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By iOFFICE + SpacelQ

Options for Unoccupied Spaces: A Guide to Deciding What is Best for Your Agency





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Learn more at: [SpacelQ.com](https://www.spacelq.com) and [Archibus.com](https://www.archibus.com)

DISCLAIMER: iOFFICE + SpacelQ employees are not qualified or authorized to direct, manage, guide, or influence how you prepare and maintain your business plans and operations from public policy or health perspectives. All formal regulatory and public policy implications associated with COVID-19 should be managed and overseen by independent specialists, government agencies, or industry associations.

What began as a necessity in the midst of the pandemic has recently become a new way of working: many agencies intend to continue to allow [flexible schedules and remote work](#) even after the pandemic.

This new trend more than likely comes from the employees themselves. According to a [recent JLL global survey](#) of 2,000 workers, 72 percent of employees would like the opportunity to work from home more than they did pre-pandemic, while 66 percent prefer a hybrid model over digital-only or office-only models.

The move away from regular office use has turned the government-owned properties on their axes. Agencies not planning on bringing people back into the office are questioning the future of their spaces. Repurposing, retaining, and vacating are just a few of the many options available to agencies considering how they can best leverage unused space in both the near and far future.

The decision will likely stem from what “office” means to each agency. In this guide, we’ll discuss how the future workplace may look, what choices occupiers have for their unused space, and whether retaining space is the right move.

Defining the Workspace of the Future

The world has opened its doors as effectively as possible, navigating the new terrain of a post-pandemic world. But those doors are less attached to physical office spaces. Whether agencies choose to return to office life is conditional, dependent upon many non-office-sector factors.

[Cushman & Wakefield](#) predicted the United States would return to peak office-using employment by early next year, though the virility of COVID-19 variants has recently added an unexpected layer of uncertainty. Other considerations employers might study when choosing to reopen offices include vaccination rates, whether schools reopen, government recommendations, and what employees prefer.

TO REOPEN OR NOT

Considerations employers should study:

- ✓ Vaccination Rates
- ✓ School Reopenings
- ✓ Government Regulations
- ✓ Employee Wants

Despite the uncertainty of life post-COVID, some organizations are choosing to move ahead and use existing office spaces as frequently as possible. Terry Gerton, president and CEO of the National Academy of Public Administration [recently stated](#) regarding the return-to-work guidelines announced by the White House on June 10, 2021, “the announcement is a clear signal to private sector firms that it is OK to return to offices and other workplaces if you follow CDC guidance and that it is OK to start planning for hybrid work arrangements.”

The ever-fluctuating COVID case numbers are causing some agencies to [push back reopen dates](#) or allow employees to decide where they would like to work based on vaccination and/or comfort levels.

The definition of “office” is no longer one-size-fits-all, and the past year has prompted a mass reevaluation of space planning.

Retain, Repurpose, Vacate?

Organizations reconsidering [the future of their workspaces](#) may face an overwhelming volume of options. There may be value in retaining office space even if you are not using it as regularly or in the same way as pre-COVID. Even agencies fully committed to telecommuting and remote work might want to hold on to their space but find new ways to leverage it.

The need to address COVID-related rules and regulations to make a smooth transition back into office is still present. So, which option is best for your business?



Retain:

Cushman & Wakefield predicted most organizations [will not move to a 100% remote model](#). GSA owned and leased spaces still appeal to agencies looking to eventually bring employees back into the office on a regular basis. And those willing to exercise a bit of patience could be rewarded with a reverse of the current decentralizing trends.



Repurpose:

A common option for organizations with a back-to-work plan includes bringing



Vacate:

Some organizations may find, after extensive [scenario planning](#), that there is really no need to keep the extra space. In this case, a formal notification of intent to vacate should be submitted to the [Program Support Center](#) (PSC).

There is no right or wrong way to approach the redefinition of your facilities. However, the decision you make could have lasting effects on your relationship with a built environment.



Pros and Cons of Retaining Your Office Space

Handling the logistics of repurposing or vacating your space is no small feat. While retaining space can be a smart investment, physical space is still a resource that must be managed, and it's important not to forget the human and fiscal capital necessary to maintain it.

Issues such as empty space, gaps in facilities oversight, and mismanaged data regarding space utilization can majorly increase your organization's expenses. Given the volume of options available for those with multiple facilities, deciding how to navigate those potential barriers cost-effectively can be staggering.

Choosing to retain your office space comes with the need to consider the cost of maintaining it and how your employees interact with your space. Understanding how your office is likely to be occupied, in addition to when and by whom, enables you to optimize your square footage and leverage your employees' productivity potential cost-effectively.

Redesigning your space can help you improve your employee satisfaction and performance but presents you with the issue of managing a renovation and leaves you with the risks associated with manipulating property. While tearing down or moving walls may not be an option in most cases, some minor changes may be approved.

If you are choosing to vacate property, there are a few questions you need to ask. What will happen to all the assets within the facility? Where will people who usually work in this space go if they need to come into the office? What is the right timing for the process of vacating the space?

Mismanaging your space, whether occupied or unoccupied, can have lasting effects on everything from company morale to the constituents you serve. The space planning process can be daunting, and there is no right or wrong way to proceed.

However, there is technology available to help your organization make informed decisions about how to move forward. Space planning platforms like those offered by iOFFICE + SpaceIQ help you manage your enterprise's workspaces holistically and establish sound, pandemic-proof real estate strategies.

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Maximize Your Office Space's Potential

With a reevaluation of assets and facilities comes an enhanced need for proactive space planning.

An integrated workplace management system (IWMS) is a software platform developed to help your business make the most of its available workplace resources. From evaluating the volume of square footage you are no longer actively using to managing reconfiguration projects to repurpose your unused space, a facility management system can ease the confusion often associated with making these kinds of decisions. It can even help in the management of assets that are being moved out of a space being vacated.

iOFFICE + SpacelQ offers the industry's premier IWMS that can help you decide which route is best for your organization as it navigates how to make the most of space you might not be using well--if at all. The proprietary tool helps you evaluate your facilities on a broad scale, and identify how you use your space to suggest methods for increasing its efficiency.

[The iOFFICE + SpacelQ IWMS turns your complex data into actionable insights](#), allowing your facilities managers to easily make the most of the space you have. Adapt your unused space to fit the new needs of your employees and your constituents with the help of centralized information designed to help you strategically improve facilities management capabilities and reduce wasted resources, from labor to electricity to tactical task assignments.

Knowing how you populate your office is the first step to successfully renegotiating your relationship

with the space. The ability to benchmark your current activity against historical use trends enables you to more comfortably reimagine your office to ideally fit your unique needs at this time. Gathering information on work trends now via smart technology helps you look forward to five or ten years so you can better implement equipment and employee habits that allow you to sustain your physical office and make economic decisions.

Should you decide to reorganize your facilities, an IWMS can help align the goals of your HR, Facilities, and IT teams, as well as the interests of your key stakeholders. Reaching consensus on the aspirations of your organization enables you to avoid faltering resilience and lapses in growth.

No matter how you choose to manage your facilities, iOFFICE + SpacelQ can help you implement your plan and manage it moving forward so you can focus on running your agency, not just managing your space.

For more information, visit [Archibus.com](https://www.archibus.com)

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Archibus, a SpacelQ product, is an industry-leading software solutions for companies wanting to improve their workplace productivity and gain full insights into space utilization, improve employee engagement, and take advantage of cost-saving opportunities. Archibus' sophisticated set of tools and dashboards are designed to optimize space, unlock data, and improve workflow for large organizations worldwide.