



THE COMPLETE GUIDE ON

**HOW COVID-19  
WILL IMPACT THE  
FUTURE OF REAL  
ESTATE DESIGN**

# CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



Real Estate trends and markets are constantly in flux, but the recent COVID-19 pandemic has had a **unique effect on the desires and interests of purchasers and renters**. Because of this, it is expected that the market will see a **large impact on condo services and design choices moving forward**. Many of these will likely stay long past temporary shutdowns and mandatory mask usage, **creating a culture of sanitization awareness and improved standards of health and safety**.

The short-term effects of the pandemic can already be seen in commercial spaces and restaurants: **plexiglass barriers, face shields, new delivery options, and separation of both employees and clients**. Many of these are expected to disappear as society gradually returns to normal, however it is expected that **some will either remain as they are, or develop into more permanent yet more appealing or functional versions**.





All building types, from commercial buildings and luxury condos to live-work spaces and affordable rentals, **will likely see the effects of the pandemic on the future of their design**, though it may appear in different ways. As such, it is important to break down the levels of impact into three sections: designs, finishes, systems, and services. Through these lenses, **it's easy to see the layers of impact we will face in the coming days.**

# CHAPTER 2

IT'S ALL IN THE DESIGN



## CLOSED-CONCEPT LAYOUTS

The fundamentals of modern design has been **leaning towards open-concept living** for quite some time, but it may be that this trend is on the way out. Whether in commercial or residential buildings, **closed-concept designs offer a level of privacy and security** that people are finding more and more necessary. People feeling confined at home are often under each other's feet right now, **feeling a lack of privacy for relaxing, working remotely, or exercising**. Having more closed-off rooms with doors in residential buildings offers the privacy and quiet needed for work or study, and in commercial buildings **in order to maintain social distancing protocols**.

## FLEXIBILITY IN THE HOME

Homes have become more than just a place to live. **People require flexibility now more than ever**, as homes have become the workplace, the gym, the classroom, and more. Designing residential buildings to **offer more "Flex Space"** and considering **multipurpose rooms, nooks, or lofts holds** high appeal to current homebuyers [1]. As there is great uncertainty about how much normalcy will return and when that may be, it is expected that this flexibility will **maintain high value for quite some time**. Many people may elect to work from home indefinitely, and many companies have decided against paying for office space while **remote working remains efficient**.

## FOYERS, MUDROOMS, AND MORE

**Handwashing, sanitizing, and avoiding contamination** have all become **essential habits in every household and workplace**. To accommodate this, **providing space at the front of any building** to leave contaminated outerwear, masks, or goods, and wash up upon arriving to avoid bringing germs into a building is a design feature that may become more desired and hold higher appeal particularly in residential units. Without room for a mudroom or foyer, something as simple as **bringing a powder room closer to the entrance to the home** provides easier access to the **sanitary habits that have become necessary**.

## OFFICE AFICIONADO

**Opening spaces up for better flow and accessibility** to receptionists and help desks has become a central point of commercial design. Many modern designs feature **“island” style desks in the lobbies of buildings** that people may approach from all sides, which has proven **difficult to protect with plexiglass** to ensure the health and safety of staff. To that end, it is more likely that reception desks and similar workstations may appear in recessed alcoves, where putting up one sheet of plexiglass would be a simple way to **keep people safe**.

## THE GREAT OUTDOORS

While it isn't always possible, the most coveted design feature in residential buildings in the wake of self-isolation and social distancing is **the ability to get outside**. The simplest thing to make buyers and renters happy at this time is to **provide as much outdoor space as possible**, and as much of it **remaining as private as possible**. Balconies, decks, porches, and backyards all have their place in real estate, and on all sides this is **becoming one of the most sought-after features in a home**.

**Where private outdoor space isn't available residents could benefit from a variety of outdoor amenities, such as:**

- Shared terraces
- Playgrounds or parks
- Outdoor fitness facilities
- Community gardens
- Benches or picnic tables outside

With a push for wellness in all facets of life, many commercial buildings would also benefit from outdoor access where possible, either in **courtyards or patios, or even a communal balcony to allow employees to step outside** for a breath of fresh air or enjoying the sunshine while taking lunch.





