



# Using Downtown Spaces to Respond to COVID-19



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## What is Indiana Main Street?

Since 1985, the Indiana Main Street Program has been helping communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts using the National Main Street Center's successful Main Street Approach.

The Indiana Main Street Program is managed by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs.

For more information on the Indiana Main Street program, visit our website [here](#). Follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) for more!

## Issue Overview: COVID-19 Responses for Downtowns

COVID-19 is a highly contagious respiratory virus. Due to the virus and governmental regulations put in place, many businesses must operate at reduced capacity and practice social distancing guidelines as outlined by the CDC. Consumer preferences are also shifting in response, making these recommendations useful even after state COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines have expired. As a result of these guidelines and changing consumer preferences, most businesses are not able to accommodate as many customers as they once were. This can lead to a reduction in profits for many small businesses, and a threat of operating on reduced hours or closing. Precautionary safety measures can also cut into profits, putting many small businesses in a unique position of deciding whether or not it is worth it to reopen at all. To facilitate the safe reopening of downtowns, this toolkit explores some of the ways downtowns can safely and creatively be adjusted to help small businesses operate at higher capacities and shift to meet changing consumer preferences in order to attract more foot traffic to the downtown area.

This toolkit is primarily intended for Indiana Main Street directors but can be easily adapted to fit the needs of other individuals or organizations. Step-by-step directions and planning considerations are provided for each option, as well as some background information on the programs and links to other resources that may be helpful.



*Madison, IN*

## How to Use This Toolkit and Topic Overviews

This toolkit should serve as a starting point for design considerations on how your downtown can be adapted to safely reopen. The proposed recommendations and considerations are not an exhaustive list but offer a good foundational starting point and guidance for implementation. Design, land use and planning, and legal

considerations are offered for each topic, and they seek to combine health, economic, and placemaking benefits for an overall healthier downtown. The recommendations in this toolkit will be most successful when implemented in conjunction with community support and feedback in downtowns that have moderate to high foot traffic, and will need to be carried out by organizations or people with sufficient capacity to take on new projects. This toolkit looks at the following topics.

### **Temporarily Street Closures**

Streets that are closed to vehicle traffic but open for pedestrians and cyclists can help to transform a downtown. This offers safer routes for pedestrians, encourages healthy activity, and can provide additional outdoor dining and retail space—an essential for safely reopening during COVID-19. Street closures are a relatively cost-effective and easy to implement solution. With proper planning and coordination, street closures can also be a very quick solution. This section of the toolkit explores:

- How to gauge community support and who to include in the conversation;
- Planning consideration to develop a route and set time for the closure that will make it most beneficial;
- Resources needed for the closure;
- Permits that will be needed and which local offices/services to check in with;
- Volunteer coordination;
- Developing a timeline;
- Evaluation and how to move forward after implementation.

### **Parklets and Pedlets**

For creating additional outdoor dining and retail space, parklets and pedlets are an option that can be implemented on a smaller scale. These are extensions of the sidewalk that take over street parking space(s), either to create a small park or extend the sidewalk. This can give business owners more freedom to expand their operations outdoors onto the sidewalk without disrupting pedestrian traffic or by providing a safe reroute. The time it takes to implement these solutions will depend on the permitting and approval process with your local government as well as how in-depth the construction plans will be. Construction plans will also have an impact on cost, but these have the potential to be quick and lower-cost solutions. This section of the toolkit explores:

- How to gauge community support and funding considerations;
- Selecting a suitable location and obtaining approval from adjacent businesses;
- Permitting and application requirements;
- Design, safety, and accessibility considerations;
- Developing a maintenance plan;
- Construction and teardown;
- Evaluation and how to move forward after implementation.

### **Implementing Walk-Up Ordering Windows**

Minimizing face-to-face contact in confined spaces and time indoors in public places are effective ways to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Walk-up ordering windows can help reduce both of these, and can also have the added benefit of increasing foot traffic and furthering a distinct sense of place if they are permanent additions. Walk-up windows can be temporary additions adapted to fit the business' space, or they can be permanent constructions. Cost and timeframe for implementation will depend on which option is selected; this

recommendation has the potential to be very low-cost and almost immediate, or higher cost and longer term. Walk-up ordering windows will likely be in demand in most communities for the near future due to changing consumer trends and COVID-19 transmission worries. This section of the toolkit explores:

- Design considerations for choosing a temporary or permanent walk-up window;
- Permitting and constructions requirements;
- Employee and customer safety considerations;
- Evaluation and how to move forward after implementation.

