaces right now is how a couple months ago, my husband, Francesco, and I started working from home. That meant we were videoconferencing a lot, and at first we didn't pay much attention to what the background behind us looked like. Then, all of a sudden, we were able to virtually enter the homes of our co-workers and clients, and "spy" on the room they were calling us from. We were immediately fascinated by the things we could see around them, and we started imagining what the rest of their room or apartment looked like. People don't pay much attention to which corner of their home they're letting you into! That's when we realized the background we were showing people through our own screens was just as important as the office where we would meet them during "regular" times. Why would we pay such careful attention to every corner of our office conference room, making sure it always looks tidy and professional and communicates a message to anyone who walks in, and not do the same for our virtual workplace? We decided to set up our space in front of a nice piece of art hanging on the wall in our apartment. That way, we are still showing something that represents us and our style—something we handpicked for our apartment—without diverting attention too far away from us and the focus of our meeting. It's better than a plain white wall, which wouldn't communicate any emotions or ideas, or our bookcase full of books and design ideas that we love, but which would be too overwhelming as a background. So, we decided to go for art!

What skills or lessons have you learned—professional and/or personal—while working/sheltering at home that will benefit your career and life overall going forward?

Thomas Lavin

Owner/President, Thomas Lavin Showroom
thomaslavin.com | @thomaslavinshowroom

Professionally, I recently discovered Zoom, just like everyone else in our industry. It has been super handy for keeping in touch with clients and bringing their new collections directly to designers. We are doing dozens of presentations a week. We also just got started with Instagram Live, and I am really enjoying that. And, my staff talked me into finally appearing on our Instagram account. I am now hosting almost daily "20 Seconds With Thomas" (in honor of our 20th anniversary) videos showcasing our vendors' work. Also, I'm getting back into pulling samples. With everyone working remotely, sometimes I'm the only one in the showroom. And I have to say, I'm really enjoying this new/old part of my job.

Personally, I've been cooking quite a lot: making pesto by hand with a mortar and pestle, hand-rolling pasta. And I'm really digging into my piano practice, sitting at the bench every day. Right now, I'm working on two pieces: one of Schubert's Impromptus and an atonal piece by Carl Vine called "Red Blues."

Stephanie Moffitt

Design Director, Mokum | James Dunlop Textiles
jamesdunloptextiles.com | @we_love_fabric

As we have been unable to venture out or invite interior designers into our showrooms, we have looked at other mediums for staying connected with the design community. One we have very successfully adopted is weekly Instagram Live videos. Both myself and

my colleague Annie Moir, who works with me in the Mokum studio here in Sydney, are comfortable with public speaking, especially in regards to presenting our latest collections or discussing our bespoke design process. However, once you turn on a live camera it's a different game, and for both of us it has been a bit nerve-racking! We are used to presenting to an audience in person, where you get to feel people's reactions and engage with them. With Instagram Live, the audience is one person with a camera so initially it was very surreal. And, as the name suggests, it's live so there are no second chances or edits! As we are progressing, we are getting far more relaxed with the process and trying to shorten our content, making it succinct whilst still visually stimulating. We look forward to being able to once again present to our design community in person, but we will continue to use this medium beyond the COVID restrictions, as the reach is so much broader.

How will office design—corporate offices, home offices, and/or your own office—change as a result of COVID-19?

David Cordell

Associate Principal, Perkins and Will
perkinswill.com | @perkinswill

We believe that corporate office space will evolve in response to COVID-19 in four ways: through changes to physical space, a heightened focus on health and wellbeing, reevaluation of standard policies and procedures, and expanded technology.

Physical office spaces will likely evolve to accommodate larger numbers of remote workers. Even long term, after the initial return-to-work transition phase, several Fortune 500 companies are already estimating that 30-35 percent of their staff will continue to work from home. This means some companies will move towards unassigned offices and workstations for employees who do not come into the office. The benefits of coming into the office will continue to be ease of collaboration with peers, mentorship opportunities, and the strengthening of office culture. Naturally, there will be a renewed focus on spaces that support these vital activities, and how they can be flexible for rapid response in the future.

The human health component will focus on enhanced building systems that filter or treat air and water to eliminate pathogens and reduce opportunities for growth of mold and other microorganisms. The industry's growing awareness of the importance of healthy building materials will evolve to include durability in response to regular and more rigorous cleaning protocols. Ensuring that protocols are in place for disinfection of high-touch surfaces, like door handles and elevator call buttons, has become important in reducing exposure and the spread of microorganisms and pathogens. Additional protocols reinforcing new behaviors, like distancing and sanitation, will likely become the norm in public spaces.

We can also expect to see technology help us respond to these new protocols. Bluetooth-enabled equipment like coffee makers in office pantries and coffee stations will allow us to order single serve beverages from our phone without requiring a hands-on approach, while offering an elevated employee experience. We could see the prevalence of touchless sensors increase in everything from restroom faucets and doors to thermostats and conference room lighting controls. Technology will also be critical in the support of expanded remote work conditions and the sophistication and quality of virtual meeting software will need to continue to improve.

The key to managing these changes is to think beyond the immediate six to eight months and plan for the inter-pandemic stage a year or more from now. Strategies offering long-term benefits by supporting occupant health or providing for future flexibility in the next crisis will be the most successful.

Katie Pace

Communications Director, Steelcase
steelcase.com | @steelcase

When we return to work, employee safety and wellbeing will be paramount. Organizations need to take action to ensure that people feel safe physically, mentally, and emotionally. At Steelcase, we're looking to the post-COVID workplace in three phases: Now (reconfigure), Near (retrofit), and Far (reinvent).

This means retrofitting the workplace quickly to comply with governmental and global health guidelines in the immediate term. When organizations are ready to bring back most or all of their workforce, they can begin reconfiguring the workplace for longer-term solutions and enhanced safety. Solutions should be highly adaptable, science-based, and selected with cleanability in mind.

In the longer-term future, work environments will require reinvention as science-based evidence and emerging technologies offer new solutions. Going forward the workplace will need to be designed with a deep commitment to the wellbeing of people—adaptable to possible economic, climate, and health disruptions. The opportunity for the workplace is to move forward, not backward.

One thing is certain about the future workplace, it won't be going away any time soon. Culture is rooted in community and the "social infrastructure"—places and protocols—that connect people and shape how we interact. The modern workplace provides the infrastructure needed to foster relationships, build communities at work, and allow people to achieve more. We will all return to the workplace changed in some way, and companies must continue to strive to create a work experience that strengthens community, creativity, and productivity.

Design will play a major role as we look ahead to a post-COVID world. Interior spaces, exterior spaces, city layouts, public transportation, materials, and more will have to adapt to a new way of life. How do you see design's role in our post-COVID existence?

Eric Yorath

Principal, figure3
figure3.com | @figure3design

As difficult as it has been, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided the world with an invaluable opportunity for research and learning in many fields. In the worlds of interior design as well as the social sciences, we have never been afforded such a circumstance to better understand what we need out of our environments—not simply for functional or practical reasons, but also on emotional and psychological levels.

Over the past several years the worlds of design and psychology have been learning from each other more and more. The recent pandemic has only provided more urgency to better understand how people connect with their environments psychologically. As such, design will need to continue finding ways to learn from and partner with the social sciences to ensure we are developing spaces and products that support us on all levels. ●

ALL IN

In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, design professionals and product manufacturers pivoted their daily businesses to contribute as they knew best: by creating solutions. While the government debated enacting wartime measures to direct plants to produce necessary items, many in the design world already were at work, needing no further prompting than the desire to be helpful in the unprecedented circumstances. Textile companies donated yards upon yards of fabric and began sewing masks; architects and designers developed new protective face shields for everyone from front-line workers to foodservice employees; product designers created safety barriers to be used in hospitals, pharmacies, supermarkets, and more; and the list goes on and on. The efforts of the design community during the pandemic could fill volumes. Here, *i+D* shares some of the inspiring results we witnessed along the way. ●

—Jennifer Quail

1. EVENTSCAPE. With its team of engineers, craftspeople, designers, and fabricators, Eventscape donated face shield kits (a box that includes the necessary pieces to fabricate 100 face shields that can be assembled in minutes onsite) as well as aerosol boxes (a tool to protect healthcare workers who are providing COVID-19 care) to front-line workers in the United States and Canada.

2. STYLEX. Seamstresses and craftspeople at Stylex produced washable, protective masks for COVID-19 healthcare workers. The New Jersey-based company donated the masks to local hospitals with the intention of doing so for as long as there is a need.

3. AMERICAN LEATHER. Best known for its recliners and sleeper sofas, American Leather shifted the focus of its Dallas facilities to producing masks and gowns for healthcare workers earlier this spring. And now it's launched a website to sell masks to the general public, and a portion of the proceeds will benefit the North Texas Food Bank.

4. MASSIMO IOSA GHINI. Italian architect Massimo Iosa Ghini of Iosa Ghini Associati, with offices in Bologna and Milan, devised a conceptual design for a new transparent protective mask that is available to be produced. The adjustable mask that fully encloses the face can be worn repeatedly and allows for the visual maintenance of human connection.



5. RED LAND COTTON. Moulton, Alabama-based producer of luxury cotton bedding, Red Land Cotton—which also created Room & Board's Sommerville collection—pivoted operations to produce masks for the University of Alabama Medical Center. The manufacturer also partnered with wedding dress designer Heidi Elnora on fulfilling nationwide mask requests.

