



# City of Fishers COVID-19 Recovery Plan



## Executive Summary

Ensuring the health and safety of our residents is, and will remain, our City's highest priority during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, it is the responsibility of this administration to pave a way for our community to recover economically and enable a return to "normal," while implementing systems that will allow for our City to flourish in what is clearly a very different future. As such, the City has developed an actionable plan consisting of public health initiatives and economic programs that will be established in a thoughtful yet accelerated timeline. These actions will enable our City to lead through the COVID-19 pandemic and allow our great community the ability to once again thrive socially and economically.

## Background

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 COVID-19 has permeated every facet of our lives. As of April 20, 2020, there are 746,625 confirmed positive cases in the United States, and 39,083 Americans have died.<sup>1</sup> In Indiana, there have been 11,683 positive cases, and our state's fatality rate from COVID-19 hovers around 5% with 569 deaths to date. Currently, the most local data we have available is at the county level, which has reported 598 positive cases and 35 deaths.

COVID-19 has also ground our economy to a halt. In the state of Indiana alone, in the timeframe covering the last two weeks of March and the first two weeks of April, there have been 444,123 unemployment claims. In that same time period in 2019, there were 9,520. More locally, in Hamilton County, there have been 9,557 unemployment claims in the three most recent reporting periods. Last year over that same timeframe, there were 195.<sup>2</sup>

A series of decisions made at the federal, state, and local levels were implemented over the past seven weeks in an effort to limit the number of infections and deaths resulting from COVID-19. These have fundamentally reprioritized why and when we leave our homes, how we do business, and in what ways we interact with family and friends. On March 6, 2020, Governor Holcomb issued Executive Order 20-02, which declared a public health emergency in our state in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States and our first confirmed case in Indiana. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic and on March 13, President Trump declared a national emergency in response to COVID-19. On March 16, 2020, Mayor Fadness issued Executive Order No. 1, declaring a local state of emergency and travel advisory for all residents to avoid non-essential travel. Then, on March 23, 2020, Governor Holcomb issued Executive Order 20-08 which required all Hoosiers to stay at home except for essential travel and activities. The statewide "stay-at-home" order is currently extended to May 1, 2020.

Our schools are closed for the remainder of the school year, and our students, teachers, and families have had to take on the challenge of learning, educating, and mentoring through a prolonged period of e-learning. Working from home is the standard for nearly everyone. Our churches and places of worship are ministering to their congregations online. Our restaurants remain closed for dine-in service and have modified their business plans to weather the storm of the devastating economic effect of COVID-19 by providing curbside pickup options. Masks and gloves have become a normal part of our attire. The world, the United States, Indiana, and our great City of Fishers are fundamentally different places than they were seven weeks ago.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.hoosierdata.in.gov/dpage.asp?id=58&view\\_number=2&menu\\_level=&panel\\_number=2](http://www.hoosierdata.in.gov/dpage.asp?id=58&view_number=2&menu_level=&panel_number=2)

Yet, in the face of this unprecedented time in our society, we remain resilient and the City of Fishers will emerge from this difficult period. We intend to do so safely, effectively, and efficiently. We will take the actions laid out in this recovery plan, which details accessible testing for residents, analysis and contact tracing capabilities within our City organization, and substantive support to our business community. These public health initiatives and economic programs will enable our community to recover from COVID-19 in a strong position, ensuring our residents are healthy and safe and that the companies that call Fishers home can confidently reemerge and open for business when executive orders are lifted.

## Plan

When the leadership of our state makes the difficult but calculated decision to start to relax mitigation efforts such as lifting the ‘stay-at-home order,’ opening public places, and increasing the number of individuals that can congregate in any one place, the City of Fishers will be ready.

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health’s Center for Health Security published [A National Plan to Enable Comprehensive COVID-19 Case Finding and Contact Tracing in the US](#). This document provides a framework for how communities can “save lives, reduce COVID-19’s burden on our healthcare system, ease strict social distancing measures, and confidently make progress toward returning to work and school.”<sup>3</sup> This framework relies on a community’s ability to provide:

- Ready access to diagnostic tests for all symptomatic cases or those with a reasonable suspicion of COVID-19 exposure
- Widespread serological testing to understand underlying rates of infection and identify those who have developed immunity and could potentially return to work or school without fear of becoming infected
- The ability to trace all contacts of reported cases

The relaxing of government orders alone will not enable our residents to return to “normal.” Confidence in their own personal health and safety is required, and that is gained through ready access to diagnostic tests. The knowledge that testing is available to our entire community is paramount. Further, our ability to conduct thorough contact tracing and data analysis to inform and educate at the municipal level is critical. Doing so enables appropriate reaction through isolation of confirmed positives and accurate quarantining of exposed contacts.

Therefore, the City of Fishers will be taking a series of actions to ensure the health and safety of our residents and enable our community and economy to recover and effectively make progress toward returning to our places of work, school, and fellowship. Below are the public health initiatives and economic programs that help achieve this goal.