### **Filling Vacant Properties**

Vacant properties are prevalent in many rural, downtown Indiana communities. Vacant space in the core business district of a community is not ideal, but this space can easily be transformed to use to the advantage of existing businesses and new entrepreneurs. By aiding businesses in finding additional space to accommodate for social distancing, or setting up a coworking/business incubator space, it is possible to give new life to these properties while investing in the community and its businesses. These recommendations are higher cost and can be implemented as a short term or long term solution. These spaces can also continue to be used past COVID-19. This section of the toolkit explores:

- Gauging interest among businesses and entrepreneurs in the community
- Logistical and legal considerations for finding a space
- Advertising and promotion
- Evaluation and how to move forward after implementation

### **Legal Considerations**

All health and safety recommendations from the State and your local government on COVID-19 should be followed, as well as CDC guidelines. Many of these programs will require close contact with the local governing body in your town or city, and some may require the local governing body to change zoning codes or ordinances. It may also be helpful to communicate with your local government to find a way to easily streamline these processes if there is a great demand in your community for any of the proposed strategies.

For more information and guidelines on safely reopening, please consult:

- [CDC Guidelines](#)
- [Back on Track Indiana](#)
- [Back on Track Indiana Restaurant Guidelines](#)
- [Back on Track Indiana Retail Guidelines](#)
- [Back on Track Indiana Industry and Association Guidelines](#)
- Local government/health department
- Legal counsel



# Implementation questions to answer and best practices

## Temporarily Street Closures

Outdoor dining or retail can be a simple way to increase the amount of people businesses are able to serve while still adhering to CDC guidelines and capacity restrictions set by the state. While indoor dining and other commercial spaces are subject to capacity limitations, outdoor operations are not if social distancing is followed. Many people also feel safer dining outside since this provides better ventilation than traditional indoor dining, and there is also research that suggests the risk of transmission is less in outdoor spaces than indoors. Closing off a street with a high density of restaurants and retail, as well as high foot traffic, can provide additional space for outdoor seating. Non-food retail can use this additional space to set up smaller pop-up shops or bring some of their merchandise outside. With COVID-19 shutdowns, many communities have seen a spike in trail and park usage. An added benefit of street closures is that they provide safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and they can also act as accessible trails and trail connectors. Safer streets also attract more people and encourage them to stay longer, which can help businesses that may be struggling to attract a crowd during the pandemic.

### How can you close off a street in your community?

1. Survey local businesses, property owners, and residents to see if there is an interest. Talk with business owners in the area you are considering a closure to see if they would benefit from expanded outdoor seating/retail area, and what days and times would be most beneficial. A best practice to try is to contact a downtown merchants association or downtown business owner group.
  - a. Is there a merchants' association, business owners' group, or something similar in your town? If so, meet with them to discuss any questions or concerns they may have. Do they have any specific needs that will need to be met? Since this closure may impact parking or curbside pickup for some businesses, it is important to make sure you have support before moving forward.
  - b. Are there other community groups that may have a stake in this street closure? If so, reach out to them and make sure their questions and concerns are also addressed.
2. Decide on the specifics of the closure. This does not have to be final and can be adjusted for future street closures based on interest and what may work better for the community. Below are some important items to consider:
  - a. Where will the closure be? Does this area have enough existing foot traffic and businesses that are operating to support it?
  - b. Will it be a single block, or stretch across multiple blocks? If you are closing multiple blocks, will it be a hard or soft closure?



Image 1: A street closure in Bloomington, IN utilizing removable bollards

- i. **“Hard” closure:** Intersections are closed to vehicle traffic.
    - ii. **“Soft” closure:** vehicle traffic is able to run perpendicular to the street that is closed. Volunteers can be used to help direct traffic as needed. This may be useful in areas where traffic congestion is a concern.
  - c. Will you need volunteers?
  - d. What day(s) of the week will the street be closed?
  - e. What time(s) of day will the street be closed? Is there a noise ordinance that needs to be considered? What are the hours of operation for businesses in the area?
  - f. Are there any accessibility concerns from closing off this section of the street?
    - i. Are fire hydrants, emergency services, disability services, bus stops, storm drains, fire hydrants, etc. impacted or blocked?
    - ii. If the street and sidewalk are at different elevations, can those in wheelchairs or with strollers travel between the two safely?
  - g. Will barricades, lighting, ramps, canopy tents, or other similar items be needed?
  - h. Will you allow alcoholic drinks to be served or live music? These may require additional permits and you should check with your local government.
  - i. Will you allow businesses not located along the street closure to set up a pop-up shop or booth to sell their merchandise? This may require an additional permit and you should check with your local government.
  - j. Will you allow cyclists to travel through the closure? Will you need a designated bike lane?
  - k. Will you need to provide additional parking for bikes/scooters/strollers?
  - l. Will you need to provide personal protective equipment like masks, or sanitation stations?
3. Contact your local municipality and authorities (police, EMS, fire) to determine which permits and plans will be required and determine the best route. Typically a street or traffic lane closure application will need to be filled out.
  4. Notify the businesses and residences nearby of the closure. Try to give at least two weeks’ notice.
  5. Begin renting or purchasing the materials necessary for the event, like road barricades, volunteer t-shirts, water/snacks, canopy tents, etc.
  6. Begin advertising for the event and recruiting volunteers. For promotional material, like yard signs, flyers, or banners, it may be a good idea to keep them generic so they can be reused for any future closures.
  7. Train any volunteers before the week and answer any questions from business owners/residents along the route. Check-in with the local government, as well as emergency services, to ensure all permits are in order. Begin placing signs alerting people of the upcoming road closure. Finalize the closure plan for the day.
  8. Prepare for the closure the day before and ensure you have all materials needed and that any technology you will be using is working and charged. Check-in with volunteers and answer any final questions and provide parking instructions if needed.



