



REOPENING PLAN

UPDATED: September 17, 2020

In anticipation of reopening City services to the public one week after the state moves to Phase 3, the City of Asheville will use the phased approach to reopening found on page three. All employees must continue adhering to the protocols provided, including maintaining at least six feet of physical distance, wearing a mask in common areas, and washing hands often.



BACKGROUND & PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Since closing City facilities to the public on March 17th, City staff have been working to determine how and when we could safely reopen. An interdepartmental transition team was pulled together to think through what that process might look like and to develop a plan.

The Transition Team identified the importance of implementing facility upfits and staggering the return of employees to help maintain physical distancing. They have also designed protocols, policies, and communication tools to ensure that employees have important information as soon as possible. This Reopening Plan was based heavily on public health recommendations to protect the health and safety of employees and the public.

The following principles were considered in the development of this plan:

- ✓ Employee and public health and safety are our top priorities.
- ✓ We will use a phased approach to transition that considers equity, the actions of key community players, and the directives of state and local emergency management agencies, health departments, and other governmental organizations.
- ✓ At least one week's notice will be given to employees before they are required to return to work.
- ✓ Limitations related to staffing, modifications to facilities, and other issues that might impact service quality are of utmost importance.
- ✓ Service innovations that have worked well during the pandemic will be considered for permanent adoption by the City Manager's Office.



REOPENING TIMELINE

CoA Step I

Begins: August 6th

Who it impacts: Employees who have been working on site throughout the pandemic, and those who prefer to return and have the approval of their supervisor.

Expectation: While buildings will remain closed to the public, remote workers will be allowed to return to working in City facilities if they choose with the approval of their supervisor or department director. All full time employees should be working full time unless authorized to take COVID-19 temporary paid administrative leave or accrued leave (vacation, sick, or comp).

CoA Step II

Begins: September 17th

Who it impacts: All employees as we begin to prepare for reopening.

Expectation: All City departments will need to be prepared to be minimally staffed and open to the public one week after the state moves to phase 3 (we are anticipating that we will reopen City buildings on October 12th). The department director will determine appropriate service and staffing levels, and employees may be required to work some days at the office and some days remotely during CoA Step II.

At least one week's notice will be given to remote employees before they are required to return to onsite work. Returning staff can report to facilities the week before reopening to become comfortable with new protocols and facility layouts.

CoA Step III

Begins: October 12th (or first Monday one week after start of Phase 3)*

Who it impacts: The public

Expectation: City buildings will open to the public. Access to necessary in-person City services will be available during regular business hours. The department director will determine appropriate service and staffing levels, and employees may be required to work some days at the office and some days remotely during CoA Step III.

**An October 12th reopening date assumes that the state has moved to Phase 3 and numbers are moving in the right direction.*

CoA Step IV

Begins: At the City Manager's discretion.

Who it impacts: All City employees

Expectation: City services will return to the "new" normal. Ongoing employee schedules and work locations have been implemented.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

REGARDING REOPENING

Who decided who is coming back when?

Department Directors submitted reopening plans in June that were finalized in July. When developing their plans, departments considered changes required to the [physical infrastructure of facilities](#), changes to operations, mitigation and response for a potential next wave of the virus, and necessary outreach and communication to the community and staff.

Employees who have been determined to be high risk for onsite work by the Employee Health Center can talk with their supervisor or Human Resources (HR) partner to discuss options. If you think you might be high risk for COVID-19, contact the Employee Health Center. Employees seeking an ADA accommodation should contact their HR partner.

If I've been working remotely, can I continue to work remotely?

For now, the answer is yes if your supervisor has determined that you are not needed onsite. Department Directors are responsible for making plans for their remote staff, identifying whether they should return to the workplace or continue working remotely. Staggering the number of employees in the office is highly encouraged; however, all full-time employees should be working full time (either onsite, remotely, or in combination), unless on an approved leave.

Supervisors will provide scheduling flexibility for employees who have caregiving responsibilities where possible.

Will we be doing temperature checks at our entrances?

Unfortunately, temperature checks are not always useful in identifying people with COVID-19. Many people don't have a fever or other symptoms, so temperature checks can be falsely reassuring and will not be conducted at this time. Instead, all employees will be required to use the [CDC Self Checker](#) before reporting to a City facility.

Do I have to wear a mask?

Absolutely. Cloth or paper masks will be worn at all times in common areas and when physical distancing is not possible. Masks are not required while alone in an office. Those using break areas can also remove their masks while eating, but posted occupancy limits must be observed. If you do not have a mask, the City will provide one for you. If you have a coworker who is not following the mask requirement, talk to the co-worker and/or your supervisor.

AS A REMINDER: City employees are expected to present themselves in an appropriate manner for the work to be performed and to present a professional and positive image to the public. For that reason, masks that are not issued by the City of Asheville must be a neutral color or pattern and be free of lettering unless such lettering is directly related to the City of Asheville or the employee's specific department. This applies at all times that an employee is on duty, regardless of whether they are in a City building. Your supervisor may provide you with additional requirements based on departmental uniform criteria.

