

Mayor Economic Recovery Task Force

Potential Economic Recovery Activities

The following potential action items have been compiled from local stakeholder input, the review of other local municipal efforts and economic development resource materials.

1. Support Business Efforts to Access Short Term Relief

- Lobby to establish and improve government programs (i.e. Rent relief)
- Provide financial flexibility –
 - Property interest/penalty deferrals,
 - property tax reductions and deferrals,
 - hydro rate changes and penalty deferrals,
 - reductions of B.I.A. levies
- Coordination of a centralized intake/help portal for businesses, 1-on-1 support to access all available funds and programs
- Identify and establish a response team
- Compile and provide webinars and individualized services to businesses to pivot their business model, or transition to e-commerce models
- Hold virtual sector-focused roundtables for sharing ideas and best-practices
- Undertake a daily scan of announcements/updates and post while exploring ability to enrich the information (i.e. Pending/Open and Accepting Applications/Closed/New)
- Highlight local companies that can provide advisory services

2. Facilitate the Re-opening of Businesses

- Ramp up small business advisory services (B.A.C.D.)
- Call on governments to provide clear guidelines on conditions for re-opening, use of P.P.E., etc.
- Provide/share re-opening reference guides and best practices
- Create Buy Local Campaigns
 - Local and social media
 - Buy gift cards
 - Curbside pick-up
 - Downtowns of Durham buy local portal
- Expand Patio Programs across the city to assist restaurants' physical distancing efforts
- Support the creation of daycare options to allow more people to return to work
- Establish a task force to pursue the creation of small business loan and support programs
- Create a working group of medical professionals to provide advice on health and wellness protocols
- Partner with local anchor institutions to commit to temporary local purchasing

- Establish a Micro-loan funds

3. Ensure Coordinated Communications to the Business Community

- Create and maintain a centralized webpage/site (investdurham.ca/covidresponse)
- Undertake surveys of the evolving needs of the business community and provide thank yous and responses
- Ensure municipal/offices/Chamber/BoT are staffed to follow up on company questions, issues, opportunities
- Direct virtual company calls and visits
- Virtual Town Halls
- Issue regular press releases and updates

4. Stimulate Construction and Infrastructure Investment

- Ensure that building and planning functions remain open
- Move to digital processing of applications where possible
- Accelerate the implementation of existing projects – GO Expansion, streetscaping
- Identify and undertake the work to have shovel ready projects for future stimulus programs
- Reduce the cost and approvals timing for development - D.C. costs and timing, letter of credit, fees, etc.
- Expand the scope and focus of C.I.P. programs – costs related to physical distancing, digital/broadband upgrades
- Establish Community Development Corporations to add job creation/training dimensions to larger infrastructure

5. Assess Leading Industries and Clusters

Some of those clusters are at greater risk than others

- Create a working group or S.W.O.T. team to work with clusters to identify critical “pain points”
- Develop an immediate cluster assessment plan, informed by survey data, roundtable discussions other data sources
- Identify and create appropriate support programs for each cluster initiative, realizing that these will differ depending on the cluster
- Long-term plan for cluster recovery and growth

6. Enlist and Ready Anchor Institutions

Eds and meds are key anchor institutions that can help drive recovery

- Convene universities to develop an action plan for reopening their facilities, especially dorms and dining halls safely
- Engage local anchor institutions to boost local purchasing and hiring
- Engage anchors in longer-run economic recovery efforts
- Collaborate on creating re-training and second career programs
- Support and provide interim training opportunities for employees (Lynda.com, Coursera, Free college/university courses)

- 7. Pandemic-Proof Airports and Transit Hubs**
Airports and transit hubs are critical to regional economies. They must prepare now to reopen

 - Develop an action plan for redesigning hubs for necessary social distancing and health and temperature screenings
 - Evaluate policies for handling of baggage, security checks, boarding and on-ground transportation

- 8. Prepare Large-Scale Civic Assets**
Stadiums, arenas, convention centers, and performing arts centers have to prepare now

 - Create a taskforce to ready regional civic assets for the transition period
 - Bring together local economic development and destination marketing organizations to develop a public awareness campaign about safety procedures and the reopening of assets
 - Consider combining economic development organizations and destination marketing organizations to support community place-making efforts

- 9. Modify Vital Infrastructure and Public Space**
Transit and public space must be adjusted for a period of social distancing

 - Create a working group to focus stimulus dollars on required retrofits and redesigns
 - Mobilize a retrofit of public transit assets - busses, subway, commuter rail, and stations as required
 - Address open space retrofits and redesigns and ensure required sanitation and cleaning
 - Focus place-making initiatives for health and safety.
 - Pedestrianizing downtown areas and neighborhoods
 - Partner with providers to increase bike and scooter shares as needed

- 10. Prepare for More Remote Work**
Cities can learn from one another about how to best support the growing cadre of remote workers

 - Create a remote work task force
 - Focus talent recruitment and retention efforts on remote workers as a key priority for economic development for the upcoming budget cycles
 - Convene telecommunication providers to assess broadband strength and capabilities
 - Develop and promote efforts to create community on-line and in the real world

- 11. Protect the Arts and the Creative Economy**
Imagine our communities devoid of creative arts and culture

 - Establish a team to marshal funding and technical assistance for arts and cultural organizations, including designing for social distancing

- Convene philanthropic organizations, private donors, and large-scale anchors to create budget support gap measures for creative and arts organizations
- Provide necessary technical assistance for reopening
- Create a micro-funding mechanisms to support small-scale community arts-based initiatives

12. Upgrade Jobs for Frontline Service Workers

They need better PPE, higher pay, and more benefits

- Mobilize to provide PPE and for the long-term for frontline service workers
- Engage local designers and manufacturers in design of effective but non-obtrusive PPE
- Create a task force of large-scale service employers, grocery stores, delivery services, to provide appropriate wages and benefits
- Work with employment offices and workforce providers to mobilize to fill employment openings at grocery stores and warehouses and for delivery workers

13. Protect Less-Advantage Communities

The economic fallout of the pandemic fall heaviest on the least advantaged

- Partner to develop a coordinated strategy for addressing and mitigating the health-care vulnerabilities of less advantaged communities
- Focus the efforts of related initiatives and working groups for anchor institutions, small business and arts and cultural institutions on the challenges of less advantaged areas
- Focus workforce and placement initiatives on developing training and job opportunities for residents of less advantaged neighborhoods