*Bloomington, IN*

9. The day of the event meet with your team early and begin setting up. Set up barricades and any other items (portable toilets, sanitation stations, canopy tents, etc.). Check-in with the businesses to see if they need any assistance setting up. Enjoy your event!
10. At the end of the event, tear down and reopen the street. Collect any materials you will be using again and return any rentals.
11. Set a time to meet with volunteers, businesses, residents, and others that attended to get feedback and decide how to move forward. Adjust the route, times, and anything else that may need to be tweaked based on the feedback received.



*A temporary parklet in Plymouth, IN*

## Parklets and Pedlets

A “parklet” is created when the part of the street next to the sidewalk is transformed into a public space for people. They most commonly offer outdoor seating, art, gardens, and/or bicycle parking. The community funds and maintains them, whether that be a local business, residents, or an organization. They help to create more pedestrian friendly downtowns by taking back space that would otherwise be used by cars for parking. A “pedlet” is similar, but acts as a built-out extension of the sidewalk instead. These are commonly used as a reroute when a business wants to expand its retail/dining onto the sidewalk. The business has more space to utilize, and the sidewalk is still accessible to pedestrians. Both are good options for expanding outdoor dining to increase the amount of people a business can serve even with reduced capacity restrictions and changing customer attitudes. They are also good for attracting and keeping people downtown and can drive up sales as a result. Depending on construction plans and duration, these can be a relatively low-cost option for increasing dining/retail space in a time where social distancing will be likely for the near future.

Since many Indiana communities are newer to the idea of parklets and pedlets, there may not be a streamlined process for application or a designated permit in your area. As a Main Street Group, consider meeting with your local government to try and streamline the process. Many communities with parklets and pedlets have revocable occupancy permits, which allow for a structure to be built in the street right of way at the discretion of the municipality. If your community does not have this type of permitting and application process, it may be a good idea to discuss this with your local government if there is significant interest within the community.

### How can you implement a parklet in your community? (Higher cost option)

1. Gauge public interest. Survey local businesses, organizations, and community members. Would people like to have a parklet in their community? Since parklets are typically funded and maintained by the community, it is important to make sure the interest is there before moving forward.



2. Consider where the funding will come from. Will your Main Street Group be interested in funding one or multiple parklets? Are there any local businesses that may be interested and want to partially or fully fund construction and/or upkeep? Are there any other community organizations that may have an interest in contributing? Are there any active community members that may want to be a part of the process or help maintain the space?
3. Select a location. The following are some guiding questions to keep in mind when considering a location.
  - a. Is there existing foot traffic? Most parklets are on neighborhood commercial streets, which are areas with already high amounts of foot traffic. While parklets can increase foot traffic, it is a good idea to locate them in an area that already has existing foot traffic.
  - b. Are the nearby businesses receptive? Parklets typically span 1-2 street parking spaces; so finding a location with businesses that are supportive of the idea will be important to prevent conflict, and in some instances adjacent businesses may need to approve construction plans. It's important to consider if nearby businesses may be operating on reduced hours or temporarily closed, as this may reduce use of the parklet.
  - c. Is there a partner willing to upkeep the parklet? Cleaning and maintenance after it is constructed will remain a routine need. Is there already an existing group responsible for cleaning other public spaces? Could they be a potential partner?
  - d. What is the speed limit of the street? Most parklets are on streets with 25 MPH speed limits or lower. Anything higher can potentially be a safety hazard.
  - e. Is the location highly visible? This can help to maintain traffic safety, attract pedestrians, and deter crime. Most cities with parklets have adopted regulations to prevent them from being installed next to the corner of a block for safety reasons.
  - f. Are there existing amenities? These could be things like shade trees, streetlights, benches, bicycle parking racks, etc. These can improve safety, comfort, and encourage more sustainable modes of travel. Locating near existing amenities can help to enhance a parklet at no extra cost.
  - g. Will the location of the parklet block access to necessary services? This could be a fire hydrant, manhole, utility meter/valve, or storm drain. Are large vehicles like delivery or fire trucks still able to make turns?
  - h. Will the parklet be located near any public transit stops? This can increase equitable community access and visibility of the project, and promote more sustainable travel.
  - i. Will you need to purchase business insurance for this space?
  - j. Will this be a temporary site, or a permanent location? Parklets can range from being set up for a day to semi-permanently or permanently. For areas that are unsure of the benefits of a



