



ORGANIZATION

Involves Creating a Strong Foundation
For a Sustainable Revitalization Effort,
Including Cultivating Partnerships,
Community Involvement, and
Resources for the District

Main Street's Role: Post COVID-19 Recovery

Disasters create business disruption. COVID-19 is no exception. Main Street Directors working side by side with City Government and other Economic Development Professionals can make a difference as to how quickly the economy comes back. This tech advice is designed to give basics on how a downtown organization works toward a recovery program.

The Phases of Economic Recovery:

Short Term: Priorities 6 months to 1 year

- Restore basic services
- Business re-entry
- Access financial resources
- Communications

Long Term: Priorities

- Strategic planning
- Rebuilding resilient infrastructure
- Financial resource development
- Resilience

Responsibilities of Local Governments After a Disaster:

- ♦ Implement recovery and mitigation plans
- ♦ Coordinate efforts across government offices, nongovernment organizations and the private sector.
- ♦ Lead efforts to restore critical infrastructure, essential services, business retention and support.
- ♦ Establish metrics to evaluate and communicate progress.

Example:

- ♦ Mayor's office establishes a task force
- ♦ City partners with downtown organization/business community to identify specific actions to support businesses, workers, and residents
- ♦ Immediate measures include:
 - ◇ Extending grace period for tax/utility payments
 - ◇ Establishing a contingency fund to support businesses
 - ◇ Expanding small business advisory services
 - ◇ Exempting businesses from delivery hour restrictions (mainly larger urban centers)
 - ◇ Lighten up on parking restrictions

Main Street's Role: Post COVID-19 Recovery

Role: Organization & Public Relations

- Be the hub for downtown communications positioning the organization as THE source.
- Plan and execute an awareness campaign promoting and illustrating actions being taken in the downtown and by the businesses to ensure a clean, safe and comfortable environment.
- Prepare collateral materials: posters, signs, etc. for downtown businesses to use communicating actions to keep employees and customers safe
- Promote cleanliness by encouraging businesses to go beyond minimal requirements to provide a safe and clean environment for all.
- Consider drafting a “good business neighbor pledge” and recognize businesses who commit to follow/exceed minimal standards.
- Publicize actions/roles of partners of the Downtown Organization.
- Be alert to and identify available resources on the local, state, and federal level advocating for downtown businesses.
- Spotlight your volunteers and their contributions to help fellow businesses and community members.
- Explore businesses Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needs possibly coordinating bulk purchasing to help offset the business costs and meet demands.
- Fundraise: as awkward as it may seem, be an influencer of positive change and invite those who are able to invest in the cause.
- Budget: re-evaluate to see how you can redistribute to better serve the downtown business community.

Crisis Communications as part of the organizational role:

Audiences: the business community, the media, state/federal governments, economic development, community stakeholders

- Many organizations and governments have created COVID-19 response webpages, example: IEDC's <https://restoreyoureconomy.org/>
- Important information:
 - ◊ Available resources
 - ◊ Updates on restrictions/closures
 - ◊ Your recovery plan & response activities
 - ◊ COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey
 - ◊ Clarification on Essential vs. Nonessential businesses
 - ◊ Statement on your city/county's response
 - ◊ List of business resources from local, state, and federal sources
 - ◊ Updates for your organizations members, downtown businesses, etc.
 - ◊ Centers for Disease Control Prevention and the North Carolina Dept. of Health & Human Services

Role: Design/Environment

- Focus on keeping downtown clean: consider hiring extra people to help
- Consider installing hand sanitizing stations or retrofitting water fountains as sanitation stations (Porta Potty companies may offer this service)
- Experiment with road diets as to increase physical distancing a lane of the road could be used for additional pedestrian/bike traffic
- Increase directional signage—may be temporary, but if on-street parking is removed to accommodate a comfortable pedestrian flow signage to additional parking areas may be needed
- Promote customer friendly parking practices such as: partnering with businesses who may have additional off-site parking to open spaces to the general public: banks, churches, office buildings. Do away with parking tickets until you can ease back into handing out
- Add color: open signs, banners, flowers, etc.
- Experiment: been afraid of tactical urbanism? This might be the time to consider!

