

Pandemic-Friendly Tenant Programming For Office & Multi-Family Properties

COVID-19 Re-Opening Checklist





WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE

Health & wellness is more important than ever for current (and future) occupants, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, landlords and property managers are looking for guidelines around how to properly implement wellness amenities in a more socially distant world.

This is Zest's published list of considerations for commercial property owners and operators, designed to help keep people safe and build occupant trust post COVID. Recommendations are organized in the following categories:

[ENVIRONMENTAL](#)

[PROGRAMMING](#)

[EDUCATIONAL / LIABILITY](#)

WHO IS IT FOR

Office and multi-family properties that want to offer wellness amenities for their occupants - from mental health programming to group fitness classes. Examples include yoga, meditation, nutrition, fitness, dance, and more. Particularly good for properties with:

- **Fitness Facilities**
- **Yoga Rooms or Wellness Spaces**
- **Group Exercise Classes** (yoga, meditation, pilates, stretching, etc)
- **Outdoor Exercise Spaces** (patios, etc)
- An interest in **Healthy Building Certifications**, like [Fitwel](#) or [WELL Certified](#)

WHY IT MATTERS

This guide is designed to help landlords and property managers:

- Reduce risks of re-entry
- Increase tenant confidence
- Boost property appeal
- Exude safety, quality, and professionalism with your wellness amenities
- Make progress towards (or maintain) a "Healthy Building" certification



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Reduce Class Capacity

- ❑ During early phases of re-entry, Zest recommends allowing at least 75 sq feet per person in a group class (up from the pre-COVID recommended 35 sq feet per participant). Consider adding more space per person if classes are high-intensity (bootcamps, etc). If classes are lower-intensity (like meditation) 75 sq ft should be enough.
- ❑ For existing Wellness Rooms and Exercise Spaces, that typically means cutting class capacity by about 50% (and/or using a larger room or an outdoor space).

2. Move Classes to a Larger Room

- ❑ Overhead and infrastructure is very low for wellness *programming* (as opposed to gyms and fitness facilities with equipment), which means classes can be fairly easily relocated.
- ❑ Consider moving classes into a larger space, so you can maintain previous class capacity. Leverage vacant units, think creatively. Remember, this *can* be a temporary home for classes.

3. Host Classes Outside

- ❑ If weather, space, *and* safety permit, outdoor classes are a great option for enhanced air circulation.
- ❑ Consider sound competition. Host outdoor classes away from busy streets, so instructor cues can be clearly heard.
- ❑ Consider class *type* when moving outdoors. (For example, outdoors is great for a sweaty fitness bootcamp, but high-traffic areas are not ideal for meditation.)
- ❑ Consider investing in portable speakers or flexible sound systems to extend the in-class experience outdoors.

4. Facilitate Social Distancing Between Participants

- ❑ If your room is exclusively used for wellness classes with a yoga/exercise mat, consider denoting “parking spots” for the yoga mats by taping off corners. This illustrates the proper distance between mats. These markers would remain between classes and help people know precisely where to go.
- ❑ If the room is used for multiple purposes, class instructors can measure and place Spot Markers 6 feet apart prior to class. These show participants where to stand or place their mat, and can be removed when classes are not in session.



5. Consider Instructor Voice Amplification

- The instructor needs to be heard, in order to have a positive class experience.
- Consider investing in a flexible sound system that has bluetooth-enabled wireless microphone for the instructor to wear. Include wipes for instructors to clean the mouthpiece, before and after each use.
- This can improve both participant safety and experience, especially if classes are moved into a larger space or outdoors.

6. Boost Cleaning Standards for Communal Areas

- Property Management and Janitorial Staff should re-assess appropriate cleaning levels and frequency, with a particular focus on communal areas.
- Communicate new cleaning standards to tenants to build trust and peace of mind. If this critical step is missed, wellness amenities will be under-utilized.

7. Go As Touchless As Possible

- This can be as simple as asking instructors to prop open the door to the Wellness Room when they arrive, before class begins. Anything to minimize the number of touches required for participants to enter or exit the room.

8. Improve Air Circulation & Filtration

- Consider leaving the door propped open and windows open during class for improved air circulation.
- Speak with your HVAC partners to ensure proper air ventilation and filtration standards are met.

