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Returning to work:
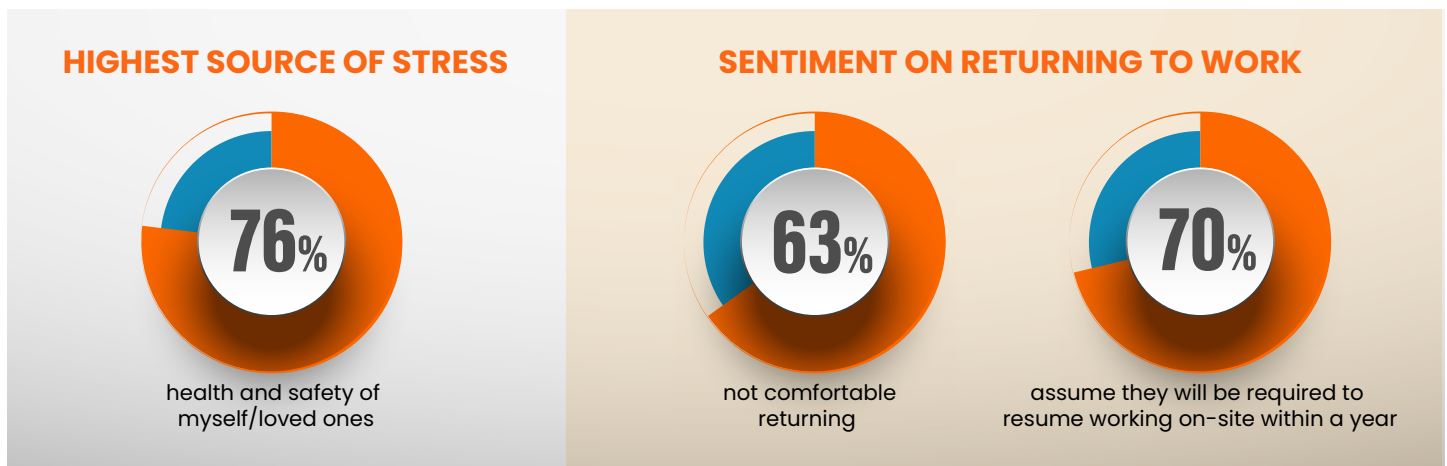
How to do it safely and ways you can prepare now