*Image 2: A parklet in San Francisco, CA*

parklet, creating one for a day to increase community awareness and exposure could be a good start. These are typically called “Park(ing) Days.” Temporary parklets are good for areas with harsh winters, but a semi-permanent or permanent parklet may be a good idea for higher trafficked areas that attract many visitors year-round. The success and use of these spaces can also be reviewed and decisions to extend, relocate, or close a parklet can be made based on this.

- k. Will this be a public or private parklet? Most parklets are public, but some areas may allow for private use. Check with your local government to see what they will allow and if that has changed due to COVID-19.
  - i. If the parklet will be public, will the local government allow applicable restaurant/alcohol licenses to extend to the parklet? If not, this may be something worth asking the local government to reconsider.



*A temporary parklet in Lafayette, IN*

4. Notify the city of the proposed location and submit all required permits and paperwork. This may vary by city/town, so it is best to check in with your local government to make sure that you have all necessary paperwork. You may also need to submit pictures of the proposed location.

5. Get approval from the property owner and adjacent businesses. It is best to get this in writing as your municipality may require you to submit this later as part of the approval process.

6. After you have selected a location and have partners, begin considering the design of the parklet and what elements it will have. Depending on how long the parklet will be set up, decide on which

construction materials will be necessary.

- a. Are there city design standards that the parklet must meet?
  - i. Will it need to be ADA compliant?
  - ii. How tall will the barrier on the side adjacent to the road have to be?
  - iii. Will this obstruct traffic sightlines?
  - iv. Will you need signs to identify this as a public space?
- b. What will the platform be constructed from? If the parklet is temporary, this could be as simple as astroturf or an outdoor carpet. If it is going to be a more permanent fixture, consider taking measures to make it flush with the sidewalk so it will be more accessible. Most commonly, flooring structures are made from concrete pavers or pre-treated wood.
- c. Building material for the structure (if there will be a permanent one). This is typically pre-treated wood or concrete pavers. Built-in designs should also be considered. For instance, if you plan on building a ledge around the perimeter to serve as a table top, consider what materials will work best for the use of the surface.
- d. Will you include furniture? This can be part of the design, or movable. Because of COVID-19, movable furniture may be more ideal to accommodate for social distancing. If the space is public, make sure this is different from nearby businesses to signal to pedestrians that the parklet is for public use and not extended seating for a restaurant.

- e. Will you need signage? This will let pedestrians know what the parklet is, what it is for, and who can use it. This depends on the design of the parklet and if it is publicly or privately owned.
  - f. Will you have landscaping? Things like movable planters, flower boxes, or nearby street trees can add to the aesthetic value of the parklet and also produce shade. Consider native plants that will do well in the season they are planted or can survive perennially if the parklet is permanent.
7. Develop a maintenance plan for the parklet. This will need to be in writing and address both day-to-day upkeep and longer term maintenance. Consider who will be responsible for the following and the frequency needed:
    - a. Cleaning and trash/debris removal
    - b. Storing furniture/public amenities
    - c. Repairs
    - d. Pruning/watering if plants are included
    - e. Graffiti removal
  8. After you have neighbor approval, a design and maintenance plan for the site, and proof of insurance if required, apply for a permit. Because parklets are a newer phenomenon, you may need to check with your local government to see what permits and fees will be required. These may vary based on the location and duration of the parklet.
  9. Coordinate an opening date with the municipality and begin construction once all permits are in place. Complete as much construction off site as possible to prevent time in the street. Have the parklet inspected before opening it to the public and make sure all necessary signs are in place.
  10. Enjoy your parklet!
  11. Remove your parklet if it will be temporary or seasonal. Coordinate a removal date with your municipality and consider storing any items that could be used again for future parklets.
  12. Survey local businesses, organizations, and community members. Did they enjoy the parklet? How often did they or their customers use it? Were there any issues that came up or things that could have been done better? Consult with your community and decide if future parklets will be a good fit and how the process could be improved upon.

#### How can you implement a pedlet in your community? (Lower cost option)

1. Reach out to local businesses to see if any have an interest in expanding their operations to the sidewalk.
2. Consider where the funding will come from. Will your Main Street group be interested in funding one or multiple pedlets? Are there any local businesses that may be interested and want to partially or fully fund construction and/or upkeep? Are there any other community organizations that may have an interest in contributing? Are there any active community members that may want to be a part of the process or help maintain the space?
3. Select a location. The following are some guiding questions to keep in mind when considering a location.

