

Executive Summary

Identifying and Realizing Redmond's Long-Term Recovery Vision

The nation's first case of COVID-19 was found in Snohomish County in January 2020. On February 28, 2020, the Washington Department of Health announced two additional cases – one in King County and one in Snohomish County. On February 29, 2020, Governor Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency in response to the new cases and directed state agencies to use all resources necessary to prepare for and respond to the outbreak. Since that time, state, regional, and local governments have responded proactively to issues as they continue to emerge and as the COVID-19 pandemic persists.

Citywide Impacts

The City and Redmond community have experienced several systemic impacts:

- Redmond's largest business sector, Information and Technology, successfully responded to the limitations instituted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Infrastructure had been previously established allowing business operations and employment to continue with relative ease following a brief period of reorganization during the initial impact of the pandemic. However, the broader economy, including though not limited to personal services, food services, hospitality and special events, manufacturing, education, and construction experienced significant reductions in revenue. A study by Community Attributes, Inc. for the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce reports that the greater Seattle region lost \$13.4 billion in gross business revenue during the first six months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. During the 2019-2020 biennium, the City experienced a budgetary shortfall of \$4 million, related to the loss of fees, registrations, rentals, and other revenue.
- A portion of the Redmond community continued experiencing preexisting as well as new insecurities regarding access to food and housing. During the April through August 2020 study period, Hopelink provided over 51,000 food boxes, equating to over 1 million meals; the City's Senior Curbside Lunch Program provided 980 meals; and Sound Generations – Meals on Wheels provided over 3,000 meals. Though support for housing was also provided in the form of rental assistance and eviction moratoriums, not all community members benefitted. People for whom English is not a primary language — comprising 12 percent (or 7,000) of Redmond's residents - and undocumented workers have been impacted in greater magnitude than other community members.

Impacts by Recovery Plan Components

All components comprising the City's long-term recovery are anticipated to continue experiencing impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The insights below represent recovery plan components impacted most severely during the study period — April through August of 2020.

Housing

The City along with other jurisdictions throughout the Puget Sound region have implemented a wide variety and large number of policies addressing housing affordability and choices. These policies are developed upon the

foundation of a “*housing to jobs balance*” whereby people working within the City have the opportunity to also live in Redmond. Currently, the majority of the City’s 10 neighborhoods require 10 percent of housing units at 80 percent of the King County median income in developments of 10 or more dwellings. Increased focus on housing affordability began in 2019 under a statewide initiative, including the creation of a Housing Choices Strategy and additional support for the “*missing middle*” – housing types providing cost options and transitional forms bridging multi-family and single-family dwelling types.

The unanticipated conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in additional strain upon already fragile housing supplies. Local demand for housing solutions is demonstrated by the City’s homeless community and indirectly, by the number of people commuting to the City for employment. However, the pandemic created additional demand through which alternative housing types became urgent. In the absence of citywide safety policy specific to housing, community service organizations and local hotels responded with short-term housing solutions. Though the solutions remain unpredictable in the long-term, these provisions filled a portion of essential needs in rapid response during the initial outbreak.

Human Services

The City facilitates support for a portion of community service organizations providing services to Redmond’s residents. This network of 22 providers represents a strong solution-oriented system, however, it is only a portion of the broader community support system. Some organizations operating independent of the formal network have continued to provide various services to people in need including food, shelter, advocacy and counseling, and translation services. These organizations, like those supported by the City, are experiencing budgetary and staffing challenges as demand for services increases, placing continued operations at risk.

A comprehensive and holistic approach to citywide community services has not been previously facilitated though, during the study period, the network rapidly expanded to 46 service providers and is anticipated to continue increasing in numbers and in capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic raised awareness of the demand for collaborative and inclusive responses to community needs through which organizations involving various focuses can communicate across missions, supporting common recovery goals.

Parks, Arts, Culture, Food Systems, and Health

Leadership and staff from the City’s Department of Parks and Recreation developed, implemented, and continued maintaining a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) during the study period. The COOP is in alignment with the National Disaster Recovery Framework and with the City’s Emergency Management Plan allowing the department to implement responses to unique community needs and provide staff clear and concise action schedules. The COOP remains effective as an evolving, “*living*” document, responding to new conditions and employing safety standards in real-time response to Governor Inslee’s Safe Start Washington Phased Reopening Plan.