Reimagining
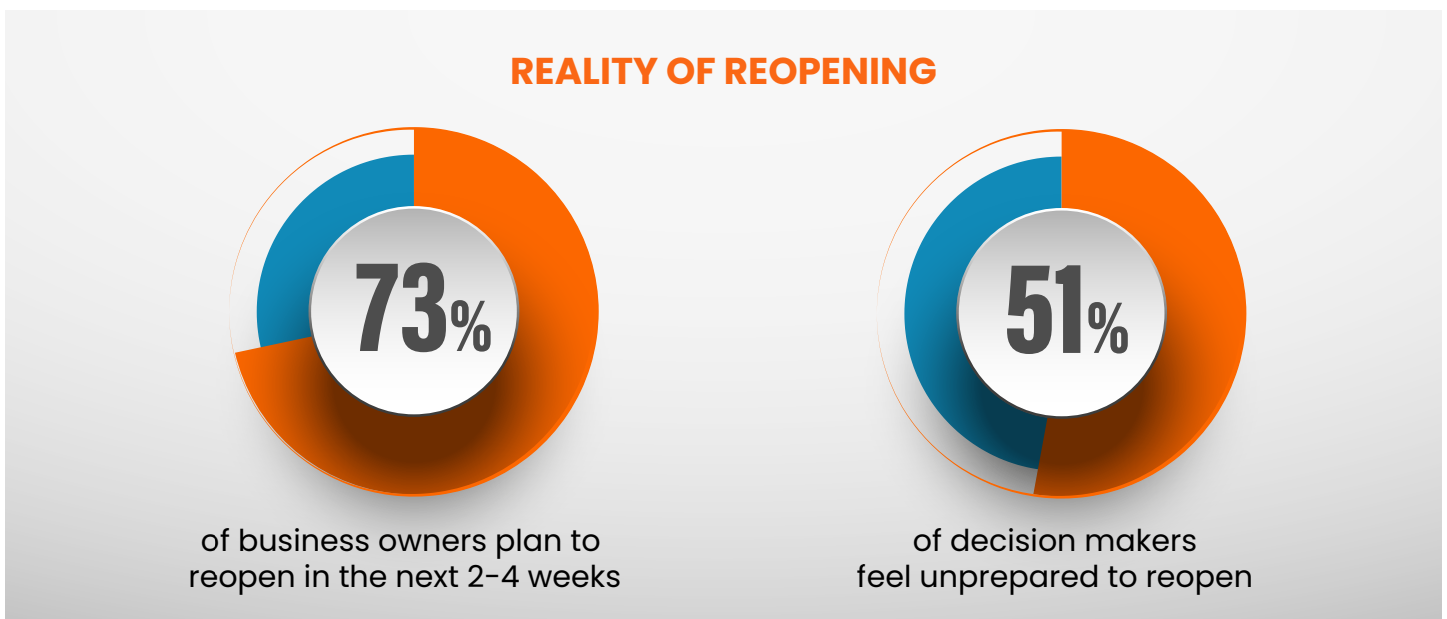
the workplace

with technology

Not much had changed in how people were accessing their buildings, offices, or campuses in the years leading up to 2020. However, the onset of the pandemic brought a heightened awareness around all the things we touch, and safety concerns with the things we used to do every day: commute, eat out, go to the gym, and go to work. Suddenly, our lives looked very different, as we all tried to adjust to this new normal. With this forced "reset" button, Openpath conducted a survey of tenants, property owners and managers, landlords, and developers to get an idea for what is top of mind for everyone across the industry, and see how businesses are coping with the new changes.

Return to work sentiment

Amongst all of the noise and uncertainty, the resounding takeaway is that people are worried about the health of themselves and their loved ones, first and foremost. In terms of returning to work, that now represents an added layer of stress due to the potential health hazard of possible virus exposure that could result in transmitting it to their families at home. The survey revealed that 63% of respondents are not comfortable returning to the workplace in the current environment, yet 70% assume they will be required to return within a year.

HIGHEST SOURCE OF STRESS

76%

health and safety of
myself/loved ones

SENTIMENT ON RETURNING TO WORK

63%

not comfortable
returning

70%

assume they will be required to
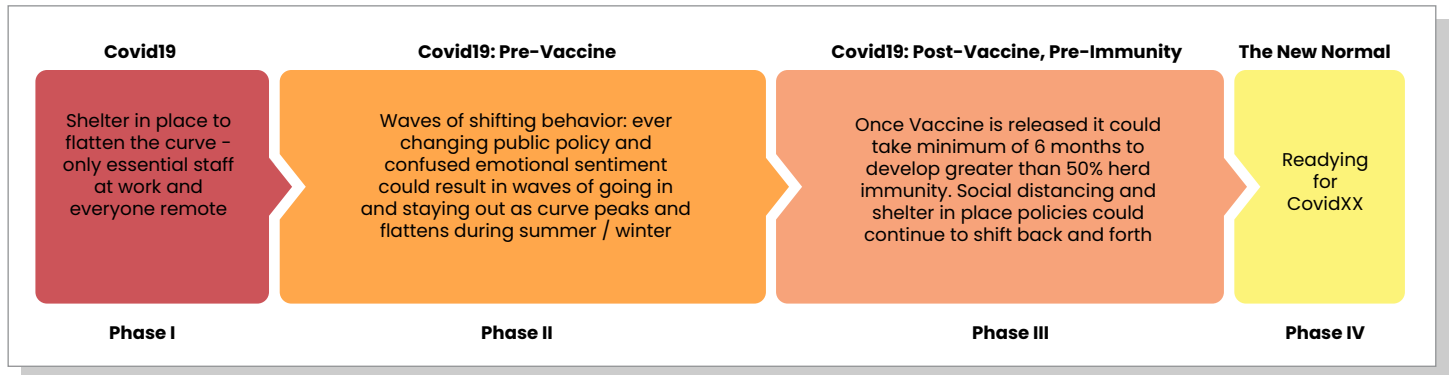resume working on-site within a year

In a perfect world, we could all wait until COVID-19 was fully under control with a vaccine before going back to our normal routines and schedules. But the reality is, for the sake of financial wellbeing, many of us will have to return to work. According to the survey results, 73% of business owners and decision makers are planning to reopen their doors in the next 2-4 weeks. And of those people, more than half of them feel unprepared to do it. What can employers and business owners do to ensure the health and safety of their employees, staff, and themselves — and can it feasibly be done in time?