- a. Is there enough foot traffic and existing support of the businesses in the area that a pedlet would be beneficial?
- b. Are the nearby businesses receptive? Pedlets typically span 1-2 street parking spaces, so finding a location with businesses that are supportive of the idea will be important to prevent conflict, and in some instances adjacent businesses may need to approve construction plans. It is also important to consider if nearby businesses may be operating on reduced hours or temporarily closed, as this may mean reduced foot traffic in the area.



*Image 3: A pedlet in Great Falls, MT*

- c. What is the speed limit of the street? Most pedlets are on streets with 25 MPH speed limits or lower. Anything higher can potentially be a safety hazard.
- a. Is the location highly visible? This can help to maintain traffic safety, attract pedestrians, and deter crime. Most cities with pedlets have adopted regulations to prevent them from being installed next to the corner of a block for safety reasons.
- d. Will the location of the pedlet block access to necessary services? This could be a fire hydrant, manhole, utility meter/valve, or storm drain. Are large vehicles like delivery or fire trucks still able to make turns?
- e. Will the pedlet be located near any public transit stops? This can increase equitable community access and visibility of the project, and promote more sustainable travel.
- f. Will the pedlet be ADA compliant and accessible?
- g. Are there existing amenities? These could be things like shade trees, streetlights, benches, bicycle parking racks, etc. These can improve safety, comfort, and encourage more sustainable modes of travel. If the business' sidewalk space and the pedlet are near these, this can help to enhance the experience for customers and pedestrians.
- h. Is there a partner willing to upkeep the pedlet? Will the business be responsible for maintaining it? Cleaning and maintenance will need to be done periodically. Is there already an existing group responsible for cleaning other public spaces? Could they be a potential partner?
- i. Will you need to purchase business insurance for this space?
- j. Will this be a temporary site, or a permanent location? Pedlets can range from being set up for a day to semi-permanently or permanently. The success and use of these spaces can be reviewed and decisions to extend, relocate, or close a pedlet can be made based on this.



4. Notify the city of the proposed location and submit all required permits and paperwork. This may vary by city/town, so it is best to check in with your local government to make sure that you have all



*Image 4: A pedlet in Great Falls, MT*

necessary paperwork. You may need to also submit pictures of the proposed location.

5. Get approval from the property owner and adjacent businesses. It is best to get this in writing as your municipality may require you to submit this later as part of the approval process.

6. After you have selected a location and have partners, begin considering the design of the pedlet and what elements it will have.

Depending on how long the pedlet will be set up, decide on which construction materials will be necessary.

- a. Are there city design standards that the pedlet must meet?

- i. Will it be ADA compliant?

- ii. How tall will the barrier on the side adjacent to the road have to be?

- iii. Will this obstruct traffic sightlines?

- b. What will the platform be made out of? Typically they are constructed from pre-treated wood or concrete pavers. Because this is replacing the sidewalk, it will need to be ADA compliant and level with the existing sidewalk. This may require jacks or pedestals to allow for the platform to be elevated to sidewalk height
  - c. How will you enclose the space? Since the pedlet will go into the street to extend the sidewalk, it is a good idea to have some type of railing or guard along the side adjacent to the street.
  - d. Will there be any other design elements? Some pedlets have movable planters, outdoor lighting, or other small features to enhance them.
7. Develop a maintenance plan for the pedlet. This will need to be in writing and address both day-to-day upkeep and longer term maintenance. Consider who will be responsible for the following and the frequency needed:
    - a. Cleaning and trash/debris removal
    - b. Repairs
    - c. Pruning/watering if plants are included
    - d. Graffiti removal
  8. After you have neighbor approval, a design and maintenance plan for the site, and proof of insurance if required, apply for a permit. Because pedlets are a newer phenomenon, you may need to check with your local government to see what permits and fees will be required. These may vary based on the location and duration of the pedlet.
  9. Coordinate an opening date with the municipality and begin construction once all permits are in place. Complete as much construction off site as possible to prevent time in the street. Have the pedlet inspected before opening it to the public and make sure all necessary signs are in place.
  10. Enjoy your pedlet!

11. Coordinate a removal date with the municipality based on the terms of your agreement. If you plan on reopening or moving the pedlet to a different location in the future, consider placing all or some materials that can be reused in storage.
12. Survey local businesses, organizations, and community members. Did they benefit from the pedlet? How often did they or their customers use it? Were there any issues that came up or things that could have been done better? Consult with your community and decide if future pedlets will be a good fit and how the process could be improved upon.

