How COVID-19 has Affected the Environment and Climate Change within the Built Environment

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Climate change has a direct impact on human health. We must understand that impact and create a resilient society.
More responsible management of urban growth will be crucial to support sustainable urbanization. As an industry, we should bring our voices to educate policy makers and those involved with updating building codes so that together we can create new public health requirements.

Transit oriented development will gain momentum to reduce reliance on cars and long commutes and increase reliance on localized smart solutions. In turn, costs will go down for companies based on a reduction in business travel and subsidized commuter costs.

The high prevalence of working from home will continue post-pandemic, driving a new perspective on location strategies, energy needs, workplace design, training and education and the desire to avoid enclosed, dense spaces.
COMMUNITIES
More responsible management of urban growth will be crucial to guarantee sustainable urbanization. We should educate lawmakers and those updating building codes so that we are creating new public health requirements.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
• Establish a comprehensive public health policy
• Update building codes to conform with HPIs
• Incentivize a path to carbon neutral/net zero environment
• Embrace all levels of environmental justice
• Address social inequities: certain communities are facing higher rates of infection and death from Covid-19 and Climate Change
TRANSPORTATION

Transit oriented development will gain momentum to reduce reliance on cars and long commutes and increase reliance on localized smart solutions. In turn, costs will go down for companies based on a reduction in business travel and subsidized commuter costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• Take indoor guidelines to the public transit - constant sanitization, hand washing, covering the mouth and nose, and cycling fresh air
• Develop strict guidelines and protocol around cleaning and sanitization, and be very transparent about their practices.
• Communities and government agencies should incentivize public transit authorities
BUILDINGS
The high prevalence of working from home will continue post-pandemic, driving a new perspective on location strategies, energy needs, workplace design, training and education and the desire to avoid enclosed, dense spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Investment in Building Automation Systems, retraining and air filtration will be enhanced
• Investment in technology to create Smart Buildings
• Partnerships between key stakeholders to promote residential efficiency programs as residential energy consumption will increase
• Developers and owners to track their full carbon footprint by including tenants and employees
Conclusion

COVID-19 and Climate Change have and will continue to affect the built environment, both in the way companies operate and how employees behave.

All pillars of the built environment must develop or adopt key frameworks around resiliency, sustainability, health, and wellness into their design, construction, and operational requirements.