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## **WS Development's Retail Experience & Incubation team during Covid - by Carina Donoso**

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WS Development

With the monumental challenges retail has faced since March, landlord and tenant relationships have never been more critical. Traditionally, these relationships have been transactional, but in today's climate, they need to be supremely collaborative. We have always considered ourselves as an extension of our retailer's team; their success is ours. WS Development has over 20 million s/f of retail space across the country, and we work with retail brands of all shapes and sizes. We have always believed that if we act as one team with our tenants, we can offer a truly unique shopping

experience that can overcome any challenge – including a global pandemic and economic downturn.

#### Legacy Place - Dedham, MA

In 2018 we founded a Retail Experience & Incubation team to strengthen how we partner with and serve our tenants. Historically, the WS Retail Experience & Incubation team has focused on curating a wide variety of personalized resources with data-driven strategies: visual merchandising tactics to maximize sell-through, training and development of tenant's staff to maximize the client's in-store experience, an analysis of sales reporting so that the retailers can focus on top sellers and understand their inventory opportunities, and lastly, retail marketing efforts by identifying their consumer profiles.

In response to Covid-19, however, our Retail Experiences and Incubation team has pivoted swiftly and evolved greatly in order to meet the demands of these challenging times. We acknowledge the challenges our tenants are facing to reopen their stores, and we wanted to arm them with tangible resources that they could use to open efficiently. Acting as a right hand to locally and nationally owned tenants alike, we have created ongoing informational webinar series and armed tenants with an array of tools, all in order to help them navigate such pressing new topics as inventory backlog, spatial configurations that are both inviting and compliant with Covid-19 requirements, appointment based shopping, curbside pickup, guest queuing, virtual experiences, product delivery, and marketing efforts.

#### The Seaport - Boston, MA

In another effort to support our retailers during these challenging times, we also recently launched #Storefrontstories. This digital portrait series showcases and celebrates local businesses at a time when they need more visibility than ever. As retailers and restauranteurs begin to reopen, our lifestyle properties across the country, including those in Massachusetts such as Seaport (Boston), Legacy Place (Dedham), The Street Chestnut Hill (Chestnut Hill), MarketStreet Lynnfield (Lynnfield), and Derby Street Shops (Hingham), have partnered with local photographers to capture socially distanced portraits of business owners outside of their storefronts. Through photos and video interviews, #Storefrontstories shares, first hand, the uplifting perspectives of business owners. The ongoing series is being shared across our properties' digital channels over the next several weeks.

Through our collaborative relationships and proactive efforts, we are entirely optimistic that our

properties and valued retailers will come out of the pandemic with an abundance of knowledge and creative tools to best support their businesses. Working as one team, we can achieve a new and meaningful shopping experience that will go beyond the four walls, and beyond the pandemic.

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