## Implementing Walk-Up Ordering Windows

Despite many cities reopening, recent data suggests that consumer preferences may be shifting. People have grown used to ordering ahead and picking up food from their favorite restaurant, or having food brought directly to their cars. Many people are also still weary of public spaces. Walk-up ordering windows at restaurants and retail locations are a smart way to shift towards these new trends, and can have other added benefits as well. Employees and customers are able to minimize contact that would otherwise be in a confined space, customers can social distance in line, and the added foot traffic can be beneficial to other businesses and act as a crime deterrent. Seattle and Washington D.C. are both becoming hotspots for walk-up ordering windows, but because permanent walk-up ordering windows are uncommon in most Indiana communities, they can contribute to the sense of place of an area. Walk-up windows can also be used to safely fulfill online or call-in orders with minimal contact between customers and employees. Consider pairing walk-up windows with street closures on days with high foot traffic, adding a parklet or pedlet, or adding additional movable/socially distant seating in existing public areas.

How can you implement a walk-up ordering window in your community? If you are a Main Street group, consider consulting with your local government to provide some of the following information to businesses in your community to streamline the process. Review local zoning code, as there are sometimes additional requirements for

implementing walk-up windows that may make development challenging. Meet with officials about temporarily changing zoning code if necessary to make implementing walk-up ordering windows easier. Businesses have a few options based on the amount of money they want to invest and the amount of time they plan on having a walk-up window.



Image 5: A window converted for walk-up ordering in San Francisco, CA



*Walk-up ordering window at the Chocolate Moose in Bloomington, IN*

### Option #1, Constructing a walk-up window (higher cost, longer term)

1. Decide on construction plans.
  - a. Depending on the scope of construction needed, if the business is a restaurant it may need to consult with the Indiana State Department of Health or county to get plans approved.
    - i. If you are located on state property, you can contact ISDH: (317)234-8569
    - ii. If you are not located on state property, [contact your county health department](#).
      - b. Is there a specific side of the building that may be best for a walk-up window? Can this be located away from the main entrance to reduce congestion?
      - c. Is there an existing window that could be refitted with a sliding drive-thru style window? This may be a way to lower costs.
  2. Consult local code to see if there are any additional reporting requirements for your municipality.
  3. Apply for a construction permit if required by local code. Some type of zoning approval or demolition permit may be required. Local offices will vary, but the application will typically be through a municipal Building or Planning Department.
4. Once approved, begin construction.
5. After the window has been installed, consider additional safety measure that can be taken.
  - a. Will you want to install some type of sneeze guard? This could be a piece of acrylic or Plexiglass installed at face-level.
  - b. Provide proper PPE for employees. If you are having difficulty locating PPE, as part of the Back on Track plan the State of Indiana has created a [PPE Marketplace](#) online that helps to connect Hoosier businesses to Indiana companies providing PPE for purchase.
  - c. Consider providing hand sanitizer for customers to use before and after interacting with employees.
6. Advertise with signage and online as needed. Mark socially distant waiting spaces outside, both for those in line and those waiting on their order. It is important to provide information to customers before they arrive and while they are there to reduce confusion and prevent the possible spread of COVID-19.

### Option #2, Creating a walk-up window from an existing doorway or window (lower cost, shorter term)

1. Decide which doorway or window would be best suited for walk-up ordering capabilities.
  - a. If you plan to use a doorway, keep in mind that this will prevent employees/customers from using this entrance during business hours.
  - b. If you choose to use a window, consider one that is further away from the main entrance to reduce congestion.
2. Evaluate the space you have chosen and what will work best with it. There are many blogs online from businesses that have implemented walk-up ordering after COVID-19 and their strategies for keeping employees and customers safe. Consult these and other businesses in the community.

- a. For a doorway, a longer ordering counter could be placed to completely block the entrance off, with a suspended sneeze guard above it or a self-standing one placed directly on the counter.
  - b. For a window, a table that an employee could comfortably stand/sit at could be placed in the interior of the building, and the window could be shut as needed. Consider installing a sneeze guard on the exterior at face-level so the window is still operable.
  - c. For garage-style doors, these could be partially opened to face-level if they are a see-through material or raised further if they are not see-through. A table or counter could be set up for ordering. If the doors are not see-through, consider installing a sneeze guard or placing a self-standing one directly on the table/counter.
3. Collect the supplies needed and begin a trial run.
    - a. Plexiglass or acrylic are cost-effective and durable options for a sneeze guard that can be regularly cleaned.
    - b. Provide proper PPE for employees. If you are having difficulty locating PPE, as part of the Back on Track plan the State of Indiana has created a [PPE Marketplace](#) online that helps to connect Hoosier businesses to Indiana companies providing PPE for purchase.
    - c. Consider providing hand sanitizer for customers to use before and after interacting with employees.
  4. Evaluate the success of walk-up ordering. Is this something the business could reasonably implement for longer? Survey customers and employees. If it is beneficial, continue to offer this service and consider making it permanent or semi-permanent feature. If it has not been successful, identify the issues and make changes as needed.



