

#ReadyForPreservation:

Tools & Tips to Support Your Downtown's Recovery & Revitalization



1. Identify the important individuals and organizations that will play a part in short- and long-term community and economic development efforts
 - Elected officials
 - Planning staff
 - Zone and building code officials
 - Planning Commission
 - HARB/Historical Commission
 - Main Street/Revitalization organization
 - Chamber of Commerce
2. Remind ***yourselves*** of what's important and why you do what you do
 - Compile the goals of your comprehensive plan, and purpose statements from zoning, preservation, and other related ordinances
 - Gather reports, photos, data, and more photos to show progress or positive change in your community over time.
3. Remind ***others*** of what's important and why you do what you do
 - Positive changes that have occurred in your community are the result of hard work, sacrifice, and investment over many years
 - Protecting these gains in short term will be important to long term
 - Zoning, codes, and preservation programs are tools for managing change, not preventing it
4. Connect the big picture to individual goals and interests
 - Make the message personal.
 - What's in it for me?
 - We will need the goods and services our local business provide
 - Property values and quality of life are directly related to appearance, cleanliness, and safety



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Lowering Barriers

1. Talk to business owners, law enforcement, code officials, HARB, and Planning Commission to identify physical changes necessary to implement social distancing measures
 - Signage
 - Dividers
 - Outdoor dining
 - Curbside pickup
2. What do existing codes and guidelines already allow for each of these measures?
 - Are these measures allowed on a temporary basis? How long?
 - What steps are involved in getting approval? Can any steps be eliminated or expedited?
 - Are there fees for these approvals?
3. What measures require new or revised policies, ordinances, or guidelines?
 - Identify which policies need to be changed or amended for each measure
 - Make sure all related policies are changed to agree
 - Make policy changes temporary or time-limited (i.e. 6 months) to allow for evaluation and tweaks before making permanent
4. How can your community improve the speed, ease, and experience of getting these measures approved (without ditching the review process altogether?)
 - Review and update application forms
 - Develop clear guidelines
 - HARBs should implement administrative review policies for low impact projects
5. How can your community ensure everyone is on the same page?
 - Few things are more frustrating than getting conflicting directions/guidance
 - Establish a working group of key players/groups to meet regularly
 - Make sure all guidance, forms, and applications are online and home printer-friendly (or able to be submitted electronically)



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Response → Connecting

HARBs, Historic Review & Planning Commissions:

- Create and maintain new paths for cooperation with Main Street organizations, and/or CDCs.
- Develop stronger ties to municipal staff and administration.
- Get familiar with economic development tools your community is using
- Participate in the bigger zoning/ development conversations beyond narrow technical/architectural review

With Partners:

- Engage the public to emphasize efforts to preserve local businesses
- Use social and traditional media and newly accepted virtual platforms to emphasize ongoing efforts to preserve businesses and the buildings they occupy

Response → Reviewing

Review ordinances, policies, codes, zoning

- Purpose: Is it relevant today?
- Recitals: Do they clearly establish processes?
- Design guidance and principles: Are they up-to-date and relevant?
- Procedures: Are they efficient and clear?



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Ordinances, Policies, Codes & Zoning

1. Manage vacancies that do occur
 - What tools exist to help with maintenance & improvements?
2. Thoughtful vacant building ordinance based upon market
 - Ensure you have good baseline data
 - Track your vacancies
 - Monitor building condition
3. Review property maintenance ordinance
 - Do you have one?
 - Are you enforcing it?
4. Ensure new uses are appropriate for design ethic
 - Ensure appropriate use mix to protect vitality
 - First-floor zoning to maintain vitality
 - Flexibility in upper-floor and side-street uses
5. Assess code-enforcement priorities and procedures
 - Holistic code enforcement
 - Third-party code enforcement



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Set the stage for recovery:

- Commercial district as a whole
- Key properties
- What do you want? And where do you want it?

