

UPCOMING DATES

MAY

20 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1
[CANCELLED]

21 Budget Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1
[CANCELLED]

27-28 Council, 9:30 a.m., council chamber [CANCELLED]

28 Design Review Panel, time TBC [virtual]

JUNE

1 General Government & Licensing Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

Toronto Preservation Board, 9:30 a.m., committee room 2

2 Infrastructure & Environment Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

9 Etobicoke York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., council chamber, Etobicoke Civic Centre

North York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., council chamber, North York Civic Centre

Scarborough Community Council, 9:30 a.m., council chamber, Scarborough Civic Centre

Toronto & East York Community Council, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

10 Economic & Community Development Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

11 Planning & Housing Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

12 CreateTO, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

15 Board of Health, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1

16 Executive Committee, 9:30 a.m., committee room 1



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■ WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF MULTI-TENANT BUILDINGS?

POST-PANDEMIC DESIGN



Rob Jowett

The way office and residential buildings are designed and the specific uses that will be desired by tenants in them are likely to change significantly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to architectural design experts.

The current pandemic and the associated quarantine and social distancing measures being undertaken to contain it have led to sudden changes in the way people live and work in major cities. Workplaces deemed non-essential by the province have been closed under a state of emergency order originally declared March 17. The closures will be continue to be in effect until at least June 2 pending recommendation by Ontario's chief medical officer. Parks and other public areas in the province have been shut down entirely. Those that remain open only allow people to pass through without stopping. Ontario residents have been advised by medical experts, including Canada's chief public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam, to maintain at least two metres of

distance between themselves and people not residing with them, and not to leave their homes unless absolutely necessary.

At a May 14 press conference, Premier **Doug Ford** announced that provided that infection rates continue to decline, private parks, campgrounds, marinas, boat clubs, golf courses and animal boarding businesses will be permitted to reopen to the public at 12:01 a.m. May 16. On May 19, all stores with street entrances and that are not located in malls, all construction sites, some seasonal venues like sports fields and dog parks, household services, and health and medical services will be allowed to resume operations, provided they follow provincial social distancing guidelines.

However, it remains unclear how long it will be before all social distancing measures prescribed by the authorities become unnecessary. With the likelihood of a second wave of infections in the fall coinciding with the start of influenza season, many medical experts are suggesting it will take until

a vaccine or other treatment has been approved for life to fully return to normal. This may not occur until well into 2021 or beyond. As a result of our prolonged adoption of different daily practices, many of the behavioural adaptations that have been made could become permanent, say some experts, and residential and office tenants may be more likely to seek additional building features measures to reduce the likelihood of disease spread of a future pandemic.

"If it is a two-year problem, and... we will go through waves of it, if we will have a good summer or a moderate summer, then some challenges in winter again, and then a moderate summer, then I don't think people will invest heavily in re-engineering the entire society," **Regionomics** director and **Ryerson University** Ted Rogers School of Management real estate management professor **Murtaza Haider** told NRU. "But if it turns out that this was just a dress rehearsal for bigger and more

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nasty viruses coming out way later, then we really need to start thinking about re-engineering the economy."

A major impact of the current changes to the ways people live and work are likely to be seen in the design of buildings and the uses being demanded by the market, BNKC principal and partner **Jonathan King** told NRU. An architect, King says clients have already been requesting design changes to aspects of their planned projects, such as changes to mechanical systems like air circulation, which could be a major transmission vector for the virus. Researchers at the **University of Alberta** are conducting research to determine whether the HVAC system was responsible for an outbreak at a restaurant in Guangzhou, China in January.

"In some cases, it's our clients proactively asking us to think about these things and to come up with suggestions and solutions to it—to do an audit... of the design," says King. "And in other cases, it's really the design team, thinking about the projects that we currently have on the board. And asking ourselves the questions [like] 'is there anything that we would do differently or need to consider doing differently in our current design that we wouldn't have

otherwise considered?"

Both King and Haider say they believe office buildings are likely to see some of the most significant changes as a consequence of altered habits during the health crisis. Businesses that have historically used office buildings as sites for their operations are more likely to be able to operate with employees working from home, and will likely be the last to return to their workplaces since their businesses can continue to function remotely. Offices that can accommodate large numbers of staff may reopen slowly, allowing only some employees to be present in the workplace at any time.

"If COVID-19 or other viruses become a permanent feature [of 21st Century life], then we may realize that we have overbuilt office space... If [only] one-third of the workers are allowed in [a] building, then there will be a lot of space that becomes redundant," says Haider. "Perhaps we can benefit from the opportunity and... when buildings see redundant space, they can consolidate space onto certain floors, and then vacant floors could be turned into residential or other uses."

