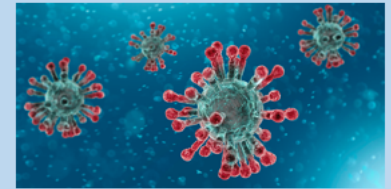




## FACT SHEET

# COVID-19 and the City of Loveland

Local response to global pandemic, March-September 2020



**Twice in a decade** the City of Loveland has been called upon to confront emergencies that required highly developed, comprehensive plans for response and recovery.

**In September 2013** the flooding Big Thompson River, fed by four consecutive days of mountain rain, swelled to 500 times its normal seasonal flow. The flood killed two people, inundated more than 2,000 acres, destroyed 66 buildings in Loveland, more than 1,000 in adjacent Larimer County, and caused more than \$38 million in damage to City streets, bridges, utilities, parks, natural areas and other facilities.

**In March 2020** the COVID-19 pandemic arrived as a much slower-moving natural disaster with much broader dimensions. The public health emergency closed businesses and schools throughout the state and nation, crippled the regional economy and local governments, challenged health care systems and disrupted the lives of every member of our community. This report describes emergency measures the City organization has taken so far, those that are in progress and others that we anticipate may be needed.

## Fiscal and Economic Recovery Group

**A COVID-19** command structure formed in mid-March, with the Policy Group under the direction of Incident Commander Steve Adams, and a Fiscal and Economic Recovery Group formed under the direction of Deputy City Manager Rod Wensing.

The Recovery Group included representatives from the Finance Department including its Revenue, Accounting and Utilities divisions, the Economic Development Department including Visit Loveland, the Public Works Department and its Facilities Division, and the Development Services Department. Liaisons from the Public Information Office, the City Attorney's Office and the Emergency Management Office filled out the membership at weekly meetings.

**The Recovery Group focus areas** provide an organizational frame for describing COVID-19's challenges and steps taken to meet them.

## COVID relief spreads across community groups, businesses

**In May 2020**, the City received a \$4,177,151 share of federal CARES Act funding through the Colorado Department of Local Affairs.

City Council determined that the money would be shared with community businesses and non-profit groups to supplement funding that those sectors had already received through the \$2 trillion federal COVID-19 relief programs.



## COVID timeline: March 2020

**Covid-19** case confirmed in Loveland **March 13**, City Manager Steve Adams signs local disaster declaration.

**All public** high-use facilities including library, museum, Chilson close **March 13**, all other City offices close **March 18**.

**City Manager, Council** members announce they will remain in 14-day self-isolation after COVID-19 exposure on Washington D.C. trip.

**Economic Development** Department begins helping local businesses with federal CARES Act aid application processes.

**Parks Department** announces that while most park areas, trails, natural areas stay open for use, as public health orders recommend, all other park facilities and golf courses close.

# COVID-19 and the City of Loveland

## City's fiscal position

- Revenue from all sources – sales tax, fees for service, enterprise functions – would fall with the Citywide and community-wide shutdown of most activity.
- Early measures based on guesses rather than data, with sales tax revenue shortfalls presumed to be between 20% and 60% initially.
- City enlists consulting assistance from Colorado State University economists Martin Shields and Harvey Cutler to provide data-based projections of fiscal impact.
- Most Front Range communities project 30-40 percent General Fund impact on annual basis, with Loveland estimating \$6 million General Fund shortfall in Q1. (Reported 4/9/20.)
- General Fund departments are asked to identify budget cuts totaling 10 percent of their remaining 2020 budgets in order to prepare for expected revenue shortfall.
- Visit Loveland in late March forecasts \$600,000 shortfall in 2020 lodging tax receipts.
- First six months of COVID-era sales and use tax figures, January through June 2020, show the combined total 3.9% higher YTD, compared to same period of 2019.
- Use tax on building materials for the first six months of 2020 were more than double, at 101.7%, than were collected during the same period of 2019.
- Lodging tax receipts, after three-month plunge, begin to rebound with regional and national events, such as the Heron Lakes PGA golf tournament, filling some hotels in late June.