Zoning & Infrastructure:

Are your preferred uses allowed?

What are the development requirements?

- Off-street spaces
- Public or shared parking
- Is your broadband and network capacity ready?
- Are outdoor dining spaces an option?

Designation:

Is the area or building covered by design review?

- Demolition may become a challenge
- New construction
- How can you preserve your downtown's architectural character?

Is there an opportunity for using rehab tax credits?

- Verify your district's [National Register status](#)
- [Part 1 application](#) to certify status
- Evaluating [National Register eligibility](#)



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Funding & Incentives:

Economic development programs

- Dept. of Community and Economic Development (DCED): <https://dced.pa.gov/programs-funding/>
- Grants, low-interest loans, loan guarantees
- USDA Rural Development Program: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/pa>
- Local Development Districts: <http://www.paldd.org/>

Tax Incentives

- Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credits (federal Historic Tax Credits): <https://www.nps.gov/tps/tax-incentives/before-you-apply.htm>
- HTC – GO Growth & Opportunity Act: <https://forum.savingplaces.org/viewdocument/talking-points-boost-the-federal-h>
- Opportunity Zones: <https://dced.pa.gov/programs-funding/federal-funding-opportunities/qualified-opportunity-zones/>
- New Market Tax Credits: <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/Programs/new-markets-tax-credit/Pages/default.aspx>
- PA Historic Preservation Tax Incentive: <https://dced.pa.gov/programs/historic-preservation-tax-credit-hptc/>
- Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) - Property tax abatement



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Online Resources for Communities

[Pennsylvania Downtown Center Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resources](#) – Pennsylvania Downtown Center (PDC) website that includes information and updates from the Governor's Office, the PA Department of Agriculture, PA Department of Community & Economic Development, and the PA Department of Health.

[PDC Funding Resources](#) – list of funding sources and links.

[PDC Reopening Resource Briefs](#) – Briefs for business and office reopening that include list of relevant links and online resources. Business owners and companies are encouraged to adhere to the Pennsylvania guidelines for reopening.

[PHMC's Reopening Resources](#) - Collection of online resources related to reopening and other COVID-19 related guidance.

[Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations \(PANO\) COVID-19 Resources](#) – website with information, resources, and links helpful to nonprofit organizations in Pennsylvania such as the COVID-19 Impact Data Hub, sample plans and policies, and fundraising.

[National Trust for Historic Preservation \(NTHP\) Resources in Response to the Coronavirus](#) – The NTHP's Preservation Leadership Forum has extensive amount of information related to COVID-19 impacts and tools for recovery, including recorded webinars and links. Resource categories include preservation practice, digital engagement, fundraising and communication, advocacy and research.

[Main Street America COVID-19 Main Street Resources](#) – extensive guidance for communities curated into three main categories: federal guidelines and programs, Main Street program support, and small business resources.

Main Street America - **Design in COVID-19 Response and Recovery** ([recording](#) | [slides](#))

Learn about how Main Street community leaders across the country are building partnerships and implementing creative design solutions as a part of their short- and long-term response and recovery work.

[Supporting Pennsylvania's Main Streets](#) – Resources for municipalities with historic commercial districts and examples of how some of Pennsylvania's Main Street communities are working to support property and business owners. From PA SHPO blog, pahistoricpreservation.com.

[Adapting Streets for Safe Outdoor Social Distancing](#) (*Originally recorded on May 15, 2020*)

Many towns and cities are adapting streets to offer more safe space for walking and biking during social distancing. Some places have removed street parking to increase available space for walking, and others have closed entire streets to vehicle traffic. Learn about these adaptations and get ideas to try in your community, now and in the future. Hosted by Greg Krykewycz, DVRPC's Associate Director of Multimodal Planning.