6. STEELCASE. Resources at Steelcase were diverted to manufacture essential protective equipment including fabric masks, face shields, and separation screens for healthcare workers and medical facilities. To aid in a coordinated global response, the company also looked to expand production to other countries and share design specs and assembly instructions for other manufacturers to use as a guide.

7. BURGEON GROUP. Phoenix-based Burgeon Group developed London Box, an intubation shield for doctors to use when connecting COVID-19 patients to ventilators. The company, which specializes in creating interactive learning spaces for kids, distributed prototypes to hospitals across the United States.

8. LOLL DESIGNS. Using durable, sanitary, recycled high-density polyethylene (HDPE), outdoor furniture maker Loll Designs crafted an emergency hospital field bed, which could be assembled onsite and allow hospitals to admit more patients. HDPE is hygienic, easily cleanable, and 100 percent recyclable.



9. CARVART. With specialties in architectural glass and hardware products, product engineering, and fabrication, CARVART launched glassSCREENS>Shield, a collection of tempered glass protective screens for essential workers. The shields can be ordered and installed on the front lines within a week.

10. SCOTT HENDERSON INC. Industrial designer Scott Henderson created a new line of face shields for South Carolina-based 3D design and manufacturing company ZVerse. Designed for workers in service industries—including restaurants, retailers, salons, grocery stores, food plants, and the elective medical sector—ZShield Flex shields are intended as a more functional alternative to cloth face masks. The clear shields allow for full visual connection and feature an adjustable neck-mount rather than head-mount.

11. CHILEWICH. Partnering with Fabric Sources International, Chilewich adapted part of its Chatsworth, Georgia, factory to produce up to 25,000 isolation gowns per week. The medical-grade gowns are made from a modified version of a waterproof backing used for Chilewich wall textiles and help prevent contamination and the spread of COVID-19.

12. OPEN WORKS. Baltimore-based Open Works converted its manufacturing facility to make emergency face shields using its 3D printers. The organization was also able to rehire previously laid-off workers to assemble and package the necessary shields.

13. CERNO. Southern California-based lighting company Cerno leveraged its capabilities and committed to manufacturing approximately 10,000 face shields to donate to local hospitals.

“Designers have a responsibility to share solutions with the world. At this critical moment in time, I wanted to use my creativity to help try and assist in the efforts to help people.”

—MASSIMO IOSA GHINI, ARCHITECT

Be Original Americas members rallied around the social campaign #DoingWellbyDoingRight on Instagram, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Burgeon Group, Cerno, Chilewich, Loll Designs, Scott Henderson Inc., and Steelcase are part of this non-profit organization that advocates for design authenticity.

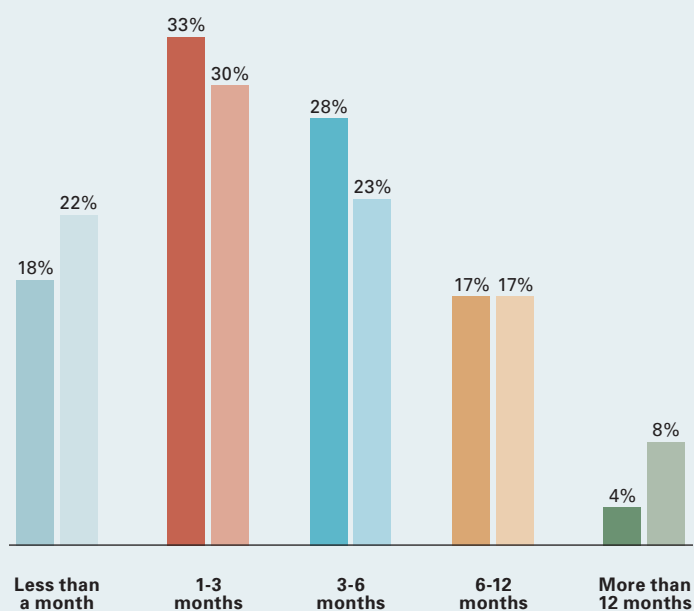
Image 1: Eventscape/Image 2: StyleX/Image 3: American Leather/Image 4: Massimo Iosa Ghini/Image 5: Red Land Cotton/Image 6: Steelcase/Image 7: Burgeon Group/Image 8: Loll Designs/Image 9: Carvart/Image 10: Scott Henderson Inc./Image 11: Chilewich/Image 12: Open Works/Image 13: Cerno

ASID CHECKS THE DESIGN INDUSTRY PULSE

The American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) conducted a series of surveys to identify the issues being faced by design professionals during the COVID-19 crisis. Beginning on March 31, 2020, a “pulse survey” was conducted every two weeks with each edition covering a variety of topics including top concerns, greatest challenges of remote/virtual meetings, anticipated recovery time, and more.

Susan Chung, Ph.D., director of research and knowledge management for ASID, notes that “changes in work for the interior design community continue to fluctuate. The community experienced a significant impact on work at the beginning as major adjustments were required to transition into virtual work for a profession that works in the physical realm. We began adjusting to these changes over time finding some stability in the April 28 survey; however, the pendulum seems to be swinging back toward additional change based on the May 12 survey with increased reports on changes in work.”

Recovery time*



*Note: Apr. 28 survey: bold colors on left; May 12 survey: muted colors on right

Key findings from the ASID COVID-19 Pulse Survey:

- Concern from the interior design community began decreasing mid-to-late April, but now at a slower pace. The level of concern regarding the impact of COVID-19 on professional life in the first two surveys had an average of 4.0 on a 5-point scale, but then dropped to 3.8 in the April 28 survey and 3.7 in the May 12 survey.
- The largest consensus among survey respondents in their estimated time to recover to pre-COVID business performance has consistently been one to three months since the first pulse survey on March 31. Projections are slowly getting longer (8 percent of survey respondents estimated more than 12 months to recover in the May 12 survey, compared to 2 percent in the March 31 survey), but the group that is estimating less than one month is increasing.
- The physical nature of interior design is challenging to navigate through barriers placed by COVID-19. Top challenges reported in topical questions from each survey include projects being cancelled or put on hold (41 percent of designers reported in the April 14 survey), getting access to clients/consumers (51 percent overall from April 28 survey; 48 percent of designers, 68 percent of manufacturers/retailers), and having to manage time through virtual communications (19 percent overall from May 12 survey).
- Eighty-five percent of survey respondents representing the interior design community are reporting some level of burnout, with the majority at a medium level (38 percent). People have been creating an exercise routine (19 percent), practicing mindfulness (13 percent), and scheduling breaks (12 percent) to improve physical, mental, and emotional health during this time.

For complete details from the ASID COVID-19 Pulse Survey, go to [asid.org/resources/covid-19/pulse-survey](https://www.asid.org/resources/covid-19/pulse-survey).

COVID-19 SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS KITCHEN & BATH MARKET

The Q1 2020 Kitchen & Bath Market Index (KBMI), released by the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA) and John Burns Real Estate Consulting (JBREC), reported kitchen and bath professionals considered economic uncertainty and fear of a recession their primary concerns as the first quarter of the year closed out. The concerns that held the top three spots in the previous quarter—cost of materials, availability of skilled labor, and labor costs—moved to seventh, eighth, and 11th places, respectively.

There is, however, an indication of recovery on the horizon. While an estimated 69 percent of all kitchen and bath projects were impacted by the pandemic, 48 percent of those cases were postponements, not cancellations. And, new data from JBREC shows cancellation rates stabilizing. Cancellations hit a high of 14 percent in early April, and by May 1 the number had dropped to 11.9 percent.

Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed expect recovery by September, while 25 percent were more cautious, predicting it may take until 2021 for conditions to improve. The report found retailers to be among the most optimistic with 42 percent stating they expect their businesses to return to normal before the end of June.

“As we all adapt, the KBMI is a look into an industry that is one of the quickest to recover in times of crisis and recession,” notes Todd Tomalak, senior vice president of research for JBREC, in a statement regarding the findings, adding the details and expectations found within the report “can be used as a gauge for other economic indicators, such as housing and consumer confidence.”

COVID-19 K&B Impact Factor*

8.08 Overall business	8.29 Building/ Construction	7.84 Manufacturing
8.3 Retail sales	7.96 Design	*On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being no impact and 10 being significant impact

Source: Q1 2020 Kitchen & Bath Market Index

FITWEL GUIDANCE FOR WORKING FROM HOME AND HEADING BACK TO THE OFFICE

The Center for Active Design, which operates Fitwel, responded to the COVID-19 crisis with a series of research pieces addressing all areas of building safety. *Research to Action: Building Health for All in the Face of COVID-19* includes evidence-based data that is being updated on a chapter-by-chapter basis as new science emerges. Chapters available at press time included Leveraging Buildings to Mitigate Viral Transmission, Building Trust in the Workplace, and Addressing Mental Health Within Residential Settings. Planned future chapters include Density and Resiliency, as well as Chronic Disease, Equity, and COVID-19.

The organization also published a variety of detailed fact sheets that outline best practices in a variety of areas that are affected by COVID-19. Among them are 5 Ways to Optimize Buildings for COVID-19 Prevention, 6 Ways to Stay Engaged While Social Distancing, and 7 Ways to Optimize Health While Working From Home.

For more on Fitwel’s COVID-19 response materials, go to fitwel.org/covid-19.