### Public Health Initiatives

- Provide free testing to any resident of the City of Fishers
- Establish a City Health Department
- Inform and empower residents with localized public health data
- Develop and implement comprehensive contact tracing

### Economic Programs

- Provide accessible testing to the business community
- Create the Fishers Start-up and Recovery Loan (SURL) Program

<sup>3</sup> A National Plan to Enable Comprehensive COVID-19 Case Finding and Contact Tracing in the US

- Provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) starter kits, education, and awareness to businesses as they begin to reopen their doors for their employers and consumers
- Provide six (6) months of free membership to Launch Fishers to Fishers residents who are currently not members of Launch Fishers
- Establish a Business Recovery Center in Launch Fishers
- Extend relaxed sign ordinance standards for businesses and delay stormwater billing to ease financial burden

## Public Health Initiatives

### Provide free COVID-19 testing to all residents

Streamlining the ability to receive a test by removing the restrictive guidelines for qualifying for a test, as well as the individual financial burden for each test, is key to removing the anxiety and fear that comes with having symptoms or coming in contact with an individual who is positive for COVID-19, but not being able to immediately schedule for a test yourself. By making testing accessible to all residents, our community will be able to react quicker and take the appropriate action to isolate and eliminate the ability for COVID-19 to spread throughout our City.

On or before May 1, the City will open a testing site specifically for our residents, enable the ability to sign up for a test online at the City website, and secure a contract with a credible lab facility to produce test results within 48 hours. Our public safety personnel, as they have time and time again, will once again answer the call for our community by staffing the testing facility and conducting tests for our community.

While the state of Indiana does not require a municipality to have a cash reserve policy, the City of Fishers has maintained a policy of holding cash reserves of at least 50% of the following year's projected property tax revenue.<sup>4</sup> The City's fiscally responsible management has provided the City with excess cash reserves for a "rainy day." That day has come, and there is no more worthy use of the City's funding than to be able to provide its residents with the ability to request and receive a COVID-19 test free of charge. The City will be requesting that City Council, on April 24, 2020, appropriate those reserve funds to pay for these tests. The City will make every attempt to seek reimbursement by the federal government if and when that opportunity is made available, but will proceed regardless of any form of compensation.

### Establish a City Health Department

In order to truly understand COVID-19's effect on our community, a municipal-level awareness of positive cases is required, as well as a commensurate response by City government to conduct contact tracing to inform and educate the community. Indiana law affords a second-class city, such as the City of Fishers, the authority to establish a full-time city health department.<sup>5</sup>

Specifically related to COVID-19, the responsibility and authority to take any action authorized by state statute or rule of the state department to control communicable diseases (IC 16-20-4-18), and the responsibility and authority to investigate the existence of any contagious or infectious disease and adopt measures, not inconsistent with the rules of the state department to arrest the progress of contagious or infectious disease (IC 16-20-4-19) become that of the City's.

Establishing this organization is a tax-neutral move that reallocates the responsibility, authority, and funding of the county health department portion of Fishers, to Fishers. Upon resolution by the City Council on April 24, 2020, a qualified individual within the Fire and Emergency Services Department will be reassigned as the Chief Administration Officer (CAO) of the City Health Department to run the day-to-day operations of the organization, a seven member board will be appointed by the Mayor to provide oversight, and a Medical Director will be contracted to provide guidance to the CAO.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fishers.in.us/DocumentCenter/View/20372/2020-Budget-Presentation>

<sup>5</sup> <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2018/ic/titles/016/#16-20-4>

### **Inform and empower residents with localized public health data**

Significant strides have been made at the federal, state, and county level in regard to the data surrounding COVID-19. However, driving the data and information on COVID-19 down to the most local level possible is the only way to truly inform a City as to the health of its community and its current risk level. The City Health Department will be able to conduct advanced data analytics to investigate the existence of the contagious disease and adopt the most effective and efficient measures to degrade COVID-19 in our community. The City will operate in a collaborative nature with the State Health Department as a supportive partner with our state leadership.

### **Develop and implement comprehensive contact tracing**

Immediately, the City Health Department will manage the operations of the city-specific COVID-19 testing site, the relationship with our diagnostics lab, and the extensive contact tracing analysis to limit additional infections in our community. Advanced data analytics and technological solutions will be utilized, as well as contacting every person diagnosed with COVID-19 in order to gather their contacts and get in touch with every contact discovered, as recommended by the World Health Organization's 2015 contact tracing response to the Ebola virus disease.<sup>6</sup> The establishment of this department and its capabilities will lay the foundation for a resilient economy and a community confident in its public health, well beyond COVID-19.

## **Economic Programs**

### **Provide accessible testing to the business community**

The City will provide access and a unique URL to the software being utilized by the City to each business in Fishers that would like to provide testing for their employees. This software streamlines the logistics of testing by automating the collection of basic information, prioritizing high-risk individuals, and assigning testing appointment times to ensure an organized and smooth process at the testing facility. Further, the city-specific testing site will be made available for the businesses, reducing the cost of the test as a result of public safety city employees administering the testing.