*Image 6: A doorway converted for walk-up ordering in San Francisco, CA*

## Filling Vacant Properties

Many rural Indiana communities have vacant buildings or buildings with [absentee property owners](#) in their downtowns. This has only been made worse due to COVID-19 and the operating restrictions and financial challenges that have come with it. With many traditional office spaces and buildings temporarily or permanently closing, this has created even more vacant properties in the core district of many communities. While filling these spaces with more permanent tenants will be difficult in an economic downturn, there are many operating businesses looking for a way to increase the amount of people they can serve while still following social distancing. Historically, there are also increases in entrepreneurship after a recession. If your community has a growing number of entrepreneurs, investing in a space to help them get established is another option for filling vacant spaces and supporting small businesses in your area.



## Option #1, Assisting businesses in finding vacant properties

1. Speak with local businesses to determine if there is a need for additional dining or retail space.
2. If there is a need, determine what type of space will be needed. Is there a demand for indoor operating space or for an empty lot to expand outdoor seating? Consider what assets the community has and how they can be strategically used.



*Image 7: A sign displaying contact information for possible tenants interested in a short-term pop-up shop lease in a vacant building in Green Bay, WI*

- a. If there is a register of vacant/empty buildings or lots in the community, begin looking at these spaces. If this list does not exist, consider collecting this information as a Main Street Group and making it available to local businesses. This list can also be helpful for new businesses looking to relocate to your community in the future.
- b. As a Main Street group, consider renting additional space for local businesses to share, providing funding to local businesses that may be interested in renting their own additional space, or compiling information to make their search easier.

3. Since these properties may have restrictions on use, it is important to keep the

following in mind and discuss any questions you may have with the property owner and seek legal counsel as necessary. Consider making this information easily available to businesses.

- a. Who owns the property you are considering? Is it someone active in the community or an absentee property owner? Is this someone receptive to short-term tenants or pop-up shops? If the property owner is currently trying to sell the property, would they allow temporary occupants since this could be a way of staging it?
- b. If the property has multiple floors, are there other tenants there? Will occupying this space require approval from the other tenants?
- c. If there is a large lot or property available, could this space be shared between multiple businesses?
- d. Is the property in an area with high foot traffic? How far is it from other businesses?
- e. What type of property is it? What businesses could it best suit?
- f. What utilities are available? Is there WiFi? How will the temporary tenant be charged for these services?
- g. Is there adequate space for social distancing? Is there window or shelf display space to allow customers to shop while remaining six feet apart?
- h. Is there space for signs outside to advertise that there is a business operating at this property? Will the property owner or other tenants need to approve signs before they are placed outside?
- i. Will the tenant be able to make modifications to the space?
- j. Who will be responsible for maintenance and repairs to the space? In some instances the property owner requires that the tenant be responsible, and this may require an inspection beforehand and be prohibitively expensive for shorter term occupancy. These properties may be best to avoid.

- k. Who will be responsible for injury due to the property owner’s negligence? In some instances licenses require the licensee to indemnify the licensor even if they are responsible for the negligent acts. This may be prohibitively expensive for shorter term occupancy, and these properties may be best to avoid.
  - l. What will the renewal options for the lease/license be?
  - m. What additional insurance will be required?
  - n. Are any additional permits required for a business or multiple businesses to operate in this space?
4. After selecting a location, get in touch with the property owner. Discuss the specifics of the occupancy agreement you will need. If it will be for a longer period of time, consider discussing a short-term lease. If it is a shorter period of time, consider discussing a license grant. Consult legal counsel as necessary.
  5. After you have secured a space, begin advertising this space within the community and create promotional material to let people know this space will now be open. It may be a good idea to keep promotional material generic if you anticipate using the same space again in the future.
  6. Open the space with social distancing guidelines in place. Consider surveying the business(es) and customers in the space. Record the amount of visitors to the space and sales made. Encourage people to post online about their experience to reach other community members.
  7. Before your lease or license grant has ended, meet with the business(es) and community members. Did they benefit from the additional space? How often did they or their customers use it? Were certain days more beneficial than others? Were there any issues that came up or things that could have been done better? Consult with your community and decide if renewing the lease/license grant would be beneficial and how the process could be improved upon.

**Option #2, Creating a coworking or business incubator space**

1. Speak with local businesses and entrepreneurs to determine if there is a need for office space or general business resources.
  - a. If there is a need for office space, consider funding or partially funding a coworking space. This is where multiple businesses share an office space, and split the cost of utilities, equipment, and other services, like reception or custodial. This can lower the financial burden for new businesses. Membership dues can be implemented to cover operating costs for the space.
  - b. If there is a need for business resources, consider funding or partially funding a business incubator. This is where management, financial, marketing, or other similar resources and education/training can take place to help startups get their footing or existing companies further develop their skills. Also consider reaching out to community members that may have experience in an area to see if they would be willing to volunteer or teach a class. Membership dues can



*Image 8: A coworking space in Evansville, IN*

be implemented to cover operating costs for the space.

