



Soofa believes the solar-powered smart signs will help to spread information about the COVID-19 crisis | Photo source Soofa

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## SMART STREET SIGNS KEEPING COMMUNITIES CONNECTED DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

 HEALTH & WELLBEING

### The Boston area is prioritising official city announcements on its signs and has opened its platform to small businesses and individuals

**Spotted:** A spin-off from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s (MIT) Media Lab, Soofa, provides cities around Boston with solar-powered smart signs for public information. In support of the world’s scramble to contain the COVID-19 coronavirus, the company has opened its small business platform to all local business owners for free. The schedule of notices booked into each sign currently in use has been updated to prioritise local government announcements.

Soofa has created a range of templates for organisations to use, to help spread their public health messaging. Moreover, as information emerges and changes almost hourly, the signage is updated almost instantly. The sensors embedded in each Soofa sign are also helping government officials gauge footfall in various locations. So far, local neighbourhoods are showing significant increases in pedestrians, while town centres reveal a drastic decline in numbers of people passing by.

Individuals can also look to the signs as a means of staying connected, to thank key workers, or to support community businesses. In Greater Boston, Soofa works with the cities of Brookline, Somerville, Everett, Malden and Boston, as well as a range of other organisations including schools and museums. All are taking advantage of the responsiveness of the signs to communicate their latest news, advice and offers to the area community.

Accessibility is one of the main challenges of most emergencies, and Springwise has spotted innovations such as a solar-powered [water purifier](#), and a [hybrid drone](#) strong enough to carry

firefighting equipment, both of which are helping emergency workers in their race against the clock.

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### **Takeaway:**

The majority of the world's countries are battling the latest global health emergency. With self-isolation and quarantine affecting millions of people every day, everything from income to family events and mental health are changing, seemingly moment-by-moment. It is a curious time for everyone, and the effects are likely to be myriad, unexpected and a mix of growth and decline. It will require resilience and supportive connection between individuals, neighbourhoods, regions and nations to overcome the drastic changes and create something positive from such extensive disruption.