Optimize Buildings for COVID-19*

- 1. Increase ventilation.** While recirculating air has become the default in our buildings, ventilating with outdoor air is vital to diluting airborne contaminants and decreasing disease transmission rates.
- 2. Post educational handwashing signage.** Health officials recommend washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- 3. Strengthen cleaning protocols.** Increase cleaning frequency, replenish cleaning supplies ahead of time, and ensure that bathrooms stay stocked with hand soap, hand sanitizer, paper towels, and tissues.
- 4. Maintain optimal humidity.** Evidence suggests viruses survive better in low-humidity environments. Buildings can increase humidity via heating and ventilation systems to maintain an optimal range of 40 to 60 percent, or by purchasing and installing portable humidifiers throughout.
- 5. Filter indoor air.** Research suggests filtration of recirculated air may be effective in reducing transmission of airborne infectious diseases. When operating at their full potential, high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters can remove 99.97 percent of particles 0.3 microns or larger. ●

*Adapted from Fitwel’s 5 Ways to Optimize Buildings for COVID-19 Prevention



THINK TANK

BY DIANA MOSHER

Companies that focused on communication during the pandemic can emerge better than before

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS FOREVER CHANGED HOW THE WORLD DOES BUSINESS—AND THE STORY IS STILL UNFOLDING. AT EVERY STAGE OF THE CRISIS—FROM THE INITIAL RUMORS OF AN IMPENDING LOCKDOWN TO FIGURING OUT THE NEW NORMAL AS WE EMERGE—THE A&D COMMUNITY HAS BEEN LEADING THE CONVERSATION. THOUGHT LEADERS ABOUND IN THIS INDUSTRY, BUT IT TAKES A SAVVY COMMUNICATOR TO TRANSLATE THEIR NOVEL IDEAS INTO MARKETING MAGIC AND BUSINESS-DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

Open for Business

The first order of business is letting clients know you're open and the details of how you'll get them what they need. "When the crisis first hit, we sat down with the executive team and put together a plan to work at home and to communicate to our current clients as well as our staff that business would continue as usual but that we'd be working in different circumstances," says Dale Gago, director of marketing and communications at Toronto-based design firm figure3. Video conferencing internally among teams and with clients quickly replaced in-person meetings and, according to Gago, it's worked out very smoothly. Everything, from cocktail parties to site visits, has been conducted online.

In addition to current projects, throughout the pandemic the firm also has remained busy with business development, especially with submitting proposals. Even in the midst of the crisis and economic uncertainty, the world moves on. Now the conversation has turned to preparing for the returning workforce, and, as always, figure3 will communicate its thought leadership. "We love sharing new ideas and new approaches to design. So, I think it's a great opportunity for all of us," says Gago.

The firm historically shies away from an overly promotional approach to its marketing and social media. "During the height of social distancing, we looked for how we could play a small part in helping people adapt to their current surroundings," he says. The team translated their popular series "10 Ways in Which Design Influences Workplace Effectiveness" to fit the new working-from-home scenario. Each day a different message from the series was shared on Instagram and LinkedIn.

"People were looking forward to seeing what the next day's tip would be," recalls Gago. "We had lots of great feedback. Some media even picked up on it. It was a really cool way to be relatable and empathetic because we're all facing this together. We love showing our new projects and our new work, but this was a great opportunity for us to connect with our audience on a more personal level."



Dale Gago,
figure3
(Image: Riley Stewart
Photography)



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“When you take the time to communicate with existing and prospective clients, colleagues, and industry friends, you never know what you can learn from each other.”

—CHRISTINE ABBATE, NOVITÀ COMMUNICATIONS

Making New Connections

In the early days of the pandemic, some design firms and suppliers were tempted to keep a low profile in response to (real or anticipated) slowing business. Trimming operating expenses was a necessity, but, in hindsight, going silent wasn't. The big takeaway has been that marketing and public relations are even more essential during a crisis. Experts in creative messaging, like Christine Abbate, president of Novità Communications in New York, were quick to assess the situation and find new ways to connect folks under the hashtag #DesignStandsTogether.

“When you take the time to communicate with existing and prospective clients, colleagues, and industry friends, you never know what you can learn from each other,” says Abbate. From virtual yoga to the online Bar Basso Party during the week in April when the whole industry would have been at Salone del Mobile.Milano, Novità's online programming has provided opportunities for their clients to connect with media while simultaneously expanding Novità's own sphere of influence.

“This is a great time to show your leadership to your network and the broader community through a positive and proactive approach and attitude,” says Abbate. She adds that it is not enough to worry about your own business—it is important to see things in the eyes of your clients, as well. How can you be of assistance to them in this uncertain time? How can you help them and pivot your services as our individual communities and the world begin to open up?

“Be sensitive and thoughtful. And if you don't feel like making a hard sell, then don't—just check in and say hello and wish them well,” advises Abbate. Everyone appreciates genuine outreach now more than ever, she notes. Then, when we begin to return to normalcy, do what you can to leverage these relationships and find opportunities to continue working together.

Abbate is inspired by how many companies in the industry have stepped up to share ideas and build a sense of community. “This empathy and openness will change the way we do business in the future,” she says. Abbate believes these acts of service will become even more commonplace, and companies can take the time now to build this into their ethos and corporate culture.



Christine Abbate,
Novità
Communications
(Image: Lexy Cassola)



Leena Jain,
Humanscale

Time to Diversify

Leena Jain, chief marketing officer at ergonomic furniture manufacturer Humanscale, agrees that these unprecedented times have forced many in the A&D industry to reimagine the way they do business. On the micro level, Jain has a new appreciation for networking. Before the pandemic she might have said no to an industry mixer for “umpteen” reasons, but during quarantine she has tried to attend at least one virtual happy hour or social event every week.

“You never know what you may learn or the connections you might make,” she says. As we move forward into the new normal, Jain will continue her long-standing monthly practice of reaching out to three people within her LinkedIn network to learn a quick tip on how to do something or glean deeper insight into something they've achieved.

She also advises using the slower pace brought about by the pandemic to reevaluate the brand and consider how you're connecting with your audience. Is there something you're missing? A void you can uniquely fill? To help this effort, Jain highly recommends investing time in learning a new skill or platform. “Education is often de-prioritized when things are go-go-go, so take a moment and expand your knowledge base,” she says.

“As a marketer, it's always critical to think about how you can uniquely differentiate your brand in a way that's authentic to your customers,” she adds. Humanscale pivoted quickly by launching a WFH campaign to help those who were suddenly working remotely. “This campaign was both timely and genuine, thanks to an already-built e-commerce channel and marketing materials that spoke to home offices, as well as a strong consulting business that offers one-on-one sessions to help people ergonomically optimize their home office,” explains Jain.

She hopes that in a couple of years the industry will look back having learned the importance of diversification in all aspects of business. “We should never rely on one way of doing business or one distribution channel or cater to one type of customer,” she says. “Diversification allows for flexibility and agility in times like these.”



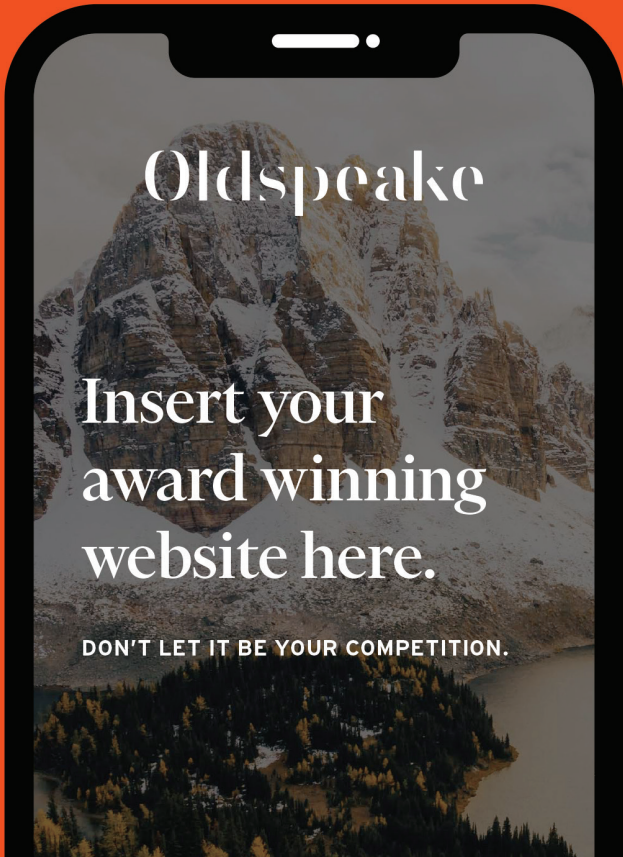
Humanscale's QuickStand Eco Desk offers ergonomic, sit-stand qualities for the home office. (Image: Humanscale)

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Business of Design Essential Outreach

It's an opportunity to be even more creative with video and get up to speed with virtual reality.

Kate Verner,
KV+A



Zoom Sets the Stage

Throughout the pandemic, Kate Verner + Associates (KV+A) has been busier than ever reaching out to individuals in global markets and serving as a clearinghouse of vital information for clients. “We’ve been talking to makers and other people we’ve worked with over the last 18 years—but also those we haven’t—to ask what they’re seeing,” says Kate Verner, founder of KV+A. Throughout the continuously evolving situation, one strategy seems to be constant: This is a time for initiating new relationships and for generously sharing resources.