## Economic development initiatives

- City Economic Development Department began extensive business outreach work in late March, after passage of the \$2 trillion federal CARES Act that contained business assistance.
- Economic Development team provides direct assistance to businesses, helping them with application processes for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program. Series of surveys, gathering data from a sampling of 3,000 Loveland businesses, begins with first distribution on April 1, second on April 30 and third on July 27, open through Aug. 14. Data shared regionally.
- NoCo Strong for Business forms officially **March 30**, organizes virtual meetings bringing local economic development officials and elected officials together with Sen. Cory Gardner, Gov. Jared Polis and others to help leverage federal and state assistance for small businesses.
- Loveland City Council resolution directs \$100,000 from TABOR Reserve toward \$5 million Larimer County Small Business Recovery Loan Fund, affiliated with Colorado Enterprise Fund, to supplement federal CARES Act aid to regional businesses.
- Downtown Development Authority rental assistance program for downtown businesses awards 31 grants totaling \$340,000.
- Loveland Patio Program launched to allow restaurants to occupy outdoor spaces, including public right-of-way, to raise their occupancy to meet revised public health orders.
- Visit Loveland opens pop-up drive-in movie theater at the east Loveland Outlet Mall, with nine weekly showings June 5 - July 12.
- “Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown” promotion encourages locals to frequent local businesses during the May-June “Safer at Home” public health advisory.

## COVID timeline: April 2020

**Governor's “Stay at Home”** order extends City facility closure dates: City offices **April 16**, Library, Museum **April 20**, Rialto, Chilson **April 30**.

**Loveland Museum** launches virtual programs **March 31**, Loveland Public Library begins online programs **April 6** to maintain services during closure.

**Due dates** for sales tax returns extended to **June 1** for payments that were due **March 20** and **April 20**, first of several extensions.

**Furloughs and layoffs** are announced **April 17** for 280 non-benefitted temporary and seasonal employees.

**“SaferAt Home”** order on **April 27** allows golf courses to reopen, while most other City facility closures remain in effect.

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## Economic development initiatives (cont.)

- “Saturday Night Dine Out” program, an outgrowth of the al fresco Patio Program for Loveland restaurants, launches **July 11** with plans for each Saturday through Sept. 12.
- Lodging tax receipts, after three-month plunge, begin to rebound with regional and national events, such as the Heron Lakes PGA golf tournament, filling some hotels in late June.
- City ED Team works with regional colleagues to build a recovery strategy called “Reignite our Economy.”
- Regional ED staff members join forces with local PIOs and county health department to develop the #keepnocoopen campaign to instill consumer confidence.
- NOCORECOVERS.com is launched to provide a one stop website resource location for business resources.

## Responses to community/social needs

- Utility Billing Office suspends service shutoffs, establishes moratorium on late fees for delinquent accounts, **March 18**. Moratorium is extended three times, with the program expiring on June 30.
- Community Partnership Office, working with regional partners and local nonprofit agencies, works to ensure that Loveland’s homeless residents are included in strategies to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, including plans for testing and quarantine.
- City issues a series of media releases beginning **March 22** to emphasize that Loveland’s parks, trails and open spaces remain open for public use, in keeping with public health messages that also stress the importance of unrestricted outdoor recreation.

## Community/social needs (cont.)

- Loveland Museum and Loveland Public Library in late March launch extensive programs of virtual service to residents, using online tools to deliver content that was otherwise shut down with the closure of those facilities.
- City Manager Steve Adams on **April 27** invokes emergency powers to suspend regulations on recreational vehicle parking and storage to all RVs to be used as quarantine facilities for affected residents.
- First applications for allocation of the City’s share of CARES Act funding for community non-profits move forward in September. Regional housing specialist Neighbor-To-Neighbor is projected to divert a share to rent assistance for qualifying residents, with another share earmarked for House of Neighborly Services to provide utility bill assistance.

## City employees: Workforce reductions, flex schedules

- Gov. Jared Polis on **March 25** issues statewide “Stay At Home” order that closes all non-essential businesses and instructs local governments, including Loveland, to direct that all non-essential employees work from home.
- City Manager Steve Adams on April 3 releases the first in a series of video briefings for employees, emphasizing the need to observe Colorado’s “Stay-At-Home” public health order.
- In an **April 14** video briefing, City Manager tells employees that City policy will align with Gov. Polis’ extension of Stay At Home order through April 26, continuing work-from-home policy.
- City on **April 17** announces furloughs, layoffs for 280 temporary, seasonal, non-benefitted employees, many of them in Parks & Recreation, Cultural Services and Library positions.

