

Only in Seattle Webinar – May 21, 2020

Neighborhood Business Districts: Phased Reopening and Strategies to Support Businesses

1. State's Phased Approach to Reopening

Michael and Jenn from Small Business Team gave an update on the State's Safe Start plan for a phased reopening and small business resources. City's role to amplify guidance and support communities with the information they need and in formats that are useful.

2. Neighborhood Sharing

- What are you hearing from your businesses?
- What are your top questions or concerns?
- What are some strategies you are exploring or thinking about?

Key themes summarized from neighborhood sharing:

- Visual, simplified, translated information to help business understand and comply
- Clear guidelines essential and checklists to present guidance would be useful
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- Customer education and potential issues with customers a concern
- Need to support businesses in their reopening financially and with advocacy
- Some businesses may not reopen in Phase 2 at reduced capacity (e.g. doesn't pencil or concerned about getting sick).
- Technology barriers for businesses to consider
- Pandemic impacts new social behaviors and new cost of doing business
- Some neighborhoods expressed public safety perceptions and concerns an issue
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Ideas and Strategies

- Visuals, photos showing examples of compliance with guidance
- Creating checklists from the guidelines for businesses
- Reopening kit for businesses
- Continued support for businesses (including in language) from OED into recovery phases
- Want public space for outdoor seating - easy process to take parking spaces, etc
- E Commerce platforms and web-based strategies to help businesses (+ payment processing)
- Continued focus on takeout and delivery during Ph2
- Buying gift cards and using them creatively, e.g. membership, giveaways
- Creative use of public spaces to allow businesses to engage in public realm
- Smaller landlords have been helpful with rent relief. Extend commercial eviction moratorium

Chinatown-ID

- Biggest challenges are translated and simplified information.
- Need visual representation of information to help businesses understand and comply. Even using a restaurant that is complying as an example (with photos, guide).

- Checklist form of state guidance would be useful.
- Personal Services guidelines are really unclear and complicated. There needs to be some work and advocacy around these.
- Concerns about PPE being available as business reopens, especially for service sectors
- Thinking about customer issues, especially with hostility towards Asian people and businesses
- Need clarity in guidelines in order to produce visual information
- Lease and rent negotiation Issues (new toolkit super useful and neighborhood is simplifying and translating)

Othello and Rainier Beach

- Support businesses in their reopening financially and with advocacy support
- Business concerns include having to track customer info, cost of safety materials (gloves, masks, separations).
- Concerns customers won't understand new ways of doing things and likely increased costs (esp for small restaurants that depend on volume).
- Need clear guidelines and education for businesses and public. Safety is priority.
- Some businesses concerned about reopening since they don't want to get sick. As concerned about this as losing their business.
- Businesses are communicating via FB, texting, emails about what is available
- Southeast business districts are working together and exploring strategies, e.g. bulk buying
- Some concerns about how to enforce guidelines
- Technology barriers for business owners
- Checklists of guidance, or reopening toolkit for businesses would be really helpful

University District

- Businesses reluctant to open in Phase 2 at 50% since it might not pencil
- Lack of students in summer and uncertainty of UW reopening
- Will we reach Ph 4 before Sept
- How this pandemic impacts new social behaviors and what is new cost of doing business
- Exploring web-based and e-commerce strategies, e.g. online marketplace, UW game day deliveries from local biz
- Developers buying gift cards from local businesses to give to new residents

First Hill

- Virginia Mason and Harborview are beginning to furlough 2/3 of workers, which impacts the local small businesses
- They have been buying gift cards to garner FHIA membership
- Passive activation events like scavenger hunt to win gift cards

Phinney/Greenwood

- Commercial rent moratorium – talking to businesses and mapping out their plan for the future.
- Advocacy to extend commercial eviction moratorium. Neighborhood zoom meeting with CM

Pioneer Square

- Neighborhood businesses rely on workforce of upper floor businesses. Return will be slow, 30-50% return, trying to get clarity on their plans.
- Perceptions of public safety a challenge

- Public spaces – allow businesses to engage in public realm and pivot their business
- PPEs, clarity on guidance important

Lake City

- Public safety perception concerns – up tick in people on the streets in crisis in business district
- Trash and appearance – w/out adopt a street program and volunteer clean ups make it worse

Uptown

- Public safety – police shooting, level of concern about being out
- Volunteer organization, so no staff to do phone calls to businesses
- Seattle Center will stay closed which reduces customers

Beacon Hill

- Want to continue the support provided for PPP from OED for reopening phases
- Translated and visual materials for this next push
- Relationships with businesses are important

3. Neighborhood Business District Recovery Projects

District Marketplace – Sara Greene

- Working with Ballard, Pioneer Square, Capitol Hill to create online local marketplaces.

Zeacon – Rich Morris

- Virtual Events and experiences