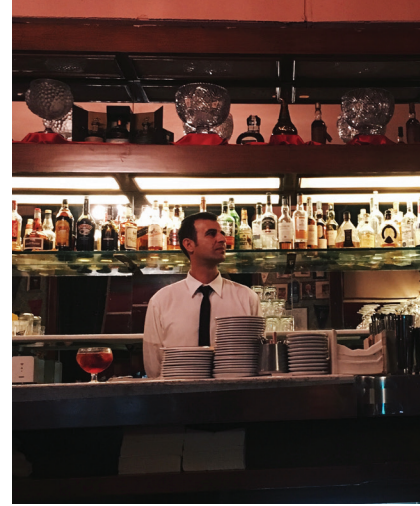
KV+A works with all levels of makers, craftsmen, and artisans as well as manufacturers that get things produced in the United States, Asia, and Europe. Verner usually travels all over the world for product reviews when working with designers on product development. Even though the idea of getting on a plane isn’t appealing at the moment, digital reviews are enabling Verner and her team to work through details remotely and keep projects moving.

Verner opines that even when travel resumes, the A&D industry will rely more and more on working from afar, and the vendors who don’t adopt necessary technology will be left behind. It’s an opportunity to be even more creative with video and get up to speed with virtual reality. It could also level the playing field for smaller players off the beaten path.

“We come across these little pockets of artisans and craftspeople who only make for a handful of interior designers or architects. Usually their talents do not include promoting themselves, and they tend to be tech phobic,” says Verner. But conducting business on Zoom during the shutdown has opened our eyes and set the stage for even more innovative ways of doing business. “There’s a ton of opportunity going forward for anyone willing to do things differently,” she adds.

But, don’t wait until you have it all figured out to bring in the marketing team. Involve your “think tank” in the earliest stages of business development. Invite them to brainstorm. Early involvement will make all the difference in a successful rollout and enable them to communicate the features of your enhanced brand to the marketplace and the media. ●

DIANA MOSHER, Allied ASID, is a New York-based interior designer and media consultant. She was the 2017-2019 communications director for the ASID New York Metro chapter and continues to be active on the communications committee.



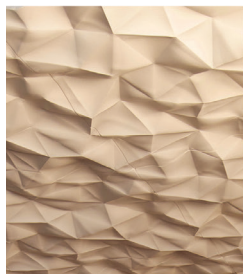
Novità hosted a virtual party in honor of design industry favorite: Bar Basso in Milan. (Image: Emma Reuland)



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Contributors

While the world continues to experience the shorter-term effects of the coronavirus pandemic, individuals also recognize that its far-reaching implications will morph into an ever-changing new normal, in both a personal and a professional sense. Among the innovative pioneers in the built environment, the design industry is positioning itself to help shape the products, services, and, most importantly, the places that will ensure the optimal health, safety, and wellbeing of humankind today and in the future. Our authors in this issue of *i+D* weigh in. —Linda K. Monroe

1. Diana Mosher, *Think Tank*

Diana describes herself as a glass-half-full person, and she positively deals with difficult situations by searching for any silver lining or learning opportunity. Such was the case with the queries she posed to the resources in her “Business of Design” article on communicating during and after a crisis (p. 22). “I enjoyed interviewing some of the industry’s most talented and creative communicators about helping brands to not only stay connected and relevant, but also come out ahead with new entrepreneurial initiatives in place,” she explains. “At the same time, these brand stewards have successfully maintained the right tone throughout the pandemic, so messaging does not appear tone-deaf to the larger tragedy that is still unfolding.” With the limits in social interaction everyone has experienced in recent months, Diana put her time to productive use: She indicates she began noticing, and then documenting on Instagram, the interesting architectural details she saw on daily walks in her Jackson Heights, New York, neighborhood. “Even some of the most unremarkable buildings sometimes have interesting original details or enhancements have been made to bolster their curb appeal. In normal times, I used to rush past in a hurry, but now I make time to stop and take a picture.”

2. Brian Libby, *Designing the Future*

When Brian conversed with the professionals for his article on design in a post-COVID environment (p. 28), he was reminded that “designers are

inherently optimistic people who have always thought about how to better organize the way we move through rooms, or buildings, or whole cities,” he says. “This story reminded me that every crisis is also an opportunity.” As a result, he is also optimistic about design’s role as society moves even further ahead. “Designers are the people who are going to figure this out,” he states. “I think most people believe we will move into an opened-up society that retains aspects of quarantine and social distancing. How we go forward is a thousand different little problems that have to be solved. But, our interior designers, architects, and planners have the expertise to help us.” During these past months, Brian has been busy completing a book manuscript—that he says he’s “been working on for years”—and having fun with one of his many artistic hobbies: making short travelogue films.

3. Jessica Goldbogen Harlan, *Brave New World*

Jessica was intrigued by her interview subjects responding to the global pandemic, especially in their creative reinterpretation of codes and zoning—the focus of her article (p. 36). “I was particularly fascinated learning about the way the staff at Mount Sinai Hospital was able to create efficient and effective systems under unimaginable pressure,” she recalls. “From simple things, like writing patient notes in Sharpie on door windows to creating ad-hoc air filtration systems, their resourcefulness impressed me.” In the future, she believes designers will play a significant role in keeping individuals safe and healthy, from both a physical and a mental standpoint. “I can imagine a trend towards homes

and public spaces incorporating designs that will keep us more comfortable and in better spirits if ever we go through another similar pandemic in the future. Larger common areas, private outdoor spaces, and better work-from-home setups come to mind,” she notes. A confirmed cat person, Jessica and her family adopted a puppy from a rescue organization during their quarantine, and, she adds, her (now former) perspective has changed. “It’s been fun taking my pup on walks...seeing my neighborhood and nearby park through her eyes.”

4. Brian J. Barth, *Changing the Landscape*

When asked about the role of design in a post-COVID world, Brian remarks, “The sudden reorientation of our relationship to public space makes it clear that professional designers will play a critical role in figuring out how to make recent temporary interventions part of the urban fabric in the long term.” With his background working for a magazine that focuses on landscape architecture, Brian was the perfect candidate to write about the same topic, albeit with present day’s more unique circumstances, in this issue (p. 42). Did he learn anything new? Yes, he affirms. “It amazed me how quickly the designers I spoke with are adapting,” he replies. “While transitioning to working from home in dealing with the economic impacts of the lockdown, they are already at the forefront of designing the post-COVID world. As a freelance writer, Brian notes the situation hasn’t been as dramatic for him as for many people. “But,” he adds, “I have enjoyed the extra downtime—catching up on my reading!” ●

Image 1: Rashidah De Vore/Image 2: Grace Kook-Anderson/Image 3: Erin Brauer/Image 4: Christine Nobel

Design

Design and engineering firm Mackenzie's 29-page *COVID-19 Design Guide* addresses current and future concerns for physical distancing, building sanitization, and operations.
(Image: Courtesy of Mackenzie)

By Brian Libby

ing

**In a rapidly changing world,
designers are the problem solvers
and visionaries enabling us to
prosper again**

the

The world was already changing. From year to year, decade to decade, populations shift and the places we flock to—be it high-density urban centers or spread-out suburbs—are continuously being remade. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, things are *really* changing.

For designers working at all scales of the building industry—interior design, architecture, urban planning—suddenly projects including restaurants, airports, grocery stores, and hospitals have to be reconsidered, re-imagined, and redesigned on the fly. All the while, it's not just a pandemic we're going through but also a major economic downturn.

But in every crisis lies opportunity. More than just shapers of rooms and buildings and cities, designers are problem solvers. They are the people who will retrofit our built environment to new everyday realities and find ways for us to not only endure but also safely, healthfully prosper—together.

To get a handle on these unprecedented times, we talked to a variety of design professionals in several major North American cities about how they're helping clients take it one step at a time as they begin planning what's next.

Future



Designers like Benjamin Huntington quickly adapted to conducting client home walkthroughs via video conference. (Image: Courtesy of Benjamin Huntington/Veritate Design)

Finding Normal and Retrofitting Home

For interior designer Benjamin Huntington, just getting into quarantine back in New York was an ordeal. He'd been visiting a project in the Highlands of Scotland by himself when the travel restrictions set in, and he ended up stranded alone for weeks. But even then, Huntington was active, be it in reaching out to clients of his firm, Veritate Design, or to colleagues and partners as president-elect of ASID's New York Metro chapter.

"The very first thing to do was to create a framework of normalcy for those within the community to help them protect themselves," Huntington says. With the ASID New York Metro board, Huntington began by setting up weekly Zoom meetings available to any designers, regardless of whether or not they're members, "about how to deal with the crisis: how to deal financially, how to access relief packages, what essentials we need and what we can do without," he explains. At that same early stage, Huntington began connecting with clients electronically and not talking about work. "It was just, 'Are you OK?' That's all we needed at that moment," he says.

Once he and clients got back to talking about projects, Huntington found it difficult at first. "As an interior designer, it's normally so important to be face to face," he explains. Yet early in the quarantine period, he found himself having a two-hour video meeting with a client, who was moving her screen throughout the residence to discuss different rooms. The process suddenly began to feel a bit more normal. "Although it took longer, by the end of the call, the client said, 'I think we'll be OK here,'" he recalls.

Looking ahead, Huntington believes society, including designers, will find ways to maintain social distancing over the long term. "The first step will be to visit a client's house with mask and gloves and sanitizer," he says. "The client may not be there, or may be in a different room, and we're communicating via phone. Or maybe they're just 10 feet away. But each way allows me to be in the home, performing my task much more efficiently. Only over time we will then be able to converse normally."

But what about the spaces themselves? For decades, homes have been becoming increasingly more open. Will that end? Huntington, who is also a feng shui master, doesn't think so.