However, the department was significantly impacted by a loss of revenue stemming from cancellation of recreation classes and facility rentals due to building closures. Facilities remained closed during the study period, in alignment with Safe Start standards, while some recreation classes transferred to virtual classrooms. Maintenance of City parks continued with some impacts experienced by staff as a result of community members’ unsafe social distancing and mask practices. Social distancing standards and budgetary constraints limited community gathering opportunities whereby City-sponsored events such as Derby Days and So Bazaar were canceled and transitioned to online venues.

Some cultural opportunities were implemented by local organizations such as Centro Cultural Mexicano's *Border Doors Exhibit*. However, as with community service agencies, small organizations providing cultural services experienced significant budgetary and staffing constraints, particularly in the absence of in-person opportunities for advocacy, collaboration, and involvement.

Additionally, Redmond like many Puget Sound jurisdictions, imports its food supplies. Access to agriculture decreases as development of land within the growth management area continues. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a serious workplace hazard, described by Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, with specific requirements to protect agriculture and related industries. Alternatives such as community and backyard gardens, backyard chicken husbandry, and rooftop gardens provide the community a minor level of access to locally grown and thereby resilient food systems. Due to the complexity of this topic and the timeframe of this plan's development, additional research is suggested to understand and develop recommendations in the context of long-term recovery and ongoing community resiliency.

Economic Development

The City's business licensing database indicates over 4,000 businesses provided employment in Redmond during the study period. The distribution of 1,500 Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans for a total of \$47,304,050 supported 25 percent of Redmond businesses and supported the retention of 14,869 jobs as of June 30, 2020. Within Washington state, a majority of PPP loans were provided to the health care and social assistance, professional services, construction, and manufacturing sectors. Funds provided to Redmond's small businesses supported utility and rent relief, lease re-negotiation, new opportunities for outdoor area operations, and other short-term needs.

The pandemic raised awareness of the importance of accurate and timely information. Small businesses stated their reliance on City messaging regarding public safety protocols and emergency services such as distribution of personal protective equipment and signage. Though a proactive involvement approach for small businesses had not been implemented as a primary focal point of economic development, the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened efforts by the City and OneRedmond to include frequent and ongoing focus groups and one-on-one conversations with small businesses regarding short-, medium-, and long-term recovery needs.

Public Safety and Mental Health

Requirements for social distancing appear to correspond to an increase in mental health concerns. The Stay Home, Stay Healthy order and physical distancing guidelines have been significantly felt by adult over 60 as well as by people living alone. Online venues strive to provide accessible and equitable alternatives though are not within reach of all community members. As of 2019, the Washington Office of Financial Management reported 727 Redmond households having access to the internet only through smartphone technology and 931 households not having access to the internet, particularly without access to the Redmond Library. Community service providers continue to report increases in mental health and crisis issues on behalf of their clients. It is anticipated that these impacts will continue in the wake of the pandemic's trajectory.

Building Services

The City's economic forecast is linked to many business sectors including the construction industry. The COVID-19 pandemic's initial outbreak resulted in pauses to development activities including public and private projects, affecting the project lifecycles for several property asset classes including hospitality, commercial, office, residential, and services. Obstacles to construction included full or partial bans on construction activities, lack of

material, required physical distancing and other health and safety standards that modified traditional operations, and regulatory challenges. Once the City's Department of Planning and Community Development successfully resumed permitting and inspections, local development activity increased as measured on a monthly basis. Yet, national financial investor requirements continue changing with long-term impacts anticipated such as the availability of capital, investment readiness, and viable tenants.

Timely response and ongoing collaboration with the development community continues to aid recovery of this business sector and support increased levels of development activity. Redmond is unique in that development of the East Link Light Rail infrastructure continued with service to Overlake anticipated in 2023 and to Downtown in 2024. A corresponding increase in demand for transit-oriented development remains likely near the Overlake, SE Redmond, and Downtown light rail stations.

Outlook

The COVID-19 pandemic raised awareness of many issues and will continue to require the City and community to adjust. It is anticipated that the region as well as the City will experience uncertainty regarding economic conditions and employment. The Long-Term Recovery Plan recognizes these challenges and sets forth a series of local actions to be facilitated by the City and the community, ensuring Redmond's long-term recovery and resiliency. Long-term strategies provide opportunity for recovery of directly impacted areas such as small business revenue and workforce redevelopment training. Strategies also suggest comprehensive refinements including streamlining operations to reduce the cost of doing business, increasing the ability for businesses to thrive, realizing the City's vision and Comprehensive Plan, and restructuring and process audits to create efficiencies and additional capacity for City operations and staff.

Collaboration, communication, and diversity are among the recovery plan components that offer significant potential for re-establishing a healthy and functioning community that will sustain itself over time.