Once City facilities are open to members of the public, they will also be required to wear a mask. The City will have a supply of one-time use masks for the public if they do not have their own.

Please note: Wearing an N95 mask can actually put you at greater risk compared to other face coverings because it can make it harder for people to breath. Additionally, N-95 masks are considered respirators and must be used in accordance with OSHA guidelines. If you want to wear a 95-series mask, you need to inform our Risk Manager [Brad Stein](#).

What about testing?

We don't have plans to test every employee at this point. Employees who have COVID-19 symptoms should not come to work and should instead call their medical provider and/or the Employee Health Center to be advised on the best course of action (which may include getting tested). Any employee may go to any testing site using their own health insurance. If you believe you have been exposed in the workplace, please contact your supervisor and the Employee Health Center for instructions.

If you test positive or Employee Health Services directs you to quarantine, your absence will be paid according to the [Temporary COVID-19 Paid Administrative Leave Policy](#).

When we are notified of a positive test for a City employee, we will reach out to that employee, conduct a case investigation, find out who had contact with them, notify those people, and provide guidance on their next steps.

How do I return to work after testing positive for COVID-19 or experiencing COVID-19-related symptoms?

In order to return to work under these circumstances, you must be cleared by the Employee Health Center. Clearance will be identified in a Workability Report that is sent to you and your supervisor.

What if I've traveled or been in a crowd?

If you travel, you are expected to follow applicable [CDC Travel Guidelines](#) for whatever period of time that they remain in effect.

Of course, we can find ourselves in higher risk situations (like crowds) even without traveling. It's important for us all to take personal responsibility for our safety by practicing the three W's (Wear your mask, Wait at least six feet apart, and Wash your hands), and monitoring ourselves for symptoms. If you do not feel well, do not come onsite, and call the Employee Health Center as soon as possible.

I took my computer/monitor home - what should I do before coming back?

If you took IT and other equipment home, please email help@ashevillenc.gov to make an appointment to come in before your first day back. This helps maintain physical distancing while carrying in equipment, and allows an IT Specialist to ensure your equipment is connected and functioning properly before you need it.

How will common spaces be different?

- ✓ Bathrooms, elevators, break rooms, and other common spaces will be limited to the posted occupancy.
- ✓ Conference rooms will not be available for meetings for now and may be used for office space to assist with physical distancing.
- ✓ Some buildings now have one way traffic patterns.
- ✓ When arriving, give yourself additional time so that physical distance can be maintained at the facility entrances and in the elevators or stairwell.
- ✓ Onsite signage will provide clear direction.

Let's talk about cleaning.

Facility Attendants will continue to clean common areas and will be sanitizing high traffic areas like bathrooms more frequently. As always, we will each be expected to take personal responsibility for keeping our work spaces wiped down and for cleaning up after ourselves in common areas. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

(For more information on the cleaning protocols in City Hall, the Public Works building, and the Municipal building, please see the [Facility Cleaning and Maintenance Plan](#).)



OUR NEW NORMAL

In interviews with Department Directors, two consistent requests were made: allow continued remote working and continue to hold virtual meetings. Our goal as a City is to look beyond the current crisis and explore opportunities to rethink how we do business and to build on departmental creativity that could lead to permanent change.

We have found new ways to deliver services during this difficult time. For example:

- ✓ City employees have been working remotely and service delivery has continued during the pandemic
- ✓ Development Services has been performing remote inspections
- ✓ Water Resources is now offering electronic plans review
- ✓ Purchasing has begun streaming bid openings
- ✓ City Council, committee, and staff meetings have been successfully conducted virtually
- ✓ And so many more!

We won't lose these innovations, and we will use this opportunity to find even more innovative ways to do business differently.



RESOURCES

Policies

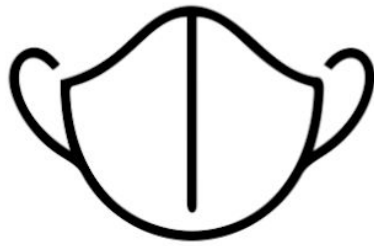
- ✓ [Interim COVID-19 Employee Safety Policy](#)
- ✓ [Temporary COVID-19 Paid Administrative Leave Policy](#)
- ✓ [Temporary Alternative Work Arrangements Policy](#)

Protocols and Guidelines

- ✓ [Protocols and Guidelines for Working in a City Building](#)
- ✓ [Exposure and Positive Test Response Guidance](#)

More Information

- ✓ [COVID-19 Resource Page](#)

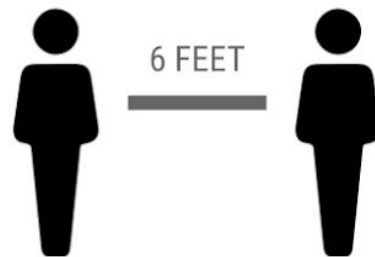


Wear

a cloth face covering.

Wait

6 feet apart. Avoid close contact.



Wash

your hands often or use sanitizer.

Help us keep this building COVID-free.

