

Glazing with a Purpose

Renovations in the Wake of COVID-19



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Just a few months ago, could we have imagined our way of life would change as dramatically as it has in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic? Practices that once seemed extreme in the U.S., such as wearing a mask or social distancing, are now not only normal, but expected. Awareness of the virus has infiltrated every aspect of our lifestyle—the way we work, socialize, shop, eat, even think. In the new normal, it’s nearly impossible to consider any subject or occurrence outside of the COVID-19 lens.

Our awareness of this contagious virus is already changing the way we design our world and operate within it. There’s no question this will continue as we begin to transition back to normal life. Fortunately, the glazing industry is uniquely positioned to help prepare communities for a safer and healthier future, simply by doing what we do best.

Safe at Work

We’ve already been fielding a growing number of requests for COVID-19-specific projects. Our Los Angeles service team tells me that the demand for COVID-19-related renovations is increasing steadily, especially as the mayor’s orders continue to evolve. Social distancing partitions have been the most requested installation, and clients want them to look inconspicuous. Clients also want them to be temporary and removable so things can be shifted back to normal if and when possible.

In addition to these quick, potentially temporary adaptations, we’ve seen more permanent responses emerge on a number of jobsites. Our Las Vegas team has reported that nearly all of the major hotels and casinos on The Strip now have temperature readers fixed at every entrance to identify potentially infectious patrons. Many of our clients are filing change orders to install additional automatic, touch-free glass doors to minimize the transfer of germs. We’ve also seen several food service and retail

businesses outfit their locations with drive-through or walk-up pickup windows to ensure safer service.

Accommodating Change

On an architectural level, many speculate that the pandemic will usher in a new era of office design, predicting an end to the open concept that has come to define the modern workplace, and a reemergence of walled offices and secluded, private workstations. Unlike the beige box cubicles of the past, post-COVID-19 office spaces will likely make an effort to retain a sense of collaboration and culture, while still prioritizing employee health and safety. Glazing is an obvious solution for achieving this, and we expect to see an increased demand for glass office walls and interior glass atriums to integrate light and transparency into closed-concept designs.

As subcontractors, we must also always ask what value our solutions provide in the context of other trades. Non-glazing renovations to public facilities will likely include replacing carpet with hard, easy-to-sanitize flooring, rerouting ventilation systems, shifting floor plans to accommodate social distancing, etc. New ideas often come from collaboration, and our new set of circumstances has opened the door for both.

Next Steps

While we hope to see the end of this virus as soon as possible, our experiences navigating this unprecedented time are likely to have a lasting impact on how we interact with our environment, both on an individual and collective level. When it comes to construction, renovations, redesigns and innovations will likely shift to meet the needs of a more cautious, health-conscious population.

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