Designer Benjamin Huntington believes an open flow among spaces in a home will continue in the future. (Image: Courtesy of Benjamin Huntington/Veritate Design)



Benjamin Huntington, Veritate Design

“You think of a home as a series of concentric circles, and each circle as you move inside is a more and more private space,” he says. “When you think about COVID-19, the threat is in the outside world. So you need a de-contamination zone at the entrance to your home. I see the mudroom becoming more important as part of the entry sequence. Traditionally it would be just before the kitchen in the back of the house. The front of the house now needs something similar: a powder room nearby and an area where things can be quarantined. That’s going to be important, I believe, forever.”

For multi-unit living, Huntington thinks the key is to use design to create a sense of ownership of shared spaces such as hallways and passageways, where infection could spread. He cites one study of a British public housing complex that found tenants were less likely to clean pass-through spaces. But when passageways became cul de sacs, blocked at one end, “the people living there began to take ownership of that external space.”



Sufficient space, as in the reception area at IA Interior Architects’ Toronto office, will serve to make employees feel safe in a post-pandemic world. (Image: Courtesy of IA Interior Architects)



Beverly Horii,
IA Interior Architects

Changing Workplaces and Better Flow

In some ways, the Toronto office of IA Interior Architects had a leg up on quarantine life and collaborating remotely. “We’re a global company,” explains interior designer Beverly Horii, who leads the Toronto team. Videoconferencing was already a regularity when working with colleagues in London, Miami, or at the Denver headquarters, and staff were free to work from home as needed. Even so, the adjustment was still challenging. “We found it was a cultural issue,” she adds. “We missed that face-to-face.”

This got the IA team thinking: With much of their projects on hold, they set about creating a survey that asked questions about working at home or in commercial offices in the future. They received responses from 1,700 people across 28 countries, which helped birth a series of conclusions. Would the open-office trend dissipate in favor of more enclosed workstations? Not necessarily, their research found. “Open offices give a variety of spaces: You pick the space for the task at hand,” she says. “One of the things we found in our survey was while working from home, people missed having that variety of settings.”

Yet there is still likely to be a transformation of sorts, at least in the short term, as shelter-in-place orders begin to be lifted but the old normal has not returned. That could likely mean far fewer times when the entire staff is at the office at once; therefore, fewer workstations would be needed and they could be shared, while collaborative spaces would take a higher percentage of square footage. “I think the shift will happen to even more collaborative settings,” Horii explains. “It may be more of an attitudinal shift, but you’ll see those settings becoming more and more prevalent with more variety to them, as we understand how people like to work.”



A survey conducted by IA Interior Architects found open and communal spaces will continue to be important in the future of office design. (Image: Courtesy of IA Interior Architects)

A feng shui master as well, Horii believes the ancient practice as well as biophilia can work in tandem to make spaces function better. “It’s going to be critical to instill spaces not just with physical mitigation for social distancing, but we also have to remember it’s about wellness of the mind and wellness of the spirit,” she says. “These are tools to help insure we have a healthy workplace.”

Most of all, Horii says, the IA Interior Architects survey showed that people want flexibility, choice, and a degree of control in the workplace: the right to make their own decisions about how often they go into the office and a range of types of spaces to meet and work when they are there.

Shifting Populations and Sky Gardens

The fact that cities are always changing and populations continually shifting is what urban designer and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) partner Scott Duncan thinks about every day. With commercial towers, airports, and district-planning commissions all over the world in progress, Duncan has seen the world shut down but also is witnessing it open again. Yet he wonders if COVID-19 may reverse long-standing patterns.

“A lot of our work for the last two decades has been about that return to the city and rebuilding neighborhoods,” he says, citing Chicago’s Lincoln Yards, a former industrial neighborhood that’s being converted to homes and offices, as one example. “That story plays out again and again: A working waterfront transitions to a mixed-use district. What now? There’s a clear correlation between density and virus infection if you look at the data. I think it will drive a lot of people out of the city. It may not be at the top of the economic food chain, but people will be faced with hard decisions when there’s a reasonably long downturn in the economy, which I think most are anticipating.”

Formerly an industrial neighborhood, Chicago’s Lincoln Yards is being redesigned by SOM to include homes, offices, public space, and more.
(Image: Courtesy of SOM)



However, Duncan does express a degree of optimism about the idea that a post-pandemic world could foster momentum for the retrofitting of suburbs and small towns. “I think it’s all about how they’re done,” he says, “I’m part of the Council for Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat. We’ve looked at energy consumption for high-density versus low-density [settings]. It’s not that categorically a low-rise, low-density scenario is bad for the environment. In a way, I’m intrigued by the problem of designing for potentially a more dispersed population.





Designed by SOM, Lincoln Yards in Chicago is an example of how underutilized land can be transformed to create a multipurpose future. (Image: Courtesy of SOM)

I think it will be a positive for many of our small towns in America, and particularly in the hinterlands around cities.” Along with that, Duncan anticipates renewed interest in New Urbanist approaches that help make non-urban settings walkable, adding that such planning efforts “don’t have to always come with the postmodern or Neo-Historicist style.”

Meanwhile, Duncan says commercial architecture is likely to favor one design shift in particular: natural ventilation. But it was already part of a trend. “Clients were already talking to us about the importance of naturally ventilated spaces or including outdoor space within the workplace. Now it’s become more of a need than a nice thing to have.”

Before the pandemic, for example, SOM was designing an office tower for a developer in Wuhan, China. Pre-COVID, “we had been talking about operable windows, but after the virus hit, the client said, ‘Absolutely, let’s do it.’ And instead of a couple of sky gardens, he wanted them every few floors. He knew it would be necessary to give a sense of comfort.” Not every office is lucky enough to come with a sky garden, but given what an upward trend shared spaces are in American office design, the lesson is broadly relevant.

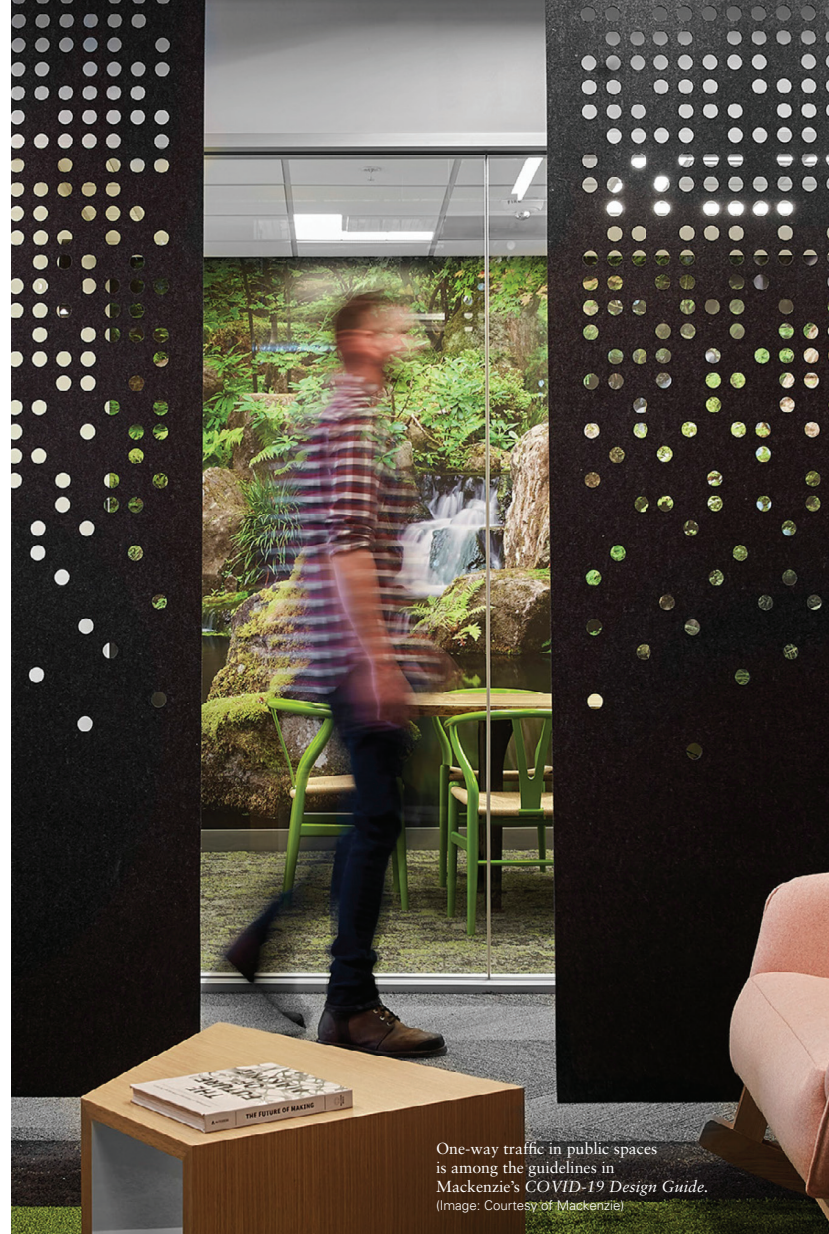
Proactive and Flexible

Perhaps because Portland, Oregon, firm Mackenzie offers a wide array of design services—from architecture and interiors to structural and civil engineering to transit planning and landscape architecture—the pandemic brought questions from clients across the built environment. “The most immediate concerns were about re-entry into their buildings, especially as it related to offices or retail spaces,” explains firm president Dietrich Wieland. “They were looking for guidelines about how to get back to work and retrofit.”

