



City of Wharton
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
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“Back in Business”
Update 4/28/2020

The City of Wharton has established this “Back in Business” framework to help ease our businesses in re-opening their doors. The “Back in Business” campaign will be developed as the State and Federal government allow more business to resume. At this time, we are continuing to allow to-go & take-out retail method, but additional changes announced by the Governor on Monday, April 27th will take effect at 12:01 a.m. Friday, May 1st.

According to the Governor’s Executive Order GA-18, ‘starting at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, May 1st, 2020, in-store retail services, dine-in restaurant services, movie theaters, shopping malls, museums and libraries, can operate at 25% occupancy’ under specific guidelines and regulations.

What does this mean for businesses?

Q: What businesses will and won’t be allowed to open?

A: In-store retail services, dine-in restaurant services, movie theaters, shopping malls, museums and libraries are allowed to re-open as of 12:01 a.m. on Friday, May 1st. ‘Gyms, bars, public swimming pools, interactive amusement venues such as bowling alleys and video arcades, massage establishments, tattoo studios, piercing studios, or cosmetology salons’ are not included in these re-opening rules and should remain closed to the public, except for utilizing the ‘to-go retail’ method to sell products.

Q: What requirements exist for businesses that are now allowed to re-open?

A: Here are the requirements that businesses need to know:

- The businesses listed above as able to open starting this Friday, May 1st can only operate at 25% capacity. Restaurants required to ‘post the 51% sign required by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission’ because more than 51% of their sales are alcohol based, are NOT allowed to allow dine-in service, but may continue the to-go order method at this time.*
- If confirmed case counts do not increase before May 18th, the Governor may allow an additional release of restrictions. Alternatively, if the positive case count does increase, restrictions may be re-activated.*
- This order does not require private businesses to open but does allow for it as outlined on this phased plan.*
- Businesses are recommended to observe CDC guidelines and continue with social distancing, hand hygiene, and other practices that prevent the spread of the virus.*

Q: What do I need to know about keeping my staff and customers safe during re-opening?

A: Businesses that are allowed to open under the new changes starting May 1st are required to follow the health protocols listed in the Governor’s “Reopen Texas” report at <http://gov.texas.gov/opentexas>. Pages 19-43 include health protocols and guidelines for employers, retailers, restaurants, movie theaters, museums & libraries, outdoor sports, churches/places of worship, and single-person offices.

More information about safe business can be found at:

CDC Guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/Index.html>

ADA: https://www.ada.gov/emerg_prep.html

OSHA: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>

Q: What does occupancy mean?

A: “Occupancy” means the maximum number of people that are allowed to be in your establishment. The Certificate of Occupancy that was issued to you by the City of Wharton states your maximum allowed number of people allowed in your building at any given time. To calculate 25% max occupancy multiply .25 by the regular occupancy number to determine your 25% occupancy cap (ex. $.25 \times 100 = 25$ people maximum for a business that normally has a maximum capacity of 100).

Q: It says rural counties can increase to 50% occupancy, can my business operate with this capacity since Wharton County is considered rural?

*A: **No!** This only applies to rural counties with ‘five or fewer COVID-19 laboratory confirmed cases’. There are more than 5 positive cases confirmed for Wharton County, therefore businesses are only allowed to operate at 25% occupancy at this time.*

Q: What happens next?

A: Businesses can most likely anticipate a very slow return to normal. Here are some tips for businesses that are struggling to keep up with the changes as our City transitions through this time:

- Businesses should be mindful to observe CDC Guidelines – being obvious about following these guidelines (such as providing complimentary hand sanitizer, wiping down point-of-sale stations between customers, continuing to keep communal stations - like self-serve drinks closed, etc.) will help customers feel safe and confident in conducting business at your establishment.*
- Businesses should take this time to make sure they have a digital presence – including a logo, website, and social media. Now that communities like ours have had to adjust to online methods of placing grocery orders and making purchases with retailers, it can be expected that some percentage of people will continue to do this. Note that apps like Favor are not the best apps for businesses like antique shops, but online stores like Facebook Marketplace and Etsy are. The City is exploring opportunities to bring workshops to our area for businesses who need help modernizing to remain relevant and sustainable. In the meantime, please contact our local representative from the Small Business Development Center:*

*Mindi Snyder, Local Representative
1112 7th Street, Bay City, TX, 77414
mrsnyder@uh.edu
281-499-9787
www.sbdc.uh.edu*

- *The City of Wharton will continue to explore opportunities and resources, including workshops, webinars, funding assistance, and other community-driven activities to help support our local businesses. As such, the City is asking our community to support our local businesses. A portion of the sales tax spent in the City of Wharton, goes back to the City of Wharton for projects like the future levee greenspace and FM 1301 extension. Businesses are encouraged to follow the City of Wharton Community Development Department online at <https://www.Facebook.com/WhartonCD> and to contact Krystal Hasselmeier at KHasselmeier@cityofwharton.com or by phone at 979-532-2491 x239 to make sure your business contact information is in our listing*

We know there are many more questions out there and that there will continue to be as we move forward in this process. The City of Wharton is dedicated to supporting its business community through this time and is eager to see Wharton 'back in business'. Please contact the Community Development Department at 979-532-2491 for more information.

Sincerely,

Community Development Department
City of Wharton