9. Add Hand Sanitizing Stations

- Touchless hand sanitizing stations are recommended in highly trafficked areas and near high-touch surfaces. If a hands-free option isn't available, a pump is better than nothing.
- Increasing access to hand sanitizer within the workplace has the potential to not only improve hand hygiene, but also demonstrate concern for tenant wellbeing, according to [BOMA](#).

10. Post Hand-Washing Signage

- Included in bathrooms and wherever sinks are located, permanent hand-washing signage should include educational language around how to properly hand wash and the health benefits of hand-washing.



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- ❑ This kind of signage has been shown to encourage proper hand-washing technique, which decreases disease spread and builds occupant trust.

11. Reevaluate Check-In Process

- ❑ Maintain social distancing as participants are checked in for class by reducing or eliminating physical contact.
- ❑ If classes are small enough, consider removing the shared “self check in” station (typically a tablet or iPad) and have the instructor individually check in participants. This means fewer people touching a shared surface.

12. Consider Face Covering Guidelines

- ❑ Look to county, state, or federal guidelines, since recommendations vary by location. Most agree that face masks can slow the spread of the virus, but the chances of viral transmission between people 6 feet apart or more is low.
- ❑ For Instructors:
 - ❑ Practically speaking, consider that your instructor’s voice projection will be significantly limited if wearing a mask. A better option might be to keep the instructor at the front of the room, minimum 6 feet away from students, and/or with a wireless microphone for best audio. Other options include a face guard or plastic shield.
- ❑ For Participants:
 - ❑ Exercising while wearing a mask can be challenging for many, and there *can be* health risks associated with limited air restriction.
 - ❑ For most healthy individuals, they will likely fatigue and get out of breath more quickly than normal wearing a mask. They should otherwise be getting enough oxygen while exercising with a non-surgical grade mask on. One’s baseline fitness level and mask style/thickness will greatly affect their experience.
 - ❑ If participants have an underlying respiratory or cardiovascular condition, the general recommendation is that they *not* wear a mask while exercising. (Examples include asthma, COPD, bronchitis, cystic fibrosis, pulmonary fibrosis and any other conditions that affect the heart or lungs).
- ❑ *Zest Recommendation as of 7/21/21: Request face coverings for participants and instructors during entry, check-in, and after class while exiting the space. Use of face coverings optional once class begins.*



PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

13. Establish Strong Dialogue with Instructors & Communicate Responsibilities

- Reiterate that safety of instructors and participants is critical.
- Ensure broader building policies and property management expectations are pressure-tested, discussed, defined, and clearly articulated.
- Determine who (property manager, onsite building engineer, class instructor, receptionist, janitorial team, tenant, employee, etc) is best suited to support and/or manage each policy/change.
- Make a detailed list of all instructor responsibilities.
- Communicate these responsibilities in writing *and* on the phone. Get written confirmation that they are able and willing to fulfil these new responsibilities.
- Example “Instructor Requirements” include:
 - Monitor themselves (and participants) for signs of COVID-19
 - Complete a COVID-19 risk-self assessment regularly
 - Wear proper personal protective equipment (face mask, gloves, etc.) before and after class, and ask participants to do the same.
 - Wash their hands upon arrival and before and after class
 - Cough into a tissue or arm (elbow nook), rather than into hands.
 - No hands-on adjustments

14. Bring Your Own Mat (BYOM)

- If participants bring their own yoga mat, it means less cross-contamination on shared equipment, and less cleaning responsibility on management.

15. Reduce Reliance on Shared Props

- Consider removing shared equipment for early re-entry days (or ensure you have designated a responsible party for cleaning) - straps, blocks, mats, etc.
- Your Wellness Amenity Manager should ensure all programming is adjusted to use minimal (if any) shared equipment, at least in phase 1 of reopening. There is a lot of strength training and conditioning to be done with body weight!

16. Limit Moves That Get People Close

- Offer classes and exercises that support social distancing. For example:
 - Avoid movements that encroach other people’s personal space.
 - Don’t offer Partner Yoga or Assisted Stretching Classes in early stages of re-entry. Partner exercises in fitness classes typically require getting



close and/or touching, which assumes more risk of transmission (not to mention they will likely make participants uncomfortable.)

- ❑ For bootcamps and running classes, stagger sprints so people have appropriate space between each other.

