

## A GUIDE TO SUMMERTIME RENOVATIONS FOR YOUR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

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For a long time, it was unclear whether commercial properties would ever open their doors again. However, only 7.7% of U.S. employees worked fully remote in April 2022 - a stark contrast to May 2020, when 35.4% of employees worked remotely.

Although the battle between employers and employees for workplace autonomy rages on, office culture is undoubtedly having a second coming. Yet, even though building occupancy is rising after two years, upgrading commercial spaces to meet an advanced workforce keen on aesthetics, health, and new technologies is critical.

Ensuring your commercial space meets tenant expectations and provides solutions to current workplace challenges can make or break your property's potential. Knowing what upgrades to make and what to expect during high costs and construction labor shortages may hold you back. However, there's never been a better time than this summer to make the necessary upgrades to your commercial property.

### Why It Might Be Time to Renovate Your Commercial Property

Similar to homes and apartments, commercial properties like offices, banks, restaurants, shops, and hotels can benefit from occasional renovations. Of course, refurbishing any property comes at a cost, so many commercial landlords and tenants tend to put it off for as long as possible.

Nevertheless, sprucing up your commercial building can improve employee morale and boost savings on energy bills. If you've been on the fence about tackling major commercial renovations, you may want to consider the following reasons for doing so:

- A fresh, updated space will appeal to clients and customers.
- Remodeling the workplace shows your employees you care about them.
- Upgrading for greater energy efficiency increases office comfort and employee health.
- A deteriorating workplace loses its distinguishable qualities.
- Remodeling workspaces for greater accessibility - employees no longer need to travel to other departments or rooms for the necessary equipment and supplies - can improve productivity.

Renovating a commercial space, whether you're upgrading part of a floor for a tenant or retrofitting the entire building, is quite the undertaking. Nevertheless, there are financial rewards you can reap when you invest in your commercial space's appearance and operations.

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## Renovating Your Commercial Property in 2022

If you've decided to upgrade your commercial property, you should know that the construction industry is currently facing unique challenges.

According to Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC), 2022's labor shortage accounts for 650,000 unfulfilled construction worker jobs. This is in addition to the 8% drop in construction workers between 25 and 54 years old over the past decade.

Today's construction labor shortage has highlighted the need for skilled professionals with efficient equipment training to meet the nation's growing building demands.

A recent interview with Anthony Johnson, the president of St. Louis architectural firm Clayco, also highlighted concerns regarding the industry's supply chain management delays, which have prolonged remodeling projects across commercial and residential properties. For instance, the difficulty in obtaining materials – steel, lumber, roofing products, electrical and mechanical equipment, etc. – is exacerbated by issues with distribution and shipping, inflation, and a louder call for domestic product availability.

Despite shortcomings, the summertime is perfect for getting started on renovating your commercial property.

## 6 Ways to Renovate Your Commercial Space This Summer

Following two years of remote work, commercial tenants and their employees have high expectations for the future of the office. From aesthetics to technology to health and safety measures, these are six ways you might consider renovating your commercial property this summer.

### 1. Install Large Windows

Studies have shown that adequate natural light exposure at the office improves employees' mental and physical well-being, including increasing sleep time by 46 minutes and enhancing their physical activity, productivity, and quality of life.

Installing large windows in your commercial property will bring more natural light into the space, meaning less electricity consumption and lower bills. Just be sure to invest in energy-efficient windows to maintain the building's temperature and comfort.

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Additionally, 20% more Americans spent time outside during the COVID-19 pandemic, which prior research suggests releases stress and reduces depression, headaches, anxiety, obesity, and heart disease. Adding more windows to your commercial property will likely have mood-boosting effects on employees who've grown accustomed to outdoor recreation while working remotely.

## 2. Rethink Color Palettes

When planning your commercial renovation, you may overlook the role color plays in appearances, mood, and productivity.

While older buildings with neutral shades may still be preferable, white eggshell walls and generic laminate countertops are out. Instead, choosing a palette that balances calmness and creativity is critical.

Although bright yellow may set the tone for an energizing brainstorming session in the conference room, this year's color trends lean more toward cozy comfort for improving productivity, such as saturated blues and greens, charcoal, and linen white.

Organic wood elements - exposed beams, custom desks, modern furniture, comfortable seating, etc. - can also make the transition from home to the office easier for employees.

## 3. Upgrade Plumbing

If it's been a while since you retrofitted your commercial space's plumbing, now would be an excellent time to consider taking on this project. For one thing, upgrading plumbing is great for your bottom line, saving you money on water bills and enhancing the appearance of your washrooms.

New WaterSense flushometer-valve toilets only use up to 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf) of water, saving about 20% of the federal 1.6 gpf limit. Conversely, traditional toilets waste as much as 3-7 gpf of water.

Dual- or single-flush toilets are one possible upgrade, while low-flow faucets are another practical option for bathrooms with high foot traffic.

## 4. Integrate Touch-Free Technology

Even two years after the onset of COVID-19, lingering fear surrounds the spread of germs and contact with infected individuals. In a 2021 study, 40% of respondents from the United Kingdom still avoid touching things in public, while three in four U.S. commuters report feeling safer with deep-cleaning practices in public transportation.

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Enhancing health and safety measures in your commercial space is essential for today's workforce. As such, renovations might include upgrading to touch-free technology, such as the following

- Installing automatic doors, key card pads, and push plates for opening doors by foot
- Updating software systems for smartphone badge entry and mobile on-site access control
- Modernizing elevators with fob or smartphone technology for floor selections to improve the touch-free experience
- Utilizing self-clean surface materials for elevator buttons or door handles
- Adding automated soap dispensers, faucets, toilets, and hand dryers in the bathrooms

## 5. Create Co-working Stations

Return-to-office mandates intend to re-create a sense of normalcy in the workforce. However, the office is likely not returning to pre-pandemic days anytime soon. In a recent Gallup poll of 140,000 U.S. employees, 42% worked hybrid schedules in February 2022, while 53% expected to work a hybrid setup in the future.

The sporadic activity could continue feeling somewhat isolating for the individuals who welcome the thought of office culture again. Reconfiguring your commercial property's floor layout to create co-working stations - as opposed to the traditional cubicle and closed-office environment - is a viable solution.

Knocking down walls for an open floorplan could pave the way for communal tables, "living room" nooks, standing desks, and high-top tables. Meanwhile, individual glass window offices can reduce noise and ensure privacy for sensitive conversations while delivering a sense of continuity for more pleasing human interactions.

## 6. Improve Energy Efficiency

It's never a bad time to seek improvements to your commercial property's energy efficiency, but summer heat makes it particularly enticing.

Seeing that lighting accounts for 17% of commercial buildings' electricity consumption, swapping out inefficient incandescent, halogen, and fluorescent lightbulbs for light-emitting diodes (LEDs) creates opportunities for ample energy savings.

LEDs use about 75% less energy, last 25 times longer than traditional bulbs, and emit 80% less heat. This means LEDs can improve your commercial property's temperature settings to run less air conditioning and heat.

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Of course, installing smart thermostats is another way to renovate your commercial property for enhanced energy efficiency. Maintaining building conditions will help ensure occupants' health and comfort are accounted for.

## Renovating Your Commercial Property This Summer is a Good Idea

With more companies calling employees back to the office, renovating your commercial property this summer will help ease workplace transitions for everyone and deliver a more pleasing aesthetic and upgrades to newer potential tenants.

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