2. If there is a need, determine what type of space will be needed. Is there a demand for indoor business operating space or for an area that can be easily opened for social distancing, like a warehouse or location with a large outdoor space? Consider what assets the community has and how they can be strategically used. If there is a register of vacant buildings, consult this.
3. Since these properties may have restrictions on use, it is important to keep the following in mind and discuss any questions you may have with the property owner and seek legal counsel, as necessary. Consider making this information easily available to local businesses that may be interested in creating a coworking or business incubator space on their own.
  - a. Who owns the property you are considering? Is it someone active in the community or an absentee property owner? Is this someone receptive to the idea of a coworking or business incubator space?
  - b. If the property has multiple floors, are there other tenants there? Will occupying this space require approval from the other tenants?
  - c. Is the property in an area with high foot traffic? How far is it from other businesses?
  - d. What type of property is it? What businesses could it best suit?
  - e. What utilities are available? Is WiFi? available How will the tenant be charged for these services?
  - f. Is there adequate space for social distancing? Is there window or shelf display space to allow businesses to display their product or for customers to shop while remaining six feet apart?
  - g. Is there space for signs outside to advertise what is operating at this property? Will the property owner or other tenants need to approve signs before they are placed outside?
  - h. Will the tenant be able to make modifications to the space?
  - i. Who will be responsible for maintenance and repairs to the space? In some instances, the property owner requires that the tenant be responsible, and this may require an inspection beforehand and be prohibitively expensive. These properties may be best to avoid.
  - j. Who will be responsible for injury due to the property owner's negligence? In some instances, licenses require the licensee to indemnify the licensor even if they are responsible for the negligent acts. This may be prohibitively expensive, and these properties may be best to avoid.
  - k. What will the renewal options for the lease be?
  - l. What additional insurance will be required?
  - m. Are any additional permits required for a business or multiple businesses to operate in this space?
4. After selecting a location, contact the property owner. Discuss the specifics of the occupancy agreement you will need. Will you need to specify that there may be multiple businesses operating out of the space? Consult legal counsel, as necessary.
5. After you have secured a space, begin advertising this space within the community and create promotional material to attract businesses to the space and publicize that this space will now be open and what business(es) will be located here.



*Image 9: The Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, a business incubator, in Fort Wayne, IN holding a workshop*

6. Open the space with social distancing guidelines in place. Consider surveying the business(es) and customers in the space. Record the number of businesses that purchase memberships. Encourage people to post online about their experience to reach other businesses and entrepreneurs.
7. Before your lease has ended, meet with the businesses that used the space. Did they benefit from the services or equipment offered? How often did they use it? Were certain offerings more beneficial than others? Was there anything they

would have liked to have in the space? Were there any issues that came up or things that could have been done better? Consult with these businesses and decide if renewing the lease would be beneficial and how the space could be improved upon.



## Additional Resources

### Street Closures

[Open Streets Project resources for street closures](#)

[Open Streets Projects' example timeline for a street closure](#)

### Parklets/Pedlets

[Main Street America's Parklet and Pedlet guidance](#)

[City of De Pere, Wisconsin's guidelines for parklets and pedlets in their community](#)

[UCLA's toolkit for creating and implementing parklets](#)

[Parklet design consideration from the National Association of City Transportation Officials](#)

### Walk-Up Ordering Windows

[How a Bay Area coffee shop implemented temporary walk-up ordering at two of its locations](#)

[An article on how San Francisco restaurants have adapted to walk-up ordering and takeout](#)

### Filling Vacant Buildings

OCRA's [toolkit](#), [webinar](#), and [sample letter](#) for dealing with absentee property owners

### Other Resources

[Small Business Restart Fund](#)

[Indiana's PPE Marketplace](#)

[OCRA Main Street Education and Training Opportunities](#)

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Image 1: Legan, Mitch. (2020). [Kirkwood street closure in Bloomington, IN] [Photograph]. WTIU/WFIU. <https://indianapublicmedia.org/news/why-not-block-off-fourth-street-for-outdoor-seating.php>

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Image 8: Southwest Indiana Chamber. (2019). [A coworking space in Evansville, IN] [Photograph]. <https://swinchamber.com/cowork-evansville-offers-offers-a-free-workday-tuesday-january-8/>

Image 9: Wish TV 8. (2019). [The Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, a business incubator, in Fort Wayne, IN holding a workshop] [Photograph]. <https://www.wishtv.com/news/northeast-indiana-business-incubator-receives-sba-grant/>