REALITY OF REOPENING

73%

of business owners plan to
reopen in the next 2-4 weeks

51%

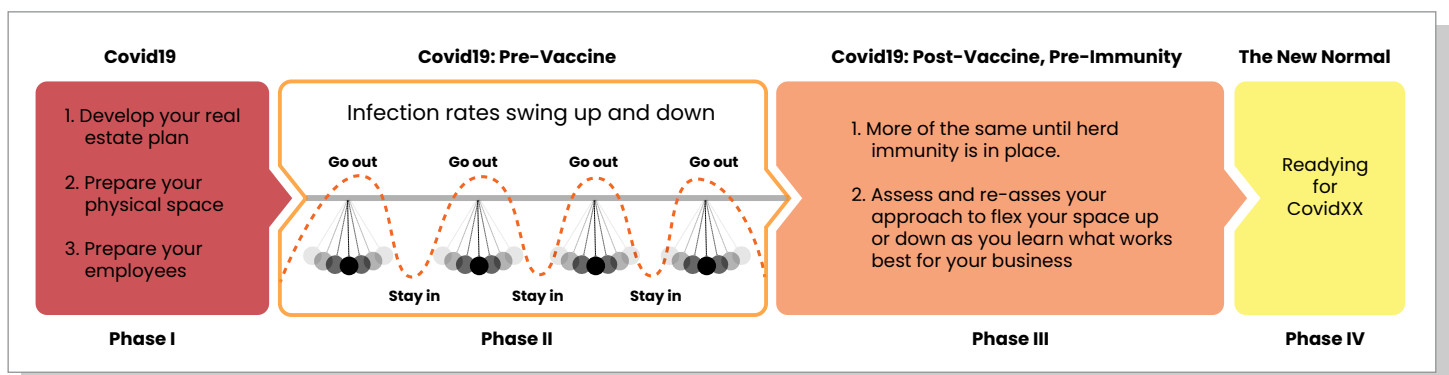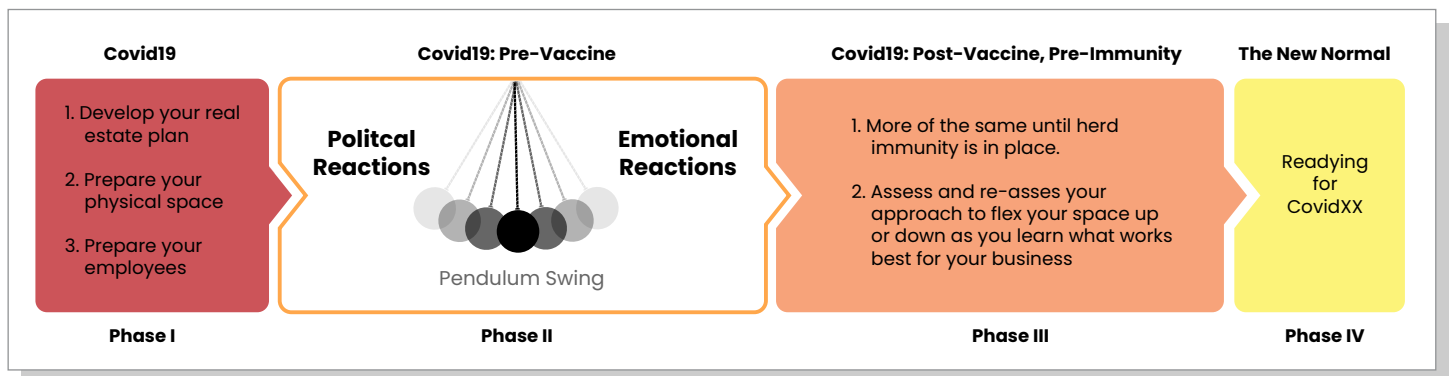of decision makers
feel unprepared to reopen

The new normal timeframe

When we look at the timeline for reopening workplaces, schools, and entertainment, we have to consider the natural phases of the pandemic in regards to a vaccine.