So that’s what Mackenzie produced: a 29-page *COVID-19 Design Guide* that was given out to clients. It begins by summarizing published guidelines for physical distancing, building sanitization, and operations. Next, the guide diagrams a series of simple ways to retrofit spaces with a combination of behavioral and physical actions: one-way traffic, touchless doors, and frequently placed stations for sanitizing hands and grabbing a mask.



Dietrich Wieland,
Mackenzie



One-way traffic in public spaces is among the guidelines in Mackenzie’s *COVID-19 Design Guide*. (Image: Courtesy of Mackenzie)

“It’s a work in progress,” Wieland says. “But I think the key will remain designing flexibility. How do you reconfigure space easily? How do you adapt it? That will become even more important.” One trend that was already on its way, building automation, Wieland sees quickening. “It’s not just video conferencing and remote collaboration,” he clarifies. “I’m talking about touchless entries and touchless elevators that you’re navigating with your phone.”

Throughout history, this narrative has played out time after time: An historic event casts a dark cloud yet in time also reveals silver linings of positive change. That was certainly the case a century ago following the 1918 flu pandemic, for example, and when peace finally arrived in 1945 at the end of World War II. Whole new eras and ways of living unfolded, and designers led the way. That’s likely to be true again. ●

BRIAN LIBBY
is a journalist, photographer, and award-winning filmmaker. His articles have appeared in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, and Architectural Digest.



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By Jessica Goldbogen Harlan

Brave New

COVID-19 could change zoning and code regulations for the better

In late March, as New York state's COVID-19 cases soared, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took over the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York for use as a medical facility.

The choice was a no-brainer: "We do 175 to 200 events a year," says Alan Steel, president and CEO of the New York Convention Center Operating Corporation, which runs the Javits Center. "In some respects, building a hospital is just the same as building a trade show floor. There are different components, elements, and timetables, but every show is also different. For temporary use, our space can be anything you can think of."

Indeed, the 2.1 million-square-foot building (of which 840,000 square feet is exhibition space) that's perched on the edge of Manhattan is a blank slate, and it met all the building codes necessary for its temporary transformation. Steel says the only thing needed to meet all the medical standards was to install HEPA filters on its air conditioning system. The facility could ultimately hold some

2,500 beds, laid out in a way that maintains the adequate distancing recommended to prevent the spread of the infection.

Whether it's convention centers being pressed into service as temporary hospitals; a restaurant using its now-unoccupied seating area to set up a makeshift supermarket selling toilet paper, all-purpose flour, and other necessities; or dining room tables in homes across the country now serving as remote classrooms, our pandemic reality has illuminated the need for flexible spaces that can pivot to serve a new purpose should the need arise.

It's also brought to light the importance of building codes and zoning regulations that will carry a society comfortably and safely into any situation that comes its way—whether it be a natural disaster, a military attack, or another pandemic. When the world emerges on the other side of this crisis, how might these regulations adapt to meet our new reality and be prepared for whatever the future holds?

The Jacob K. Javits Convention Center was able to quickly and safely add 2,500 beds to New York's overwhelmed hospital system. (Image: Kevin P. Coughlin/State of New York)



Alan Steel and New York Governor Andrew Cuomo (second and third from left) work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to transform the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center into a medical facility.
(Image: Don Pollard – Office of Governor)



World



Safety First

“Although we find ourselves in unprecedented times, building codes remain one of the strongest defenses to keep our communities safe and protected,” says Michael Pfeiffer, senior vice president of technical services at the International Code Council (ICC). “As businesses have had to adjust and convert their facilities, the codes have provided reliable safety guidelines, making the efforts to adapt [varying spaces to new uses] more effective and efficient. Without the codes, there wouldn’t be a starting point or minimum standards for these projects.”

At a time when building safety standards are more important than ever, the current pandemic has often hampered progress in changing or enforcing them.

“I think the biggest challenge for professionals in the industry is how much of this work requires person-to-person contact,” says Nicole Kuklok-Waldman, lecturing professor of planning law and entitlement at University of Southern California. The Los Angeles offices for Building and Safety and Planning are open, but Kuklok-Waldman reports that the staff is only working remotely. “This makes it hard to walk through complex issues or address something quickly,” she says. As an entitlement consultant and lawyer, Kuklok-Waldman creates code-based solutions that often require a detailed discussion of the code and prior experience. “That’s really hard when you’re dealing with a government agency, dealing with a crisis, remotely,” she adds.



Michael Pfeiffer,
International Code
Council (ICC)



Ashley Marsh,
MASS Design Group
(Image: Courtesy of
MASS Design Group)



The GHESKIO Tuberculosis Hospital in Port au Prince, Haiti, was designed by MASS Design Group.
(Image: Courtesy of MASS Design Group)

MASS Design Group, which has offices globally, is one organization that’s helping pioneer guidelines for buildings to make them safe for their occupants—both during the pandemic and in better times. The company is no stranger to infectious disease control: It was founded in Rwanda more than a decade ago to design medical facilities that reduced the spread of infection and created healthier environments overall for recovering patients.

Currently, the organization has a team working with New York’s Mount Sinai Hospital as it navigates the treatment of COVID-19 patients. “It’s amazing how they were able to pivot, creating all sort of small, rapid hacks to fix the constraints they were faced with,” Ashley Marsh, a senior architect at MASS Design Group, says of the space-challenged hospital that has little room for flexibility in such a dense urban environment.

For instance, because the old building had windows that opened—unheard of in more modern medical facilities—the staff was able to remove the glass panes and replace them with plywood in which a HEPA filter was inserted, creating negative pressure in patient rooms that allowed clean air to enter and air with potential contagions to exit. Other more minor hacks included using dry-erase markers to write on door windows so medical staff could read patient information without entering the room, and to mark directions on floors with tape for the influx of new staff who might be unfamiliar with the building.

Information like this at Mount Sinai and other facilities across the nation is being collected and used by MASS Design to create working documents that other businesses and institutions can use to enhance the safety of their own buildings. The company’s COVID Design Response page on its website has documents on how to design spaces for infection control, how to limit contagion in makeshift facilities, and how to redesign hospital spaces to protect healthcare workers, with more documents in the works, including a report on how construction sites can be managed and operated more safely.

“One of our biggest goals is to try to scale up. How can knowledge gained on the fly eventually spread to impact millions of people around the world?” notes Marsh. The company hopes to partner with Ariadne Labs to create a learning collaborative that will disseminate this knowledge.



A sign outside of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in New York, which was transformed into a medical center during the pandemic, sends a message of inspiration to the city.



Regina Yang,
MASS Design Group
(Image: Courtesy of MASS
Design Group)

While MASS Design Group is currently focused on the battle against COVID-19, the lessons learned may have relevance for years to come. “Our hypothesis is that this is as significant a moment as 9/11 was in terms of how we approach new spaces and operate within them,” says Regina Yang, a senior director at MASS Design Group. “I can’t imagine there will be no impact, but we might not know what [the impact] will be. It will certainly change as we continue to learn about the biology of coronavirus.”

“The human dimension is also so important,” adds Marsh. “Pre-COVID we already saw the duality and multipurpose of buildings in society. The more dense our society becomes, the more pressure there is for each building to do more than one thing.” For instance, a school building that sits empty after 5:00 p.m. could be used in the evenings for a community meeting space.

“We’re going to see a critical mass of innovation post-peak,” predicts Marsh. “COVID-19 is doing what any major shift would do: highlighting or illuminating some of the changes that were already brewing.”



MASS Design Group’s COVID Design Response page on its website includes documents on how to design spaces for infection control, how to limit contagion in makeshift facilities, and how to redesign hospital spaces to protect healthcare workers, with more documents in the works.
(Image: Courtesy of MASS Design Group and Ariadne Labs)

Flexible Spaces

Elaine Mahoney, a senior resilience project manager with the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, agrees that the post-pandemic world will spark a conversation about adaptive reuse. “We’ll see an increase in creating spaces that are more nimble,” she says. “The concept of using conference centers like Javits in other ways is great, because they’re raw spaces and can become anything. Public buildings, office spaces, hotels... how can they be retrofitted based on need?”

Permanent safety measures will likely also be a standard in public spaces. As businesses prepare to reopen, they’re implementing new measures to keep guests and staff safe. For instance, the Venetian Resort in Las Vegas reported plans to install thermal cameras, electrostatic disinfectant sprayers to clean high-touch surfaces, UV lights to kill bacteria in loading docks and warehouses, and on-staff EMT teams.

Mahoney thinks that many buildings will be retrofitted to conform to the social-distancing protocol that we’ve become accustomed to. Schools will need to overcome their overcrowding issues, and companies might incorporate more teleworking. And Steel agrees, envisioning that a meeting room once intended for 100 people might only house 50.

Paraphrasing a quote from Maya Angelou, Kuklok-Waldman says, “When you know better, you do better.” She explains, “We now have a framework for where the gaps are—such as adequate internet and computer access, remote login access, PPE [personal protective equipment] for employees, and other issues related to this pandemic. Bigger picture, I would expect more attention to remote and online service provision by cities and counties, a more global acceptance that internet access is a basic right and not a privilege, and continued recognition in the zoning codes that use-based Euclidean zoning [whereby a town or community is divided into areas in which specific uses of land are permitted] does not reflect in the current social environment.”

She adds that zoning based on use misses the opportunity for governments to be flexible and nimble when necessary. Cities like Los Angeles are operating under systems established decades ago—“Our zoning code was last revised in 1946 after World War II,” says LA-based Kuklok-Waldman—and COVID-19 has revealed the need to update this code as soon as possible.