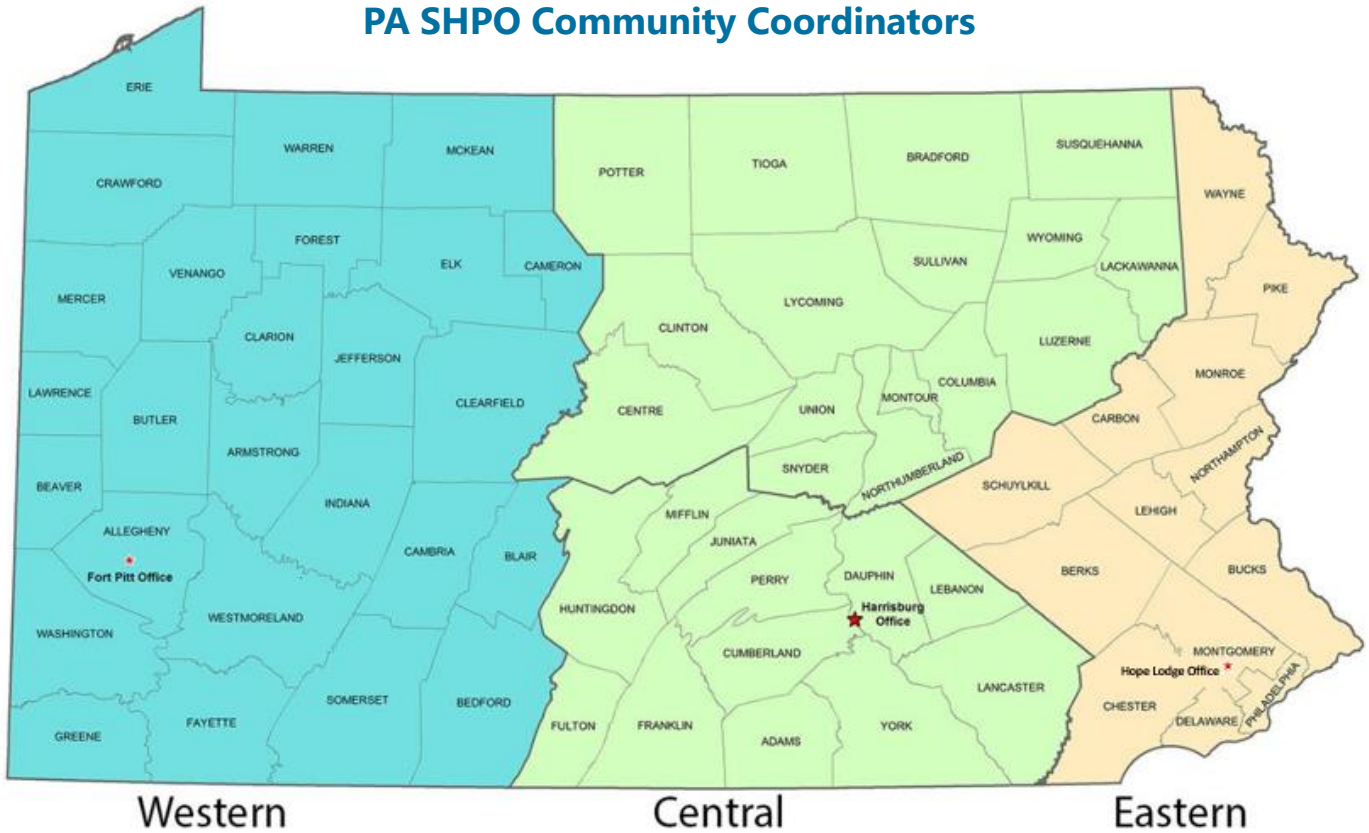
[Reopening Retail Districts Safely](#) – Soon it will be time to design safe conditions for retailer and customer reentry; this blog post offers some of the suggestions that planners can help implement. From APA.

[Information Clearinghouses for COVID-19](#) - Curated list of national and international organizations with online resources related to the COVID-19 pandemic from government entities and planning organizations.

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