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## **The Real Estate Finance Association update: continuing to create virtual engagement opportunities**

June 12, 2020 - Financial Digest

Boston, MA REFA continues to create virtual engagement opportunities for its members to continue networking and education throughout this time.

REFA held its fifth Coffee Hour on May 7th. These Coffee Hours serve as a networking opportunity to virtually bring members together for an open dialogue. The topic of this conversation was “Workplace Re-Entry: How Tenants are Moving Forward.” This session was led by Sam Crossan, JLL, and Constantinos Efstratoudakis, Vertex Pharmaceuticals.

On May 7th, REFA held its second Webinar – “What’s Next for Hospitality & Retail.” The Webinar featured the following speakers from a range of industries: Nilesh Bubna, Longpoint Realty Partners; Deepa Krishnamurthy, formerly at Linear Retail Properties; Vin Norton, UrbanMeritage; Alan Suzuki, JLL; and Larry Trabulsi, CHMWarnick. The panel discussed the current state of projects and transactions, performance, what the new normal may look like, and how this pandemic will help accelerate change.

REFA hosted its first College Connection on May 21st. The virtual program was geared toward an audience of college students interested in breaking into the industry in Greater Boston and beyond. It included a panel discussion with young industry professionals who provided an introductory overview of the commercial real estate industry and its many career paths. They shared their tips on how to connect, network, and launch a career in CRE. The panel consisted of the following REFA Emerging Leader members: Greg Bohenko, Samuels & Associates; Samantha Hallowell, Newmark Knight Frank; Naomi Mayeux, National Development; and Kevin Stone, KeyBank Real Estate Capital.

On May 28th, REFA presented its third Webinar – “Reimagining the Future of the City, Mixed-Use Planning, and the Workplace.” Claudia Piper, REFA 2020 president, Webster Bank, moderated the conversation with Elizabeth Lowrey, Elkus Manfredi Architects; David Manfredi, Elkus Manfredi Architects; and Steve Samuels, Samuels & Associates. The panelists held a conversation about the importance of the communal nature of cities, as well as the value of proximity and the workplace when it comes to creativity and collaboration.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540