The ICC’s Pfeiffer says, “We cannot make predictions about future code changes; however, the Code Council is open, and transparent code development processes would allow for such proposals to be considered and potentially included in future editions of the codes. The building safety community takes the health and welfare of building occupants very seriously and pays close attention to the reports and information that impact building science. If new sanitation standards for buildings were recommended by health experts, it is likely that code-change proposals would be submitted to incorporate the new standards into the international codes.”

A City Exodus?

While building codes might be updated to make them adaptable enough to address any future pandemic or natural disaster, another change that might be wrought by COVID-19 is a shift in where and how people want to live once they're able to emerge from their social isolation. Will those who were confined for months to small urban apartments with little to no access to outdoor spaces decide that a larger home in the suburbs will be better suited to wait out the next possible pandemic?

Mahoney is one of the many New Yorkers who fled the city. She believes that if there is an exodus after the pandemic, it might be more due to an affordability standpoint. "Now that we're in an economic crisis, people will be looking for ways to decrease their housing costs, as well as from the concern about space and their health."

And she sees the possibility of urban spaces changing due to the pandemic. "Access to outdoor space has been the number-one thing people are looking for in luxury developments," Mahoney says. She anticipates that—just as after the tuberculosis epidemic there was an increase in apartments designed with sun porches—post-COVID residential design might increase the availability of outdoor spaces, either for individual apartments or for the entire building. Citywide, she envisions changes to the infrastructure, such as streets being closed to vehicles so residents can walk or bike the streets.

"I think we are all more thoughtful of how our living situation can be improved if this happens again," says Kuklok-Waldman. "For some people, that might be spending more money on a larger home. But for others, it might mean moving closer to easier deliveries, more restaurant choices, and better internet access."

If there is indeed a shift to suburban living, Kuklok-Waldman cautions that long-term consideration must be made to how these less-populated areas operate. "Suburbs just don't work the way they used to," she says. "We see the severe impact on traffic, car culture, and people being too spread out. Going back to 1950 is not the answer here."



Nicole Kuklok-Waldman,
University of Southern California

Charles Marohn,
Strong Towns



Schools will need to overcome their overcrowding issues, and companies might incorporate more teleworking.

Charles Marohn, founder and president of Strong Towns, doesn't believe a city exodus is the right solution. "To build suburbs and maintain them requires a ridiculous amount of cash, and the very design of a suburb is insolvent," he says. "Zoning codes in the suburbs require making your lots really wide, but when lots are wide, enough wealth is needed" to maintain curbs and to pipe and wire utilities to each property. Instead, he says, "What cities need now more than anything is adaptation, innovation, and nuance. They need the opposite of rote replication" for which modern zoning seems to advocate.

For the ideal model of a community that would weather a pandemic like COVID-19, Marohn looks to European cities that have interconnected neighborhoods. "If one neighborhood had a disease outbreak, you could essentially seal off that neighborhood to stop the spread of disease and the people within that neighborhood would still have essentials," he says. Instead, in many suburban and even some urban neighborhoods, people have to drive to one part of town to groceries, another part of town for other essentials.

Marohn believes the pandemic will reveal a truth about cities: "The city is better without suburban commuters." He says that without the traffic, cities are able to close their streets for pedestrian use, the air is cleaner, and stress levels seem to be lower.

His take on how zoning laws can create a better post-pandemic society: "Zoning needs to become 10 percent of what it is today. If I were advising someone who works on zoning codes, I would recommend stripping down the codes and simplifying them to their essence. Regulate only things that cannot be fixed in a generation—the structural things that make it difficult for cities to adapt."

Suburbs or cities, there's no doubt about it: Our world will be forever changed when the COVID-19 pandemic winds down. And the ways we use and interact with our homes, our public spaces, our workplaces and institutions, and our communities will follow suit. ●

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has written about the home furnishings industry for more than 20 years, and her work has appeared in *HFN*, *Town & Country*, *Stylus*, *TastingTable.com*, *ALLRECIPES.COM*, *AmericasMart* magazine, and *Yahoo!* A culinary-school graduate, she also is the author of nine cookbooks, including *Ramen to the Rescue*, *Mason Jar Lunches*, and *The Little Book of Takoyaki*.

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Changing

By Brian J. Barth

the

Landscape architects are at the forefront of figuring out how social distancing will transform the design of public and private spaces

Landscape





A large NanaWall allows for an indoor/outdoor connection and added space for the whole family.
(Image: Courtesy of NanaWall)



Space2place designed a colorful, playful escape surrounded by nature at Kinsmen Park in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
(Image: Courtesy of space2place)

Living by Design Nature Connection

In March, like most Americans, Ryan Moody made an abrupt and jarring transition to working from home. Trained as both an architect and a landscape architect, he found his new workspace less than ideal. But it gave him the opportunity to ponder what the post-COVID future of design—especially as it applies to our new work-from-home and school-from-home reality—might look like. He found himself going back to some of the most fundamental design principles, which are proving quite durable in these uncertain times.

“This is all so new that we’re still digesting the reality of the situation we are now living in,” says Moody, cofounder of the Washington, D.C., landscape architecture firm Moody Graham. “But I think much of what we know about design will continue to apply—it’s just that we’ll need to shift it slightly.”

One thing that seems readily apparent, however, is that the general public is more aware than ever about how their homes support, or detract from, their sense of wellbeing. For decades, studies have shown a critical link between health and connection to nature. Because Moody and his business partner, Jay Graham, both share a background in architecture and landscape architecture, they’ve always been interested in the relationship between indoors and out. The designers were already focused on what they call their “tree-for-every-window” philosophy, the importance of which has been driven home by the current pandemic.

Likewise, they have long espoused psychologist Rachel Kaplan’s concept of “soft fascination,” which emphasizes the restorative value of natural scenes like “clouds moving across the sky, leaves blowing in the wind, the flames of a fire pit, or the rippled reflections of a water feature,” says Moody. “Looking up and seeing things like that allows for mental regeneration and the ability to refocus.”

An increased desire for a connection to nature in urban settings is an expected result of the COVID-19 shelter-at-home circumstances.

(Image: Courtesy of Moody Graham)

Moody Graham’s “tree-for-every-window” philosophy is likely to go mainstream in post-pandemic design.

(Image: Courtesy of Moody Graham)





The team at Moody Graham believes firmly in the restorative value of being immersed in nature. (Image: Courtesy of Moody Graham)

It's relatively easy to enhance our new work environments in this way, and during a pandemic, when stress levels are on the rise and people are feeling isolated and uncertain about their future, connections to the exterior environment are more important than ever."

One way to create a connection to the outdoors is to convert walls to windows. Matt Thomas, marketing director of NanaWall, a company that makes glass walls for exactly this purpose, says such renovations are a long-standing trend that he expects will "deepen and accelerate" as the pandemic progresses. NanaWall's products allow for more than just a view—they can slide or fold open in nice weather for a seamless transition between indoors and out. And they are designed for maximum insulative value to mitigate the additional energy consumption typically associated with increased glazed surfaces.

"For people working from home and supervising their kids' remote learning, a glass wall expands the square footage and breaks down traditional ideas about rooms and space—you can be working inside while supervising your kids playing outside," says Thomas. "I think the idea of the home office will fade away in time in favor of flexible and cleverly designed spaces that can adapt to the needs of the moment, whether that is working from home, entertaining, or giving your kids a functional space." The thought is no doubt a balm to the soul for those who have spent months living under lockdown, "particularly in a place like New York where space is at such a premium," says Thomas, who calls such spaces "transformative."



Moody Graham sets the stage for indoor/outdoor living and a restorative connection to nature. (Image: Courtesy of Moody Graham)

The New Urban Ballet

In cities across the country, a new dance emerged in March. Walking down the sidewalk became a very different experience as people maneuvered to maintain a 6-foot protective bubble around themselves, hugging the curb when another person passed by and stepping into yards and parking lanes when foot traffic surged beyond the point where social distancing was possible. Pharmacies and grocery stores were among the first pioneers of this pandemic choreography, painting stripes on the pavement at 6-foot intervals so people could safely line up outside to wait for their turn to enter, and erecting all manner of jerry-rigged barriers to coerce customers to move about in a safe manner.

The urbanist Jane Jacobs famously described the intricate, though unconscious, movement of people throughout the day on a city street as a “sidewalk ballet.” Today’s version is considerably more self-conscious in its choreography—and, for many, filled with anxiety.

Landscape architects like Jeff Cutler, an urban design specialist who founded the Vancouver firm space2place, have been observing this new dance as they contemplate how temporary social distancing interventions might eventually crystallize into permanent features of the urban landscape. Driving around the city on a weekday early in Vancouver’s lockdown, Cutler observed what has become a strikingly familiar scene: “The downtown streets were quite empty, but the parks were quite full.” He wondered whether “the idea that parks should be thought of as part of the public health system will be a lasting legacy of the pandemic.” He says, “There’s a lot of evidence for the health benefits of parks and urban green spaces, but it has always seemed a bit abstract to communicate that to the general public. I think that connection has become much more real for people.”

When people leave home to go to school or work, they are moving about—“Getting my steps in!” they say—as well as socializing to varying degrees. If they’re not leaving home for either of those reasons, they still need to get out and interact with the world, which means they’re likely to do it in more of a recreational fashion. In Vancouver, so many people swarmed into Stanley Park (the city’s biggest) that city officials closed the road encircling it, as a sort of relief valve, says Cutler. “If everyone goes to the park at the same time,” he explains, “you exceed the carrying capacity—you need more space for social distancing, and that space has to come from somewhere.”

