



## STILL THE SEASON TO BE JOLLY: HOW PROPERTY MANAGERS ARE SPREADING JOY THROUGH HOLIDAY PLACEMAKING

Christmas 2020 is going to look and feel very different than in years past. Ordinarily, the holiday season is an important time for individuals and local businesses to connect with their communities. But 2020 is no ordinary year.

COVID-19 has changed the way we gather with our family, friends and communities, as well as how we celebrate the holiday season. Luckily, people and communities are resilient and agile. In this article, CBRE explores how building owners and property managers are adapting to make the holiday season safe, fulfilling and economically viable during a global pandemic.

## The relationship between the holidays and central business districts is deep-rooted and timeless.

In most cities, the central business district is where we gather to unite and celebrate, and for most businesses in the area, a productive and profitable holiday season can be critical to their success.

But as we know, this holiday season is going to pose unique challenges. People are guarded about how they interact and share spaces with others, and property owners and managers are making changes to keep visitors safe. So, what changes can we expect and embrace?

### 1 Space & Design Considerations

### 2 Engaging Environments

### 3 Digital Experiences

#### SPACE

Space and design considerations for interior environments will need to be flexible, inviting, engaging and safe. This means a space that could previously fit 400 people might now only fit 100 with social distancing, and the design and layout needs to be adapted accordingly.

Property owners need to consider ways to redefine their outdoor spaces, which are perceived as healthier and safer with the flow of fresh air. Seating in these areas needs to be well-spaced.

One popular adaptation has been resurgence of drive-in cinemas, where people can enjoy an immersive experience in the comfort of their own car, allows physical distancing while offering families a chance to meaningfully engage with businesses and the wider community.



## INSTA-FAMOUS

As lived by many celebrities -- if it isn't on Instagram, it didn't happen! Clever retail landlords know that the customers who dwell and spend more time and money in their centers are millennials, so providing Insta-worthy sets, along with incentives to like, share and post, puts Christmas this year on a socially distanced winning streak!

Retail landlords have also introduced decorative wayfinding pods throughout major centers that not only give directions but also spread Christmas cheer as an extension of the experiential activation, offering further selfie experiences.

## FRESH AND NATURAL

We live in an age when consumers are increasingly aware of what goes into the products they use and are making more conscious choices to favor natural products and ingredients. Marrying this trend with the move towards creating immersive, stage-like settings within retail environments will result in an increased use of real-life nature featured within activations, rather than artificial plastic trees and decorations.

Luxury settings such as premium office and high-end hotels might take this trend one step further, by stimulating the senses through natural scents such as pine or cinnamon pumped through air systems.



At a big box homemaker center, shoppers and their pets can take a socially distanced selfie with Santa. Pets have always been heroes at this center, which has been providing pet photos for over a decade. This year, however, the center has added distancing parameters to keep the community safe, with the added chance of winning a \$500 gift basket made up of retailer gifts.



## THE NEW “ON SCREEN” CHRISTMAS

Since the dawn of cinema, our screens have been adorned with holiday tales each year, and for many it's not Christmas until they have seen their favorite festive movie. This year, we will be experiencing the holidays “on screen” like never before.

Holiday campaigns this year will have an even stronger digital element, driving increased engagement with shopping centers and their retailers through websites and social channels.

**“We have invested heavily in digital experiences and communications to bring the holidays to our customers and create a connected customer experience.”**

- Meagan Wakefield, Regional Director of Retail Property Management, Pacific

In commercial office, rather than throwing a holiday party or live event, this year we might see landlords bringing the community together to celebrate the end of the year with a virtual trivia event, perhaps hosted by a well-known comedian—providing connectivity, albeit socially distanced, along with plenty of laughs, prizes and giveaways. These digital events are beautifully curated and can still create a sense of occasion while keeping people safe.

## SANTA – BUT NOT AS YOU REMEMBER

The days of queuing up for hours to visit Santa in a small cabin that resembles the North Pole may be over, and we will now meet Santa via an electronic screen, virtual reality (VR) experience or distanced in-person encounter.

A contactless interaction with Santa may include an elevated platform for optimal photo opportunities with guests standing in front of him in a socially distanced area and pre-purchased photo packages. Digital experiences can still be set within very nostalgic, traditional settings, and with a personalized service provided by Santa's knowing your child's name, stimulating the exciting memories and wonders of a Christmas past.



## SUPPORTING ONLINE SHOPPING

Online holiday sales are expected to be bigger than ever this year. Retailers and property managers are encouraging a “real life” browse in store before buying online and nabbing the bargain, to minimize returned stock (therefore less strain on logistics resources) and wasted time getting the wrong size.

The Buy Online, Pickup In Store (BOPIS) and curbside pickup trends continue to see increased utilization from shoppers. BOPIS and curbside pickup increased 52%\* over last year on Black Friday with many retailers giving priority and special discounts for customers using these services. BOPIS helps retailers solve for the last-mile logistics and allows consumers to have a convenient, contactless experience.

**“There are myriad areas that retail property managers have committed time and attention to during the pandemic, including reworking their property operations to incorporate various new protocols; supporting retailers’ needs through opening and closing mandates; and helping create designated curbside pickup parking spaces and zones at the majority of retail properties, providing customers with a safe option to collect their orders. Further, we’ve seen new approaches to marketing and programming in attempt to promote the shopping experience as safe and engaging.”**

- Todd Caruso, Senior Managing Director of Retail Services, Americas



### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

Although the holiday season will look and feel very different for most of us in 2020, landlords and property management teams have an opportunity to innovate and be creative with how they engage audiences in the digital age.

The landlords and retailers that succeed in winning the hearts (and wallets) of their shoppers will be bold and not afraid to take risks, while ensuring a safe environment with a unique experience that can't be delivered elsewhere.



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## CBRE

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