17. Maintain Continuity for Remote Workers with Live-Streaming Classes

- ❑ These classes are run digitally through Zoom or another online streaming platform. Similar to an in-person class, there is a scheduled start and stop time. You can set capacity limits, if desired.
- ❑ Participants can choose to show their video or unmute their audio, but the instructor can always be seen and heard.
- ❑ Tenants can keep their fitness routines going, no matter where they are working. Live-streaming classes are treated much like in-person classes, so attendance is high.
- ❑ Gives you the option to host a small class for those on property, and simultaneously live-stream it to those working remotely.

EDUCATIONAL / LIABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

18. Update Participant Liability Waivers

- ❑ Every participant should sign a Liability Waiver before taking a class, whether in-person, live-streaming, or on-demand.
- ❑ Your Wellness Amenity Provider will likely handle the content, design, updating, collecting signatures, and storage of all student waivers for you.
- ❑ This waiver should include details as to *why* participation might be hazardous and list possible risks associated with participation in group exercise, yoga, and meditation classes. Ensure these risks are clear and conspicuous in the waiver.
- ❑ In regards to COVID-19, consider including language relating to viral transmission or bacterial infection.

19. Offer “[Yoga Mat Cleaning Guidelines](#)” for Occupants

- ❑ You might be surprised to know how few people actually clean their own yoga mat regularly. It can be helpful to share DIY cleaning instructions as a resource.

20. Share Requirements for Class Participation and “[Etiquette Reminders](#)”

- ❑ Improve tenant safety and comfort during classes by clearly spelling out what is expected of all participants. Should include the following reminders:
 - ❑ Stay home if you're sick



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- Bring your own mat, props, sweat towel, water, etc
 - Wash your hands before and after class
 - Maintain 6 feet of distance between others at all times
 - Remove your shoes once you enter the building
 - Wash or sanitize your hands as soon as you enter the room
 - Before and after class, put on your mask
 - Teachers will not provide hands-on touch or physical assistance
 - Teachers will teach from the front of the room and will not walk around

21. Proactively Communicate with Tenants

- Once a return date is decided and a re-entry plan is confirmed, your Wellness Amenity Provider should partner with Property Management to ensure multi-channel communication to tenants, vendors, instructors, janitorial, etc
- This is critical for building occupant trust, for the success of wellness amenities, and for achieving broader property objectives.

CONCLUSION

Wellness amenities have never been so appreciated by tenants. Landlords and property managers are welcoming tenants back into office buildings and residents back into communal areas during the COVID-19 pandemic with a deliberate and cautious approach. Wellness amenities should be a part of that conversation. Zest is here to help. Contact Zest for support in reopening your wellness amenities.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Zest is a leading Tenant Wellness Provider operating nationwide, based in Portland, OR. We make it seamless for landlords and property managers to turn their properties into places of wellbeing. Services include occupant programming (yoga, meditation, and fitness classes delivered in-person or live-streaming). Learn more at zestpdx.com/buildings

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- OHA: [Oregon Health Authority: Specific Guidance for Fitness-related Organizations, Signage](#)
- BOMA: boma.org.
- EPA.gov: [Lysol Disinfectant Spray](#)
- Fitwel: [COVID-19 Resources Our Ongoing Response to Industry Demand](#)
- Well Certified: [The built environment has a huge role to play in improving health and wellbeing](#) and [Places Matter: Prevention and Preparedness, Resilience and Recovery](#)
- Harvard School of Public Health: [COVID-19 For Health](#) and [“Healthy Buildings on the Horizon”](#)
- NY Times: [Exercising While Wearing a Mask](#) and [Do Runners Need to Wear Masks?](#)
- Parents.com: [Is It Safe for My Family to Exercise with Face Masks?](#)
- LA Times: [After coronavirus: What gyms will look like when they reopen](#)
- Washington Post: [How gyms and yoga studios are preparing for the coronavirus](#)
- MASS Design Group: [Designing Spaces for Infection Control](#)
- MindBody: [Reboot Kit: How to Reopen Your Fitness Business Post COVID-19](#)
- IHRSA: [18 Safety Considerations for Your Health Club Reopening Plan](#)
- Soul Cycle: [Our commitment to the highest level of safety.](#)

DISCLAIMERS

- *Zest does not provide medical advice; ask your doctor for that.*
- *This resource contains ideas for consideration (not foolproof solutions), designed to drive conversation around how buildings can help protect tenants and improve wellbeing.*
- *Research on COVID-19 is regularly emerging. Official recommendations vary by county, state, and country. Updates will be incorporated into this resource as new evidence is published.*