Covid19	Covid19: Pre-Vaccine	Covid19: Post-Vaccine, Pre-Immunity	The New Normal
Shelter in place to flatten the curve - only essential staff at work and everyone remote	Waves of shifting behavior: ever changing public policy and confused emotional sentiment could result in waves of going in and staying out as curve peaks and flattens during summer / winter	Once Vaccine is released it could take minimum of 6 months to develop greater than 50% herd immunity. Social distancing and shelter in place policies could continue to shift back and forth	Readying for CovidXX
Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV

Our framework to consider for decision making

The most important part of establishing a plan moving forward into the new normal is to be prepared. In our current pre-vaccine phase, we are likely to see a pendulum swing between returning to work in accordance with infection rates. The more your building and workforce are equipped to handle the back-and-forth, the better. Therefore, it's crucial to have a strategy in place that prioritizes flexibility and safety.

Covid19	Covid19: Pre-Vaccine	Covid19: Post-Vaccine, Pre-Immunity	The New Normal
1. Develop your real estate plan 2. Prepare your physical space 3. Prepare your employees	**Politcal Reactions** **Emotional Reactions** Pendulum Swing	1. More of the same until herd immunity is in place. 2. Assess and re-asses your approach to flex your space up or down as you learn what works best for your business	Readying for CovidXX
Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV

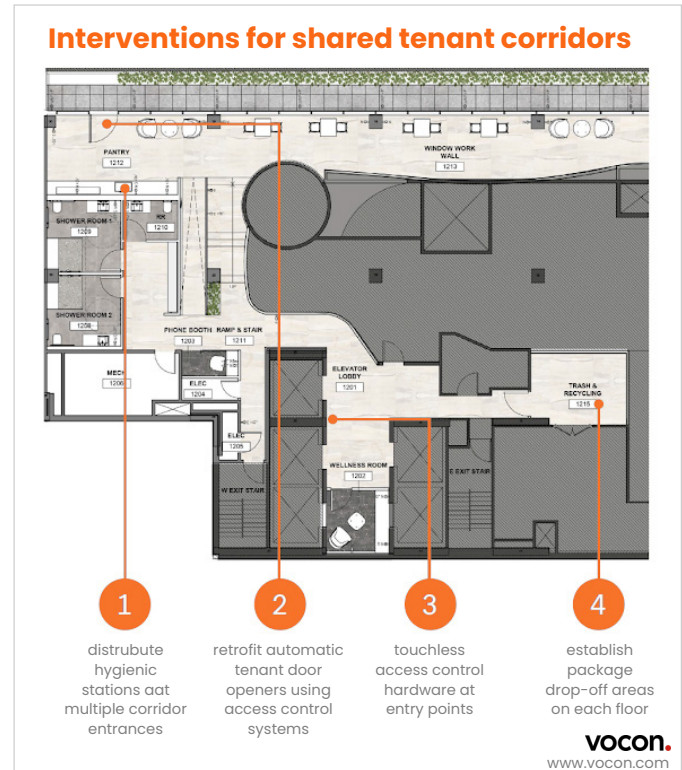| Covid19	Covid19: Pre-Vaccine	Covid19: Post-Vaccine, Pre-Immunity	The New Normal
1. Develop your real estate plan 2. Prepare your physical space 3. Prepare your employees	Infection rates swing up and down Go out / Stay in	1. More of the same until herd immunity is in place. 2. Assess and re-asses your approach to flex your space up or down as you learn what works best for your business	Readying for CovidXX
Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV

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Reimagining the workplace after COVID-19

In order to make sure everyone feels safe and secure at work, there are some fundamental changes to the workplace as we know it. When adjusting workplaces for the new normal, structural and technological changes help boost confidence and peace of mind, enforce, and track activity to ensure a safer experience. The survey showed that the top requested safety features that would make people feel more comfortable returning to their workplaces are:

☑ **Reduced occupancy**

☑ **Touchless access control**

☑ **Hand sanitizer stations**

These responses paint a clear picture: people don't want to touch anything communal anymore. Increasing the number of hand sanitizer dispensers in the workplace is an easy (and important) win, but it's not enough to keep people safe, or give them confidence in coming back to work. In order to really make a difference in the sentiment of returning to work, implementing strategies to reduce capacity and eliminating common touch points are essential. Luckily, there are tools you can use to automate and enforce these new processes to make these changes quickly and efficiently.