# CHAPTER 3

THE FUTURE OF  
FEATURES & FINISHES



## HAND SANITIZER IS HERE TO STAY

Even before the pandemic, hand sanitizer stations were available in many lobbies, medical centres, and office buildings **to promote healthy habits and avoid the spread of any number of illnesses.** The fast spread of hand sanitizer appearing in every possible building may be a result of the battle against COVID-19, but **it is a result that is likely to remain consistent moving forward.** Not only are dispensers inexpensive to maintain once installed, **but this is a simple and effective way to keep people safe, and ensure that people feel secure in their health.** It is likely that new options will begin to emerge, including **more aesthetically-pleasing models to blend into high-end condo lobbies** without being an eyesore, or have a more natural appearance appealing to more rustic designs. And with more options, the likelihood of building owners investing in more appealing hand sanitizer dispensers in order to maintain appearances and keep residents and employees **happy and healthy.**



## HANDS FREE HARDWARE

The technology around **hands-free systems has evolved in the past decade**, from clap-on, clap-off to voice or gesture-activated capabilities. While such **smart features** have been seen as luxury features in recent years, they have become a **necessity in keeping communities safe**. There are an incredible number of features that could be upgraded to hands-free options, and **many of them are well worth investing in**.

- Elevators
- Keyless door locks
- Light switches
- Temperature control
- Door buttons/accessibility buttons

Each of these features **eliminates high-touchpoint areas** that otherwise offers high potential for transferring bacteria or viruses. **Hands-free tech is a must-have** in new-build designs, but also something that **can be retrofitted in existing buildings** to maintain healthier habits and eliminate potential health risks.



## ANTIMICROBIAL MATERIALS MATTER

With the implementation of **antimicrobial polymer coatings to materials**, the medical industry has been avoiding bacterial transference between patients. With **self-cleaning coatings** and antimicrobial coatings, many surfaces can be made safer. The discovery of antimicrobial properties in many natural materials however, has opened **new opportunities for home design becoming both functional and fashionable. Silver has been well-documented** as an antimicrobial agent, and copper and its alloys show great antimicrobial properties as well [2]. With this knowledge, **copper surfaces can bring warmth as well as safety** into the designs of the homes of the future. **Sinks, door knobs/handles, and fixtures of brass** may become one of the frontrunners in design trends over the next few years.

## FROM THE GROUND UP

One of the **highest areas of bacterial build-up** may seem nigh impossible to avoid. **Flooring takes the brunt of the dirt, spills**, and abuse of everyday life. Even with daily cleaning, **many flooring materials are naturally porous and can hold bacteria inside** long after contact. Luckily, two types of flooring are naturally antimicrobial. Both **cork and ceramic tile** [3] are naturally **germ resistant**, and provide a safe option for flooring without any worry of lingering bacteria. **Antimicrobial protective coatings** can be applied to vinyl and concrete flooring for a similar effect, offering more options when it comes to choosing flooring for any residential or commercial building.

# CHAPTER 4

SYSTEM UPGRADES  
WITH NEW APPEAL



## CLEAN AIR, CLEAN HOME

HVAC systems aren't likely to change much, as they're already held to very strict codes, but with **higher concern for airborne contaminants and particles**, elevated air purification systems and **high quality filters** are a necessity for many buyers. There are many options [4] on the market for air purifications systems that include air quality monitors as a **smart home function**, allowing residents to feel safe and comfortable in their homes with the knowledge that the air they breathe is **free from harm**.

### Consider:

- High quality air filters
- Air purification systems
- Careful humidity control
- Fully operable windows
- High efficiency HVAC
- High quality insulation and sealant

Adding **purifying plants** in common areas also promotes cleaner air, with the **added bonus of creating a more relaxed, beautiful space**.