Main Street's Role: Post COVID-19 Recovery

Role: Promotion/Marketing

- Execute “feel-good” marketing and advertising
- Introduce small scale entertainment in spaces large enough to accommodate social distancing
- Live stream performances
- Personalize PPE to promote downtown or businesses and give them away
- Promote positive experiences
- Promote local tourism; offer virtual narrated tours; self-guided walking tours

Role: Economic Vitality

- Assess economic impacts
- Strengthen partnerships: local, regional and state organizations
- Update economic development plans
- Establishing or supporting business recovery center to work with getting back to business
- Pull together financial assistance programs making it readily available to businesses
- Offer a “Safe Start Kit” to businesses which would include information such as: essential information from state and local reopening plans and requirements, customizable promotional materials and templates, contacts for business assistance resources, information on upcoming district-wide activities, events and marketing efforts, and other pertinent information and materials
- Help businesses increase their on-line presence
- Host roundtables or block meetings with businesses to allow them input and help you, help them!
- Think about new opportunities. Example: restaurants may have to continue limiting seating this could be an opportunity for a food truck, grab and go menus, etc.; laundry services may need to pick up and deliver, retail offer more one-on-one shopping experiences
- Be ready for investors. There will be investors looking to capitalize. This is where it's important to have good communication with property/business owners and have that Downtown Property Inventory list updated!

Post Disaster Small Business Assistance: Financial Programs

Types of assistance:

- Revolving loan funds (RLFs)-self-replenishing lending tools
- Bridge loans-gap funding for businesses waiting on insurance or other resources
- Grant programs-usually funded from state or federal sources, but look at local grants/or your current Main Street grants to see if they can be reallocated to help small businesses
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI's)-can deploy funds to higher risk recipients
- Federal resources: Small Business Administration (SBA) Economic Injury Disaster Loans serving businesses affected by COVID-9

Example of COVID-19 Business Recovery Program:

- ♦ City originally initiated a recovery plan following a hurricane, but reinstated to serve businesses affected by COVID-19
- ♦ Partnerships of three local banks to provide low-interest loans
- ♦ Short-term gap financing
 - ◇ Short term (180 day) low interest (fixed rate-3.25% APR) single-pay note
 - ◇ APR (Annual Percentage Rate) offered through June 2020
- ♦ Assistance coordinated by the City/County Economic Development Partnership

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Post-Disaster Small Business Assistance: Support Strategies

- ♦ Resource identification: share information and assist access
- ♦ Virtual and telecommunications: resources for online opportunities/telework
- ♦ Worker assistance: unemployment benefits, child care services, health/mental health care access, mortgage assistance
- ♦ Shared work: employees cut back hours, and state funds (where available), make up the difference
- ♦ Buy local: remind customers/launch campaign
- ♦ Restaurants: take-out and delivery options
- ♦ Check out NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center's Conference Website for Tips & Resources, <https://www.ncmainstreetconference.com/covid-19resources> site includes links to NC Business Resources as well as tips from communities around the state

Example from New Orleans Business Alliance (NOLABA): Gig Economy Relief Fund

- ♦ Gig economy workers represent 8% of New Orleans Parish workforce*
- ♦ Cancellations of events=millions in lost income for gig workers
- ♦ \$100,000 committed by NOLABA for initial fund, up to \$500,000
- ♦ Individual award sizes: \$500-\$1000, depending on need
- ♦ Reapplication if eligible after 45 days **a gig worker is an employee who has been contracted temporarily in order to preform an agreed upon task. Gig workers can work both as an independent contractor or as an employee of an employer such as ride sharing.*

Crisis Communications

- ♦ Audiences: the business community, the media, state/federal governments, economic development stakeholders
- ♦ Ways to communicate: websites, social media, texting services, email
 - ◊ Many organizations & governments have created COVID19 response webpages
 - ◊ IEDC's <https://restoreyoureconomy.org/>
- ♦ Important information:
 - ◊ Available resources
 - ◊ Updates on restrictions/closures
 - ◊ Your recovery plan & response activities
- ♦ Consider including in your communications:
 - ◊ COVID-19 Economic Impact Survey
 - ◊ Clarification on Essential vs. Nonessential businesses
 - ◊ Statement on your city/county's response
 - ◊ List of business resources from local, state, and federal sources
 - ◊ Updates for your organizations members, downtown businesses, etc.
 - ◊ Centers for Disease Control Prevention and the North Carolina Dept. of Health & Human Services

The Way Forward:

- ♦ Information is key: communicate clearly and provide access to resources
- ♦ Work together: coordinate efforts across organizations and leaders
- ♦ Be adaptable: this situation is constantly changing, be able to adapt quickly

Sources for this Tip Sheet:

International City/County Manager Association (ICMA); <https://icma.org/>
Restore Your Economy.org; <https://restoreyoureconomy.org/>
Reopen Main Street, <https://reopenmainstreet.com/>