## COVID timeline: May 2020

**City Manager’s order** allows residents to use RVs parked in public right-of-way for quarantine purposes, as public health officials recommend, effective **May 1**.

**Parks & Recreation** Department on **May 2** reopens hard-court facilities in all City parks under “Safer At Home” policy promoting outdoor recreation.

**General closure** of City offices, some other facilities extended to **May 25** under new orders, County seeks variance for reopenings.

**Second round** of furloughs on **May 15** affects 40-50 City employees, General Fund departments make 10% cuts.

“**Patio Program**” allows restaurants to expand into alleys and streets to increase seating capacity to 50% under governor’s order **May 27**.

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## City employees (cont.)

- Second round of furloughs and reductions in hours announced **May 15**, affecting between 40 and 50 benefitted employees and prompted by the extension of closure dates for the Recreation Center, Museum, Rialto Theater and Loveland Public Library.
- City on **June 5** announces all General Fund employees, with the exception of sworn police officers must take six days of mandatory unpaid leave by Dec. 5, 2020.

## Facility reopening processes, timetable

**City offices and facilities** were closed, and reopened, with guidance from public health orders and variances determining schedule and processes.

- City offices and most high-use public facilities close on **March 13**, nearly two weeks prior to the State of Colorado's "Stay at Home" public health order that imposed statewide closures of businesses and other institutions.
- Initial closure date was set to be in effect through **March 26**.
- City on **April 23** – five weeks after full closure – announced first facility re-openings and service resumptions, with three City golf courses scheduled to open on April 27 and the Recycling Center reopening April 28.
- Public Works Department Facility Reentry Team on **April 23** is established as an addition to the Fiscal and Economic Recovery Group, as pressure builds to pursue a schedule for reopening facilities and resuming services.
- Reentry group goal is to "provide structure, guidance and protocols" to be instituted prior to any reopening decision.

## Facility reopening (cont.)

- City Facilities team drafts processes for reentry, with final decisions made solely by City Manager and COVID Policy Group.
- Gov. Jared Polis' **April 26** "Safer At Home" order replaces Stay-At-Home guidance, warning that staggered dates for re-openings from April 27 to May 4 should not result in a "free-for-all."
- Loveland Public Library announces plans for curbside material pick-up and drop-off, beginning May 1.
- City offices on **May 4** increase staffing capacity to 50 percent, in keeping with Safer-At-Home.

## COVID-era bright spot: Construction, development

- Development Services Department is added to Fiscal and Economic Recovery Group for second meeting, **April 16**.
- Initial report highlights progress in single-family building permits, with 200 in first quarter of 2020 nearly matching the 2019 total of 236.
- Project developers on parcels in northwest Loveland express intention to keep their projects on track though 2020.
- Developer/builder activity reflected in Q1 2020 use tax collection on building materials, rising by more than 105 percent during the same period of 2019.
- Several independent northwest project developers begin work with Development Services and Finance departments on comprehensive planning processes for their holdings.
- "Furlough Fridays" for the Development Center staff end Sept. 11 because of increasing demand on permitting/planning functions.
- September report shows that through the first three quarters of 2020, the total valuation of buildings covered by the 2,078 permits issued is slightly more than \$255.5 million, higher than in any of the previous five years.

## COVID timeline: June - September 2020

**Furlough program** announced **June 2** requires most employees to take six days' unpaid leave by Dec. 4, with exemptions for police and non-General Fund employees.

**Reopenings scheduled on June 15-16** for recreation center, Loveland Museum and public library, as well as public access to most city offices.

**Regional pact** with Fort Collins, Larimer County allows for July Fourth drive-in fireworks at The Ranch fairgrounds facilities.

**City Council on Sept. 1** directs \$1.8 million share of federal aid package to Loveland businesses and non-profit agencies.

**Economic Development Department on Sept. 15** establishes \$550,000 fund for business rent and mortgage help.