



Fredericksburg Main Street COVID-19 Update • 03.23.20

We are experiencing a highly fluid situation that changes quickly. This is a hard time for families, community groups, and businesses. Small, independent businesses operate on tight margins. A few slow days is alarming but a few slow weeks (or temporary closures) can be devastating. It is up to us to pull together as a community to stay healthy and safe while also keeping our small businesses going. They are the backbone of our community – supporting nonprofits, employing locals, and keeping dollars in our own community.

We need them and they need us.

These are unprecedented times and there is a lot of uncertainty. As our Main Street's motto states – *Forever Revolutionary* – our Downtown is forever changing and evolving. Our history tells us that we can get through this situation. One thing is for sure – when this passes, and it will, we will arrive together as a unified community.

**Together, we will make sure the heart and soul of our community – Downtown
Fredericksburg – is here when we come back.**

Out of deep care and consideration, local businesses have been taking extra precautions to ensure their establishments are sanitary and healthy places for workers and customers. Many are trying to respond to the customers' willingness to support them while maintaining social distance. Some have already closed temporarily.

If you want to help your community, particularly local businesses, please support them however you can and consider buying gift cards or using their delivery/pick-up/online stores to help with their cash flow now.

Fredericksburg has been working with downtown businesses to determine what is needed and what supports could help keep things as stable as possible. Read on for a few ideas that you can do today and what we have been doing so far.

If you want to help, here are some actions you can take now:

1) Buy gift cards directly from downtown businesses (not Fredericksburg's Downtown Gift Cards). It's like an interest free loan. This helps keep them going today even if you can't shop or eat there until tomorrow. Cash flow is one of their main concerns right now.



2) Donate to local nonprofits – especially those that had to cancel fund-raising events. Don't wait for end-of-year giving. Generally, nonprofits have unpredictable cash flow because we earn money from sponsors, donors, events, merchandise sales, or grants – there aren't always guarantees on how much money will come in or when.

3) Eat and shop local. Fight the urge to buy from national online retailers. Think about how your life would have normally flowed this week and try to support those same businesses in a slightly different way. Buy gift cards or use takeout option. Many businesses are offering delivery, virtual one on one appointments, pickup for online or call-ahead orders for food and merchandise, even ones that don't normally offer this service!

4) Keep up with downtown businesses – Follow your favorites on Facebook, Instagram, or twitter. It's the quickest way to stay up to date on what is happening with them. Many are offering online videos, demos, and one on one virtual appointments as examples. The creativity is amazing as they pivot to survive. Things are changing so rapidly to keep a list updated for now. Reach out directly to them.

5) Get ready to eat and buy local when this passes. Businesses need you to stay open. When the time comes for us to go out & celebrate, let's look forward to going big! Let this season of life apart grow love for your city and a generous heart for the businesses that make our community wonderful. #FXBGLoveLocal #LoveFXBG

What Fredericksburg Main Street is doing now:

1) We're sending frequent updates with information and resources to downtown businesses. And we are surveying them to assess their needs & how we can respond.

2) We're monitoring responses from other communities and similar organizations to ours. If there is a great idea out there that we can rip off & duplicate, we are ready! We are also sharing our best practices with our colleagues around the nation.

6) We're part of a regional coalition focused on supporting businesses. We are meeting weekly with staff from the City and Counties economic development departments, Chamber of Commerce, University of Mary Washington SBDC, George Washington Regional Commission, Rappahannock Economic Development Corporation, and Fredericksburg Regional Alliance so we can share information. First meeting is the week of March 23rd.



7) We are reassessing how we work to find the best ways to help the Downtown. Feel free to send ideas or examples of what other towns are doing.