Interventions for shared tenant corridors

| 1	2	3	4
distrubute hygienic stations aat multiple corridor entrances	retrofit automatic tenant door openers using access control systems	touchless access control hardware at entry points	establish package drop-off areas on each floor

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Reducing occupancy in the workplace

According to the CDC and global health authorities, social distancing is an effective way to prevent spreading COVID-19, especially indoors. The more space between people, the better, and our survey data showed that many people would feel more comfortable returning to work if their employers and property owners reduced occupancy as part of their COVID-19 reopening protocol.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OCCUPANCY MANAGEMENT

79%
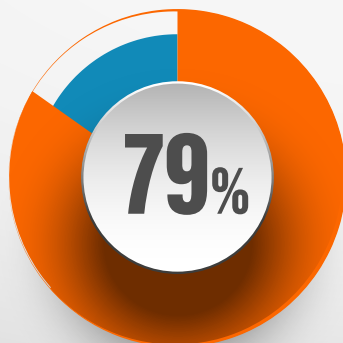
Reduced occupancy was the **#1 requested action item** by 79% of respondents

80%
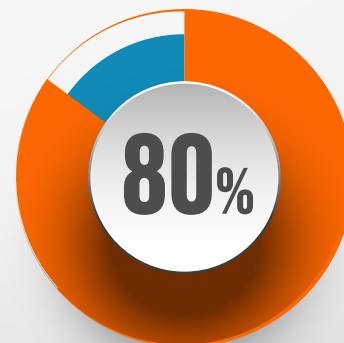
of businesses plan to maintain the same building space or decrease the size

There are a few ways you can reduce the capacity in your office or building. The simplest way is to reconfigure the desks and common areas to put more space between people throughout the building. You can also use decals and dividers. While this is a budget-conscious way to encourage social distancing, you can't effectively enforce the new guidelines, and there's no way to manage or track occupancy levels. Using business processes and leveraging technology offers a smarter way to limit the number of people in your building at any given time.

Many companies are splitting up work hours into shifts of smaller teams so fewer people are scheduled to be in the office at the same time. With this strategy, being able to change door locking/unlocking schedules and manage user access credential privileges instantly become must-have capabilities for teams planning their return to work. Openpath makes it easy to manage occupancy with shift schedules: simply assign users to groups, and authorize access for each group on different days and times as needed to keep capacity below the set threshold. Plus, with remote management capabilities, Openpath lets admins handle schedule changes and add or revoke user access from anywhere.

Ground floor optionality

1. create a congestion free lobby with multiple entrances

2. convert vacant retail to mud room amenities

3. open up stair connections to alleviate elevator congestion

4. use touchless access control solutions at turnstiles

5. convert vacant space to secured areas for food drop off & package delivery

6. monitor elevators for density and open larger freight elevators for tenants

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However, even with the best laid plans for reducing the total number of people in a given space, it can be difficult to ensure everyone follows the guidelines. Leveraging access control technology goes a long way in eliminating congestion and enforcing social distancing in your facility. Occupancy management systems are a solid investment for any business looking to safely reopen after COVID-19, because they automate and enforce the capacity limits for your space. Openpath's access control system uses entry and exit readers to track the number of people entering a zone, and deny additional unlock requests until capacity falls below the set threshold. Administrators can receive alerts and manage occupancy in real-time from the activity dashboard, too. If you want to invest in more robust COVID-19 workplace safety technology, you can also integrate Openpath with people counters and capacity sensors for enforceable and improved space management.