## EVERYBODY NEEDS BETTER CONNECTION

In a high-speed world, it's important to keep up. With everyone working from home, learning from home, and socializing from home, **having quality internet connection or access in every building has become an essential part of life.** While cable internet is standard, the option of **fiber optic internet** has an appeal that will draw countless buyers and renters to a building. Fiber optic internet has many benefits, though the most important ones are the **upgrade in speed, and the lack of interruption.** These wires are made of glass, and therefore don't rely on electricity, making them **immune to interruptions from power outages** [5]. This appeal makes fiber optic internet one of the **most reliable and desirable technologies** in any urban area, and are becoming more and more accessible every day.

## INDEPENDENCE IS A BONUS

One of the most underrated features in a building is **independent water supply or heating and cooling capabilities.** Geothermal heating and cooling has great appeal as a **green feature**, but its independent systems provide a unique appeal in these uncertain times. As these buildings run on their own systems, **the risk of water contamination is incredibly low**, and the impact from a possible full shutdown would remain minimal. With both environmental and societal impact, **geothermal technology is one of the most beneficial and stable systems in modern design and technological capabilities.** This independence is something that would make a **substantial impact in the face of disaster**, and is well worth considering when designing any new residential building moving forward.

# CHAPTER 5

ADAPTING MODERN SERVICES  
FOR A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD





## CONTACTLESS SYSTEMS, SERVICES, AND SOLUTIONS

Long-term goals are currently focused on finding the **most effective way to have less necessary contact with other people**. Working towards **online portals for service and maintenance requests** will highly limit how many people need to interact face-to-face, limiting the potential spread of illness. This helps keep residents, Property Managers, and maintenance staff all safe, though will likely **create a different culture** surrounding these services. **Contact free delivery systems** for residential buildings, including **cold storage**, is an amenity that will have increased value as people maintain physical distancing and avoid contact with one another. Services such as **Snail and Luxor One** are great examples of how storage systems can exist separately, and including them in a building's design is a great way to improve convenience and quality of life. **Refrigerated storage for grocery deliveries** is a convenience that many people would be willing to purchase or rent for convenience. **No-contact visitor parking systems** are also available, such as **Honk Mobile**, which makes an excellent addition to a building without requiring extra physical elements.

## SHARED SPACES REIMAGINED

While people may worry about the safety of **sharing amenity space** between other residents of a building, with more and more people working remotely and intending to do so for the foreseeable future, **work/live spaces are more important than ever**. People living in apartments

or condos may not have the space for a home office, and a lounge, study room, or **shared workstation may be their only option**. If done properly however, these **spaces can remain a valuable asset** without risking the health and safety of residents or maintenance staff. The first, and most obvious, solution is to maintain thorough cleaning procedures. With staff to **clean thoroughly multiple times a day** and residents required to **clean their workstation before leaving**, transference of germs between residents is minimized. Workspaces may be seen less as open areas with plenty of flat surfaces, and **instead be designed around separate “pods” to maintain separation** between users during their stay. In addition, protocols such as needing to **book ahead and potentially signing a waiver** may become common procedures for using shared amenity spaces.

## HIGH-TECH HELPERS

Though it may seem like something from science fiction, **robotic concierge services** have been used in the hospitality industry globally since 2014 [6]. With this investment, high-end buildings can maintain concierge services **without the risk of face-to-face contact**. From deliveries to information, these robots could **revolutionize the role of concierge** and create a unique feature that is not only safe and helpful, but **frees up staff for other duties, saving money in the long run**.

# CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION



Building design will remain, at its core, largely the same. **Trends in real estate and design come and go**, and the market has shown an adaptability that continues through every hardship. With the foundation of the current market and an understanding of where the trends may be going, **making decisions for the future of building development can be done with confidence**. The most important element of design will always remain the same: **what makes a client happy?**



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## CITATIONS:

[1] <https://www.livabl.com/2019/12/5-designer-approved-uses-den-flex-room.html>

[2] <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2013/04/130409110014.htm>

[3] <https://floorcoveringsinternational.com/blog/what-floors-are-antimicrobial/>

[4] <https://www.balancedhomebalancedlife.com/healthy-indoor-air-quality/>

[5] <https://www.fusionconnect.com/blog/blog-archive/fiber-vs-cable-internet-a-guide-to-the-differences-in-speed-cost-more/>

[6] <https://www.socialtables.com/blog/hospitality-technology/hotel-brands-robot/>