

NOVEMBER 2021

# WORKSPACE TALK

Connecting People & Workspaces

## Articles of Interest on Space Utilization and Management Issues

Thank you for picking out this installment of the State Properties Commission's *Workspace Talk*, a periodic newsletter that shares articles of interest to professionals and agency administrators where space management is a responsibility.

This issue will provide a synopsis of and link to a few articles discussing the trends, pros, and cons of the primary workplace design functionality options – enclosed office layouts, cubicle / workstation programs, and open office environments. Some of these are by system providers, so may be subtly biased, but are chosen because they seem to make a fair presentation.

Aside from adherence to State Space Standards, the State Properties Commission takes no position on the benefits of offices / cubicles / open work areas as the best option. The articles summarized below, and available via the embedded links and QR codes, provide ideas to consider as administrators make decisions in this regard. If you or your agency leadership would like to discuss this topic in more detail, please do not hesitate to reach out to Lee Nelson, Assistant Director, at 404-656-5550 or [lee.nelson@spc.ga.gov](mailto:lee.nelson@spc.ga.gov).



## Open vs. Closed Space Work Environments

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### The Perspective | October 2020

A good introduction to the advantages of closed and open work environments. This article also contains some very interesting links to other relevant content (which are active in the article link).

*Research findings on the pros of enclosed office layouts include:*

- \* Outlining a clear hierarchical order, which is necessary for agency's chain of command to be effective.
- \* Providing fewer distractions, but actually increasing face to face interactions between staff members.
- \* Providing a healthier environment, especially as the pandemic recedes, by lowering exposure to germs.

*Research on the pros of open work environments include:*

- \* Promoting collaboration, particularly spontaneous sessions to bounce ideas around and seek assistance
- \* More cost effective for initial construction and continued flexibility, as well as more efficient in use of space and utilities to heat / cool / light the office
- \* Preventing / easing physical pain, as open plans encourage staff to spend more time standing and moving.

The bottom line: open environments are better at fostering collaboration, but enclosed plans promote better performance.



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## Together Again: The Future of Shared Spaces in the Office

Steelcase | 2020

Returning to the office will mean more time to collaborate and socialize. Once the return to work is completed, users that opt for a more open office concept will need to decide how the office will work in a heightened sensitivity environment. The issues range from the proximity of desks / workstations to circulation patterns and conference usage room usage.

Key concepts are: Density, which governs proximity and privacy among other factors, Geometry, which includes how spaces relate to one another, and Division, which governs how spaces function based on separations – for example a collaboration area may be best served by having movable white boards as “walls” rather than hard fixed surfaces. The article includes useful diagrams illustrating the issues and how to treat them.

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## 6 Office Design Trends in Post-Covid-19 World

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### Vicus Partners

Some staff members will naturally be more concerned about the health effects of returning to an office than others. There are a number of design concepts that will help vitiate these concerns, as well as provide for a more up-to-date and productive environment.

These include:

- \*Workstations that provide at least six feet of distancing between staff members.
- \* Open floor plans are easier to clean and ventilate, so are not bad and are not going anywhere, even if not as productive.
- \* Innovative furniture and fixture features are easier to keep clean and can be customized to disperse concentrated usage.
- \* Conference rooms are trending smaller but more numerous.
- \* Consistent communication on reducing density is useful for reminding staff of social distancing preferences.
- \* Flexible work and unconventional spaces encourage staff to think outside the box.



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## The Truth About Open Offices

Harvard Business Review | December 2019

CAUTION – LONG READ. A more academically oriented article that challenges some conventional wisdom about open offices, including that they increase collaboration and productivity (and that seemingly pointless meetings are nonproductive). Open offices result in interactions that are less productive if not managed carefully – for example using furniture and equipment placement (including coffee machines!) in a way that encourages teams that work together to collide accidentally-intentionally.