Touchless technology for the built environment

If there's one thing we've learned in the new normal, it's that touching things is now a source of anxiety. Think about all the things you touch at work: door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, break room microwaves, maybe even shared computers or desk supplies. When it comes to returning to work after COVID-19, eliminating as many common touch points as possible helps employees, tenants, and visitors feel safer. The best place to start with COVID-19 safety technology is at the front door: going contactless with your access control system. Keycards and fobs, touch readers, PIN pads, and turnstiles are one more thing to wipe down throughout the day, and it's nearly impossible to keep up the proper maintenance. And yet, only 25% of survey respondents said they have proactively implemented touchless technology in their offices and buildings.

HANDS-FREE ACCESS WITH MOBILE CREDENTIALS

62%

of respondents would prefer to use their mobile phone to access their building

Mobile credentials, which ranked #1 in terms of preferred access method, solve this pain point by letting users enter and exit using their smartphone. With Openpath's mobile-based access control system, you have the ability to go completely touchless thanks to wave-to-unlock capabilities activated by Bluetooth — the user doesn't even need to take their phone out of their pocket or purse. Similar configurations are available for touchless turnstiles and touchless elevator systems. You can also reintegrate Openpath with Allegion door opener hardware for 100% contactless entry and exit.

Automating wellness verification procedures

In addition to social distancing, making sure people who come on-site are healthy in the first place is essential to safely returning to work during COVID-19. Openpath offers integrations with visitor and tenant management software to automate and enforce wellness waivers and self health attestations as part of a daily check-in process required for authorized building entry. The integrations allow the entire process to be completely digital so it's easy to manage remotely, and reduces the burden on HR and administration teams. It is also possible to set up temperature screenings with on-site thermal camera integrations. If you anticipate visitors to your building, wellness verification procedures can be added to the guest check-in flow, associating mobile guest pass credentials with a completed attestation form. Adding these symptom check processes to your office protocol gives employees and visitors peace of mind when returning to work.
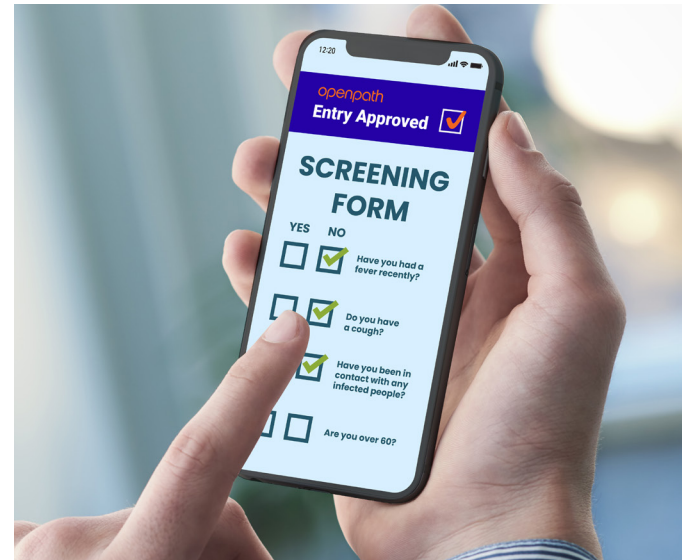
Proactive building security management

In our survey, 45% of respondents said that security was the biggest challenge they faced when shutting down their offices. When nobody is physically present at work, how can business owners ensure their facility is still secure? Businesses are struggling with managing requests for temporary access for employees, maintenance staff, and deliveries, and those who are reducing capacity by making changes to work schedules are needing to constantly shift hours and enforce new schedules on the fly.

With a cloud-based platform such as Openpath, businesses are able to take a proactive approach to managing their building security via remote access. Enhanced COVID-19 safety features like remote unlock, door schedule changes, user credentialing, and video management can all be done anywhere, at any time. Plus, with real-time reporting and activity notifications, you'll always know what's happening at your building, without having to be on-site.

Key takeaways for returning to work

From our survey results, it's clear that while returning to work after COVID-19 is necessary, it's critical that precautions are taken and safety becomes the number one focus. People need to feel secure when they go back to their workplaces and campuses. With a few COVID-19 workplace safety solutions in place, it's possible to create a space that people feel confident about. Prioritizing touchless technology, enforcing reduced capacity throughout the building, reconfiguring communal areas, and optimizing check-in processes all offer added confidence when reopening your building.

