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WHEN CAN I BRING
MY EMPLOYEES
BACK?

ONE YEAR LATER

A year into the pandemic, with vaccinations on the rise, the city of St. Louis is eager to see office workers return to downtown. But for businesses across the region, it remains a complicated question.

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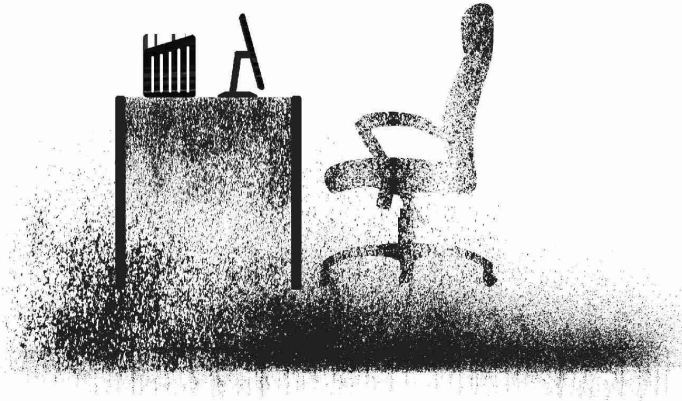
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ONE YEAR LATER

BACK TO MET SQUARE

How four tenants inside one of the region's largest office buildings are coming back to work



BY SLBJ STAFF

With 42 floors and over 1 million square feet, One Metropolitan Square, located downtown, is the third-largest office building in the St. Louis region. We checked in with a few of its tenants to learn about how they're preparing for a post-pandemic workforce deployment.

**BRYAN CAVE LEIGHTON
PAISNER**

What it does: International law firm with 1,400 lawyers worldwide, including more than 200 in St. Louis

Location: 207,000-plus square feet on floors 32-38 and 14

Employees working in the office pre-pandemic: About 450 on any given day (out of about 600 based here)

Employees working there now: About 150 on any given day

The return-to-work strategy: The firm established a five-stage plan, and St. Louis entered stage 2 early in the pandemic, which established a default working-from-home environment while maintaining a team of about 40 in the office in a daily rotation. Employees not part of that rotation were allowed to visit with advance permission. In June, the office advanced to stage 3, which allowed personnel to come into the office without advance permission, though with safety protocols in place. The firm hopes to move to stage 4 by this summer, which it has termed "permitted work from home," when it expects to see a larger portion of its workforce return to the office.

JLL

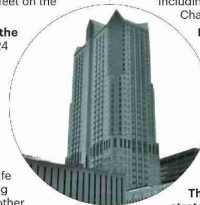
What it does: St. Louis office of national commercial real estate firm. Serves as both a tenant and property manager for Met Square.

Location: 7,995 square feet on the 29th floor

Employees working in the office pre-pandemic: 24

Employees working there now: About 6-10

The return-to-work strategy: Most employees are able to come into the office now, though JLL has limited capacity to 18 people to account for safe social distancing. Seating is spaced so that every other work station is left empty. Face coverings are required when not at your desk. Conference rooms also have a reduced capacity. Signage with details regarding the new guidelines is available throughout the office, as is hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes.



GREATER ST. LOUIS INC.

What it does: A regional business advocacy organization formed in January from the merger of five economic development organizations, including the St. Louis Regional Chamber

Location: About 27,000 square feet, the entire 13th floor

Employees working in the office pre-pandemic: Around 50 (employed by the Chamber and various subtenants.)

Employees working there now: 31

The return-to-work strategy: As of Jan. 1, the 13th floor lease transitioned to Greater St. Louis Inc., led by CEO Jason Hall, who said the newly formed organization was operating like a startup with an aggressive agenda, which required everyone to be together, though following safety protocols. "We wanted to transform into a new organization. That's the type of environment that most needs to operate in-person," he said.

BI-STATE DEVELOPMENT

What it does: Bi-State is an economic development agency overseeing key elements of the region's transportation infrastructure, including Metro, the Gateway Arch Riverfront, St. Louis Downtown Airport and the St. Louis Regional Freightway.

Location: It has 84,540 square feet on the sixth and seventh floors.

Employees working in the office pre-pandemic: About 250

Employees working there now: At about 30% capacity, or 75 employees

The return-to-work strategy: A team is working with department leaders to plan for the return of HQ employees. In the meantime, Bi-State expects to see additional team members slowly transition back over the next few months as more employees are vaccinated and the city of St. Louis eases gathering restrictions. Since the pandemic started, the organization, much like others in the building, enacted safety protocols such as temperature screenings and mask requirements.