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## BentallGreenOak Portfolio Scores Fitwel's Viral Response Approval

Fitwel worked with public health experts and real estate companies to address the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

By **Les Shaver** | January 22, 2021

BentallGreenOak has received Fitwel's Viral Response Approval for 17 office buildings across the US.

Fitwel, operated by the Center for Active Design (CfAD), developed the Fitwel's Viral Response module in coordination with public health experts and real estate companies to address the unique challenges with COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious respiratory diseases.

The VR module allows building owners, companies and commercial tenants to demonstrate compliance with strategies that mitigate viral transmission and build trust to create healthy and resilient environments for all occupants.

BGO says it is the largest commercial real estate portfolio in the country to have achieved this Viral Response Approved distinction to date. The buildings achieving the certification are in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Denver, Charlotte, Portland, Jersey City and Wellesley. BGO says these cities are among the first in the US to have commercial real estate buildings with third-party certification of their operations, policies and practices confirming their preparedness to mitigate the spread of infectious disease.

BGO retained Underwriters Laboratories to conduct various independent tests, including indoor air quality, water quality and janitorial efficacy and building re-occupancy investigations across its certified portfolio. UL will continue their testing regime on an additional 13 buildings in BGO's US-based office portfolio.

"As cities grapple with the enormous challenges of mitigating the spread of COVID-19, real estate asset managers must assume their role in supporting this effort through the implementation of leading practices that keep tenants and the general public safe and our buildings operational," said Amy Price, president of BentallGreenOak said in a prepared statement.

As they return to work, tenants will need assurances that the environment is safe. Dr. Michael Gao, M.D., founder of Haven Diagnostics, says landlords **should tell a more cohesive story around how those efforts (<https://www.globest.com/2020/11/13/landlords-need-to-tell-a-better-story-about-their-safety-practices/>)** make the office environment a place that can be lower risk. "It's that layer of translation between what you've done to what it means for you that I think a lot of landlords are currently missing," he told GlobeSt.com in an earlier interview.

Certifications like Fitwel's Viral Response Approval are one way to demonstrate that commitment to safety. That could prove to be a competitive advantage in the future.

"We think that landlords who are making investments today and helping communicate the benefit of that investment, not just for COVID, but for any respiratory disease, we'll be ahead of the market," Gao says.