### **Create the Fishers Start-Up and Recovery Loan (SURL) Program**

The City of Fishers will create the Fishers Start-Up and Recovery Loan (SURL) Program for our local small business community in response to the COVID-19 crisis. This loan program provides start-up funds for small businesses which need an influx of capital as they begin to reopen and resume operations. The City will allocate up to \$500,000 towards this program in amounts up to \$15,000 per business. An application review committee consisting of representatives from the Fishers Redevelopment Commission, OneZone, and the City Finance Committee will review each application and make recommendations of awards. These low-interest, start-up loans are intended for small businesses that meet at least one of the following criteria: employed less than 25 FTEs prior to the COVID-19 pandemic; designated as 'non-essential' under Governor Holcomb's "stay-at-home" Executive Order; businesses that were not fully able to adopt their business model to sustain existing revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic; and/or those 'essential businesses' that had to furlough or lay off 50% or more of their workforce as a result of COVID-19. These companies must be able to demonstrate a direct correlation of their business disruption to COVID-19.

### **Provide PPE starter kits, education, and awareness to businesses**

The newly established City Health Department will partner with businesses in Fishers to provide PPE starter kits consisting of masks and gloves in order to properly protect their employees as they begin to reenter the workplace. Additionally, extensive education will be made available to businesses to provide recommendations and guidance in accordance with CDC guidelines in regard to cleaning and disinfecting techniques, physical space layout to ensure social distancing, and how to utilize the city testing software and facility to ensure rapid testing opportunities are made available. The newly established Health Department will make contact with every business in Fishers to support them as they reopen their doors to their employees and customers.

<sup>6</sup> [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/185258/WHO\\_EVD\\_Guidance\\_Contact\\_15.1\\_eng.pdf?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/185258/WHO_EVD_Guidance_Contact_15.1_eng.pdf?sequence=1)

## **Establish the Launch Fishers Entrepreneurship Recovery Program to provide six (6) months of free membership to Launch Fishers**

For many in our community, this pandemic may have resulted in job loss and an uncertain economic future. Entrepreneurship is a key pillar of our community's vision, but starting a new business during this time could also be challenging. The City and Launch Fishers will partner to create the Launch Fishers Entrepreneurship Recovery Program to help address some of the barriers of creating a new business. The City will cover the cost of a Launch Fishers membership for new Fishers-resident members for a period of six months.

## **Establish the Business Recovery Center in Launch Fishers**

Additionally, the Fishers Economic Development team will establish a Business Recovery Center located in Launch Fishers for all current businesses in our community in order to provide in-person information on potential federal and local loan and grant programs, as well as virtual job fair and non-profit support.

## **Extend relaxed sign ordinance standards for businesses and delay stormwater billing to ease financial burden**

In recognition of the difficult times the business community is facing, the City temporary relaxed ordinances related to outdoor display and storage standards (Article 6.10) as well as temporary signs (Sec 6.17.8) on March 18, 2020 by an executive order of the Mayor. The City will leave these lifted indefinitely to enable businesses to promote their reopening as appropriate.

Additionally, the commercial stormwater utility bills for the first quarter of 2020 were delayed 60 days to ease the financial burden on our businesses. That bill will now be spread evenly throughout the remaining three commercial billing cycles of the 2020 payment year. Additionally, the City is providing an additional 30 days to pay the quarter two utility bill, originally due on June 18, 2020, now due no later than July 20, 2020.

## **Timeline:**

<b>April 24</b>	Emergency City Council Meeting for Recovery Plan
<b>April 27</b>	Fishers Health Department Board assembles, adopts policies and procedures Start-Up and Recovery Loan Program Application (SURL) Launches
<b>April 30</b>	Business Resource Center launches virtual meetings
<b>May 1</b>	COVID-19 Testing Site Opens
<b>May 4</b>	Application period for SURL closes
<b>July 20</b>	Q2 Commercial Stormwater Bill Extension

Timeline is dependent upon City Council approval of the Recovery Plan items during its emergency meeting on April 24.

## **Conclusion**

Our city, not unlike any other community in our state or country, is facing unprecedented times. It is in these times, though, that bold action is required. These public health initiatives will protect our residents, advise them on the health of their community, and empower them with the confidence needed to begin to return to work, school, places of worship, and social gatherings when the data informs us that those actions are safe and appropriate.

These economic programs will provide our businesses with substantive support to help our companies begin to rebuild. In the form of funding, resources, education, and opportunities, this support will enable them to reopen their doors to their employees and customers when the state leadership makes the informed decision to begin to lift the "stay-at-home" order.

The City of Fishers is a resilient community that will emerge from COVID-19. Our City will flourish once again, as we take these actions to shape our community going forward.