The same could be said for sidewalks. In that case, the extra space also has to come from the street. “Typically around 30 percent of the land in a city is dedicated to road rights-of-way,” says Cutler. “The street network is the largest category of publicly owned space in any city, so that’s the obvious spot to steal some space.”



Located in City Centre, in Surrey, British Columbia, West Village Park is an urban oasis designed by space2place.
(Image: Courtesy of space2place)





“The street network is the largest category of publicly owned space in any city, so that’s the obvious spot to steal some space.”

—JEFF CUTLER, SPACE2PLACE

Space2place designed East Fraser Lands Park in Vancouver to enhance the unique qualities of living in a riverfront community. (Image: Courtesy of space2place)

Landscape architects have advocated for years to put cities on a “road diet.” The idea is to shrink the amount of space devoted to cars and allocate it to more environmentally friendly purposes, such as bike lanes, space for pedestrians, tree plantings, and bioswales for stormwater filtration. Cutler believes—or at least hopes—that current circumstances will give further credence to this cause. He predicts that public transportation use will remain low for the foreseeable future due to crowding concerns, which could lead to an increase in cars on the road. On the other hand, if more people are working from home and opting to have groceries and other goods delivered, traffic and parking demand may actually diminish, especially if walking and cycling are encouraged.

As of early May, Cutler says the Vancouver City Council was considering a motion to close streets in certain commercial districts, at least temporarily, to allow for this sort of repurposing of space. One of the main motivations for civic leaders, he says, is to allow restaurants to set up tables in the right-of-way in order to accommodate more socially distanced seating than they could within their walls. Many other cities around the world are already experimenting with this model. The whole street does not need to close; in many instances, significant space can be obtained simply by appropriating on-street parking areas.

“Take away street parking, and you more than double the sidewalk area,” says Cutler. “When we’ve proposed this as part of streetscape transformations on past projects, business owners tended to express concern that they’re going to lose customers because people can’t park right in front of the store. Often after the transformation is complete, however, it turns out to be good for business. We’re seeing municipalities trying out these things on a temporary basis out of necessity, but maybe that will create momentum to keep it that way in the future.”



A San Diego residence greatly amplifies its space with a NanaWall.
 (Image: Courtesy of NanaWall)

Sweating the Details

It will be years before the full impact of the pandemic on architecture, design, construction, and engineering is known, but designers have been speculating. Moody is already seeing one clear trend in his business: Calls for designing home vegetable gardens have increased significantly—whether out of paranoia induced by the sight of empty grocery store shelves, or simply because people have more time at home and growing food is a nice way to connect with nature.

“We had victory gardens during World War II, so maybe these could be called restorative gardens,” Moody says. “People need to restore their mental and physical health—having a connection to food and plants is a way to do that safely in your backyard.” He foresees an increase in demand for indoor gardens, as well. And he predicts the pandemic will force a rethinking of the design of senior living facilities, where society’s most vulnerable have been stuck in what are essentially virus incubators, with little access to social stimulation, much less the outdoors.

Another design category ripe for change: outdoor furniture. “We know that people have always liked the flexibility of movable furniture,” Moody says. “Before we often thought about it in terms of moving from sun to shade, depending on the time of day or season. Now it might be thought of in terms of whether or not we can move benches 6 feet apart so that people feel more comfortable in a public setting and have control over how close they are to others.”

This pandemic may last years, and like any previous major social transformation, it is likely to leave a lasting impact on public life. Fears of future infectious disease outbreaks could make social distancing a permanent norm. In thinking about how municipalities will prioritize their investments in public places, Cutler assumes that flexible, adaptable spaces will rule the day. It might not be a time to invest in sports facilities or outdoor amphitheaters, for example. Whereas grassy fields surrounded by meandering trails remain a good bet, one that is relatively light on strained municipal budgets.

Park programming and management may be even more important than physical features for the time being. Will it be necessary to hire rangers to enforce social distancing? In high-demand environments, such as city beaches in summer, perhaps there will be a line to enter, just like at stores. Cities already have systems in place to reserve ball fields and picnic pavilions, so it’s conceivable that apartment dwellers in big cities might soon reserve their 6-foot-by-6-foot spot in the sun each week.

Ultimately, residents must decide what they want their shared civic future to look like. This spring, Cutler is conducting a series of public engagement meetings—virtually, of course—to solicit input on the design of a new wastewater treatment facility that will double as a park. “It will be enlightening to hear what people are thinking,” he says. ●

BRIAN J. BARTH
 is a freelance writer with a background in environmental planning and design. He has written for a range of publications, from *Landscape Architecture Magazine* to *New Yorker.com*.

Resources and Advertisers

RESOURCES

Section	Page
Design Pulse: The At-Home Front	16
The Antiques Diva & Co. antiquesdiva.com	Steelcase steelcase.com
Daun Curry Design Studio dauncurry.com	Stylex stylexseating.com
figure3 figure3.com	ZVerse zverse.com
LATOxLATO latoxlato.com	Design by the Numbers
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Steelcase steelcase.com	John Burns Real Estate Consulting realestateconsulting.com
Thomas Lavin Showroom thomaslavin.com	National Kitchen & Bath Association nkba.org
Materials: All In	18
American Leather americanleather.com	Business of Design: Think Tank
Burgeon Group burgeongroup.com	figure3 figure3.com
Carvart carvart.com	Humanscale humanscale.com
Cerno cernogroup.com	Kate Verner + Associates kvanyc.com
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Scott Henderson Inc. scotthendersoninc.com	Skidmore, Owings & Merrill som.com
	Veritate Design veritatedesign.com

Brave New World

Ariadne Labs ariadnelabs.org	36
Army Corps of Engineers usace.army.mil	
Department of Housing Preservation and Development for New York City nyc.gov	
International Code Council iccsafe.org	
Javits Center javitscenter.com	
MASS Design Group massdesigngroup.org	
New York Convention Center Operating Corporation esd.ny.gov/new-york-convention-center-development-corporation	
Strong Towns strongtowns.org	
Venetian Resort venetian.com	
University of Southern California usc.edu	

Changing the Landscape

Moody Graham moodygraham.com	42
NanaWall nanawall.com	
space2place space2place.ca	
Vancouver City Council vancouver.ca	

Up Next

Gensler gensler.com	50
Hotel San Luis Obispo hotel-slo.com	

ADVERTISERS

Advertiser/Website	Page
American Society of Interior Designers asid.org	C3
Crate and Barrel crateandbarrel.com	C4
Design Within Reach dwr.com/trade	9
Interior Designers of Canada idcanada.org	35
MAMAGREEN mamagreen.com	11
modularArts modulararts.com	26
NeoCon neocon.com	41
Oldspeake oldspeake.io	25
Richard Frinier Design Studio richardfrinier.com	12
Sherwin-Williams swcolor.com	7
Stickley stickley.com	6
Surya surya.com	4-5
The Container Store containerstore.com/trade-program	C2-3
The Insurance Exchange ASIDinsurance.org	23
U.S. Green Building Council usgbc.org	13
Walpole Outdoors walpoleoutdoors.com	15

PROFESSIONALS FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

Christine Abbate Novità Communications	Scott Duncan, AIA, LEED AP Skidmore, Owings and Merrill	Massimo Iosa Ghini Iosa Ghini Associati	Ashley Marsh MASS Design Group	Todd Tomalak John Burns Real Estate Consulting
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Toma Clark Haines The Antiques Diva & Co; Republic of Toma	Ray Graham, FASLA Moody Graham	Nicole Kuklok-Waldman University of Southern California	Ryan Moody, ASLA Moody Graham	Kate Verner Kate Verner + Associates
David Cordell, ASID, NCIDQ, LEED AP, WELL AP, Fitwel Ambassador Perkins and Will	Scott Henderson Scott Henderson Inc.	Thomas Lavin Thomas Lavin Showroom	Katie Pace Steelcase	Dietrich Wieland, LEED AP BD+C Mackenzie
Daun Curry Daun Curry Design Studio	Beverly Hori, LEED AP, NCIDQ, OAA, ARIDO IA Interior Architects	Elaine Mahoney New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development	Michael Pfeiffer International Code Council	Regina Yang MASS Design Group
Jeff Cutler, CSLA, BCSLA space2place	Benjamin Huntington, ASID, CIDQ, NY CID Veritate Design	Charles Marohn Strong Towns	Alan Steel New York Convention Center Operating Corporation	Eric Yorath, LEED AP figure3
			Matt Thomas NanaWall	

RETREAT TO WELLNESS

There was a time, not so long ago, when travelers had the option to spend their hard-earned vacation days at designated wellness retreats, the idea of which often conjured visions of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg's infamous Battle Creek Sanitarium or of a constant agenda of ancient practices like meditation or yoga. These connotations led many to believe such destinations were simply not for them but, today, a hotel property need not have a gimmick or a specialty to place its guests' wellbeing front-and-center. Today, wellness is woven into every design decision, from the materials and palette used throughout guest rooms and common areas to access to nature and more. In the July/August issue, *i+D* will examine this more modern method for making wellness accessible to a much wider audience, one that will head back home all the more rested for it. ●

At the Hotel San Luis Obispo, wellness extends far beyond the walls of its restful and restorative Sol Spa. Designed by Gensler, the hotel incorporates ideas of sustainability and wellbeing throughout with reusable water bottles for all guests, coupled with filling stations throughout the property; living wall art and live-edge wood tables; charging stations for electric vehicles; and multiple outdoor spaces where guests can enjoy the natural surroundings.
(Image: Tanveer Badal)



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