



# THE CRISIS FACING MAIN STREET

*The public health crisis and subsequent economic impact are taking a dramatic toll on the small businesses that support nearly half of our nation's private workforce and make our communities unique and vital places. Washington Main Street, a program of the Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP), is working with the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation (WTHP) and our state and national partners to gather data and priorities related to small business and Main Street recovery.*

## SMALL BUSINESS IMPACT SURVEY

In early April 2020, [National Main Street Center's survey](#) reached nearly 6,000 small businesses across the country. Major findings and policy implications include:

- Millions of small businesses are at risk of closing permanently if the crisis continues. Of the nation's approximately 30 million small businesses, nearly 7.5 million may close permanently over the coming five months, and 3.5 million are at risk of closure in the next two months.
- Approximately 35.7 million American employed by small businesses appear to be at risk of unemployment.
- While the CARES Act is being deployed, there remain critical voids. Small businesses need immediate assistance, especially those with 20 or fewer employees.

*"This is exactly the wrong time to decrease or cancel support for programs, like Main Street, that serve as critical connectors and supporters of small businesses. As we look ahead to a recovery, this data demonstrates that Main Street programs with a 40-year history of managing through crisis and recovery from large economic transitions are needed now more than ever."*

### **Data from Washington State's 237 respondents:**

- Over 75% said that employees are at risk of unemployment and/or layoff
- 91% reported loss of revenue and 36% reported added expenses to mitigate public health risks
- 64% reported that their business revenue has decreased by more than 75% since COVID-19 became a widespread concern in early March
- When asked if business disruption continues at the current rate how soon will your business be at risk of closing permanent, approximately 1/3 answered 1-2 months and 1/3 answered 3-5 months
- Top concerns:
  - 68.4% Losing work (clients, projects, sales)
  - 57% Paying this month's rent/mortgage
  - 52.3% Employee's financial welfare
  - 49.4% Customer traffic
  - 46.8% Accessing government support related to COVID-19

## WASHINGTON MAIN STREET FOCUS GROUPS

To gather additional information, DAHP's Main Street Program conducted a series of focus groups to discuss needs and potential mitigation measures with executive directors of designated Washington Main Street Communities and with WTHP staff. These discussions highlighted:

### Priorities for small businesses:

- **Emergency funding – fast funding in the form of grants is the unified top priority Main Street professionals are identifying in their communities across the state**
- Clarity on funding – consistent and clear direction on what to apply for, when, and where
- Lowering fixed costs – rent relief, 1-2-month sales tax delay, etc. with no fines/fees accrued
- Technical assistance – for businesses at no cost to support pivoting to online sales, trying to stay connected to consumers, etc. whether through Main Street or other agencies

### Priorities for Main Street organizations:

- **Emergency funding – resources for nonprofits that don't compete with small businesses**
- Identifying priorities – providing a Main Street training to support local programs' direction and focus amidst onslaught of demands for assistance from businesses/communities
- Technical assistance – basics on social media engagement and online/mobile business models to answer questions or direct businesses to resources

*This data was compiled by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation on April 15, 2020.  
To learn more about our efforts to support Washington communities during the COVID-19 visit  
[www.preservewa.org/covid-19](http://www.preservewa.org/covid-19)*