



Topics for Planners to Consider in COVID-19 Pandemic Economic Recovery Planning

Note: This is the first in a series of documents about COVID-19 pandemic economic recovery planning to be issued by DLCD. Additional technical resources will be shared over the coming weeks and months.

May 12, 2020

For land use planners and community and economic development professionals, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity to rethink local codes and planning programs, and consider the best, most effective ways to use them as tools for recovery planning and community development.

DLCD has put together a list of topics for land use planners to consider. Our theme for tips on economic recovery is *adaptability and flexibility*, not compromising or weakening standards for public health and safety. The suggestions below should be evaluated with a focus on equity. Planning for recovery needs to be inclusive; consider how adjusting local codes and other solutions address vulnerable populations, essential service sector workers, and the rural communities that are most impacted.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- 1. Opportunities for small businesses to minimize overhead.** Consider multi-use shared work space, locations for pop-up sales and services, or providing locations for locally grown food sales by identifying opportunities for new or expanded farmers markets.
- 2. Support employment retention for small business.** Listen to your small businesses. Identify what you can do to initiate or maintain open communication with key employers in your community during this unprecedented time for businesses.
- 3. E-Commerce Business Pivots.** Now is the time to provide support and advisement to your retail businesses in need of resources and information to pivot to online-based business models. Consider connecting work at home or gig workers with appropriate technical skills with those businesses in need of assistance. For example, to create websites for web based product purchases.
- 4. Expand Mixed Use.** Traditional downtown mixed use consists of retail uses on the street level and housing on the second story. To create more opportunities for new businesses to get off the ground, allow a variety of service and retail businesses in apartment buildings, garages, or residential neighborhoods.
- 5. Adapting Existing Buildings.** The near term forecast will likely include more re-use than new construction. How will your code respond to this? Are off-street parking mandates and limitations on permitted uses preventing existing buildings from being occupied and redeveloped?
- 6. Many businesses have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic by becoming delivery based.** This change may stay and forever modify how restaurants, retail establishments,



growers and support services do business. What can you do with your code to help make this change easily? Talk to businesses that have made the shift for ideas.

7. **Walking and biking.** Take advantage of the momentum and consider expanding pedestrian and bike lanes in streets to provide safe distancing from others and to encourage these healthy modes of transportation. Expand the uses allowed in public space.
8. **Time Limit on Applications.** Can a city or county adopt provisions (code and administrative) to allow permits to be extended?
9. **Fees.** Is there room in a county or city budget to reduce fees for a period of time? As incentive for new development? Are business registration and licensing fees an impediment to entrepreneurial efforts in your community?
10. **Code Enforcement Flexibility.** While the proverbial Achilles Heel, it may be an opportunity to rethink your priorities. For example, allow longer term stays for family or friends being housed in an RV on a residential lot.
11. **Housing availability.** Consider encouraging the adaptive use of single family dwellings. Although cities over 2,500 population are required to allow accessory dwelling units, smaller cities with population under 2,500 could consider updating codes to allow ADUs. All cities could look at their codes to see if the creation of an internal dwelling unit or conversion to allow a portion as an apartment is streamlined and flexible. Check out some of the DLCDC and TGM resource guides on housing. <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/UP/Pages/Housing-Resources.aspx>
12. **Childcare challenges.** Many local codes have tremendous flexibility already. In fact, state law requires local codes to allow family child care in any residence in a residential or commercial zone. With physical distancing requirements, most childcare facilities have been or will need to be modified. If your city has not already done so, now is a good time to update your code to be consistent with state law. And while you are on the topic, consider how and where your code can accommodate childcare options for lower income shift workers, workers who might not have traditional 8-5 white collar jobs, or for farm workers. What could your city do to accommodate creative solutions?
13. **Food systems.** Strengthen the economic viability for food businesses by connecting local and regional agricultural production. Keeping it local fosters interdependent relationships, jobs, and strengthens the community.
14. **Food Production.** Like many states, Oregon has a cottage food law that allows people to obtain a Domestic Kitchen or Bakery license (for more information, see: <https://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/FoodSafety/FSLicensing/Pages/DomesticKitchen.aspx>). This allows people to establish food preparation businesses as home occupations. Most development codes will not present a barrier to this business opportunity, but cities should review their codes to make sure. Consider how your code might allow a pop up, shared or temporary kitchen or how you might streamline permits for a commercial kitchen. Check with your local Environmental or Public Health Department on applicable guidelines and regulations.
15. **College Campuses.** If you are fortunate to have a college in your city limits, inquire about their plans and how your planning office may help. Sometimes it's just a simple gesture to let folks know they can think beyond traditional development design and use of facilities such as offering low cost commercial kitchen space or sharing public space.



- 16. Chambers of Commerce or downtown business associations.** These groups may be your closest ally. They have a direct line to small businesses and can help spread the word about adaptability and flexibility. And they can identify businesses owned and operated by non-English speakers who need personalized service, translation, or interpretation.
- 17. Arts and Culture.** How can you prioritize inclusion of the artists, musicians, and other performers in your community recovery plans?
- 18. Many actions do not require code changes.** We know that code changes are not a quick fix. Consider whether your city council/manager might take action to approve the use of city owned sidewalks or streets for restaurant seating. Or authorize the use of a municipal owned vacant lot. In general, take a look at city policies and provisions on use of public open space.
- 19. It's all about the internet.** Discuss what your city or county can do to promote expansion and service of broadband to everyone in and around your community.
- 20. There's no silver bullet.** What works in your community, works in your community. Only you can decide. We're here to help support your local program.

If you are interested in learning more about any of these topics, or need advice on local implementation, contact your DLCD Regional Representative.

<https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/CPU/Pages/Regional-Representatives.aspx>

Questions? Please contact Matt Crall, Planning Services Division Manager

Direct: 503-934-0046 Cell: 503-798-6419 Email: matthew.crall@state.or.us