Making substantial changes to your COVID-19 building safety technology can feel like a daunting task. The good news is that more than half of respondents said their budget was going to increase to prioritize health and safety technology in the workplace. To determine the best course of action, businesses should find out what COVID-19 returning to workplace technology is readily available, which can be done by reaching out to a trusted security system installer in your area, and maximize those dollars. Any effort a workforce sees its employer making towards protecting them goes a long way with increasing morale and peace of mind.

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BUDGETING FOR HEALTH TECHNOLOGY

51%
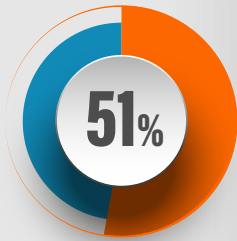
will increase security spending for COVID-19 workplace solutions

Ensuring your building is as safe as possible opens the door for more innovation as we continue to move forward. Yes, the office as we know it is changing, but it's not all bad. We are creating new, and in many cases improved, workplace experiences with innovative COVID-19 building safety solutions. Many of these technology updates are not just quick fixes; they are future-proof solutions that will keep your building ahead of the curve well beyond safely returning to work after COVID-19. We are reshifting our focus to the health and safety of each other — at the end of the day that's a positive outcome for everyone.

Additional design interventions for ground floor amenities
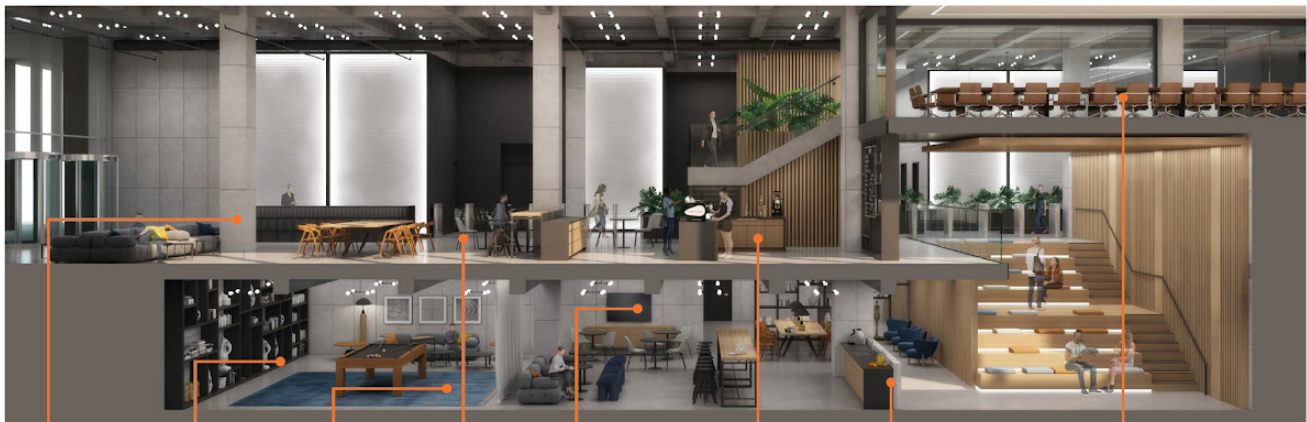
1 implement pre check-in for visitors with QR code access

2 program multipurpose rooms using a reservations system

3 replace lounge seating with cleanable surfaces

4 program dedicated elevators to amenity floors

5 install video technology to allow for open space meeting

6 implement serviced café areas opposed to self service

7 provide cleansing stations at high traffic areas

8 reduce chair density in meeting spaces or divide into smaller meeting areas

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Ready to reopen with confidence?

Getting your building ready for a safe return to work is effortless with Openpath's reliable, hands-free access control. Set up a demo with our sales team, or have one of our trusted partners walk your site to assess your needs. We'll show you how to deploy all of these COVID-19 technologies in your building, and help you create a safer workplace for everyone.

Contact us to get started:

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sales@openpath.com