However, in an effort to maintain physical distance between working individuals,

the amount of office space being allocated to individual employees is also likely to rise, so some offices could be using the same amount of space to accommodate fewer employees at any one time.

In a press release May 12, **Twitter** announced that it will be allowing current employees to work from home "forever" if they choose to do so. Many companies are likely to follow their lead, especially technology companies, a category that the **City of Toronto** has been trying to attract for some time. King says this could lead changes to residential spaces, with more residential buildings offering amenities that could make working from home simpler and more attractive.

"One of the big issues with a lot of the home office scenarios is that... you're sharing with your partner or your spouse... roommates... [or] children, and your ability to create a space which is professional, which is, in some cases, confidential, and allows you to focus, is challenged," says King. "Maybe part of the solution to a certain percentage of the population starting to actually begin working from home is to think about the amenities, and to think about perhaps providing bookable meeting space somewhere [in a multi-unit residential building] that has been completely outfitted with the necessary connectivity and technology that that people would be requiring to carry out a meeting or a conference call."

However, more people

working from home all the time, especially in shared meeting rooms or in co-working spaces could also increase the spread of diseases, meaning that some recreational areas in multi-tenant mixed-use or residential buildings may need to be redesigned, **Urbanation** market research director **Pauline Lierman** told NRU. She says transmission would be very likely in shared spaces, especially fitness areas, and the main reason those spaces have not been transmission vectors during the current pandemic is that building operators were proactive in shutting them down early.

"We're seeing a lot more flex spaces. Even in new purpose-built rentals... [we have what] we would call partitionable areas [that] create more intimate areas within those spaces as well as having more space all together," says Lierman. "[Apartment] units are getting smaller still. And people are looking for that exterior space where they want to have socialization, so... I think [redesigning residential spaces to limit transmission] would have to come down to materials and airflow at this point."

Lierman adds that the economics of real estate will make it unlikely that developers would want to build larger units since that pushes up prices in an already extremely unaffordable housing market. She says that most existing larger units that remain affordable for people,

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IN BRIEF

The Meadoway recognized with CSLA 2020 Award of Excellence

Perkins&Will's restoration and revitalization plan for Scarborough's Meadoway was recognized Wednesday with a Canadian Society of Landscape Architects (CSLA) 2020 Award of Excellence for Planning and Analysis.

The Meadoway transforms a 16-kilometre active hydro corridor stretching from Rouge National Park through the Don River Valley to Toronto's downtown from a little-visited monocultural green space of mowed grass into a biodiverse meadow with community and public realm improvements and recreational, educational and active transportation opportunities. The plan also connects five municipal wards, 13 neighbourhoods and over 60,000 households through

over four ravines and seven watercourses in Canada's largest linear urban greenspace.

The Meadoway was one of 13 projects across Canada to be recognized with a CSLA award this year from among 68 submissions; the only project to be recognized in the GTHA.

In its press release, the CSLA noted that "this year's

winners demonstrate that landscape architects are leading sustainability, conservation and recreation by promoting a broad vision for our environment and being key players in planning our cities...They illustrate the range of what landscape architects do and how landscape architects are helping to reshape our communities by defining the

places where we live, work and play."

For more information about this project and those of all of this year's CSLA award recipients, please visit the CSLA [website](#). 

Corridor Feature Catalog How we got there



Data set visualization from Perkins&Will's restoration and revitalization plan for Scarborough's Meadoway, showing elements that were considered and analyzed in determining the firm's plan for the restoration and revitalization of Canada's largest linear urban greenspace. The plan was recognized this week by the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects with a 2020 Award for Excellence in Planning and Analysis.

PREPARED BY: PERKINS&WILL

SOURCE: CANADIAN SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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especially for families, were brought about by targeted city policies that would need to be broadened to bring in larger units in the future.

Haider says that right now, more research is needed to

learn more about the virus, to determine both the best ways to stop its spread and how best to design against the spread of future diseases. He says it is critical to examine the spatial context in which COVID-19

has been spread to others to determine how to design new spaces to limit disease transmission.

"I think what the government should do as a first step is to understand how the disease has spread, maybe using smartphone apps to understand these social networks in time and space and contexts to understand how the diseases spread in Canada, and then design spaces

that prevent such a spread," says Haider. "With that event history of [infected] individuals ... based on that information, we can actually redesign, re-jig the environment, space, and congregation of individuals to counteract what we believe promoted the... spread of the disease in the past." 