



City of La Center Community Message on COVID-19 Response

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2020

Greetings members of the La Center Community. The City of La Center is taking steps to contain the spread of coronavirus as well as preparing for further actions as they are needed. We understand and empathize with the growing anxiety and uncertainty of how, or when, the disease will evolve in our region and what the response will be if an outbreak does occur here.

Our priority is continuing to serve our residents by ensuring the City remains open and operational with appropriate measures in place to protect the health of our employees and the community. City Staff are working, but public access to City facilities is limited. To contain COVID 19, protect our community, and City employees, the lobbies of City Hall and Police Department will remain closed. The Community Development Department office will be opened from 8:00 AM to Noon, and in the afternoon from 1:00 PM until 3:30 PM. These changes will remain in place through Monday, March 23.

- If there is an emergency, please Call 911.
- To contact a Police Officer for non-emergency calls, please call 311 or 360-693-3111
- If you need to talk with a Community Development staff member, please call 360-263-7666
- If you need to talk with a City Hall staff member, please call 360-263-2782

The City continues to closely monitor the ongoing coronavirus outbreak and implement appropriate actions in response to this rapidly changing issue. We are following the lead and guidance of Clark County Public Health and working alongside Clark County Public Health and CRESA (Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency) and surrounding partner municipalities to implement coordinated response and communication.

Currently, the number of confirmed and under investigation cases in Clark County is relatively low ([Clark County Public Health](#)), however, this is expected to grow exponentially in the coming weeks and months.

The risk of exposure is increasing for people who live in our region. Health agency experts, including the [World Health Organization](#), recommend social distancing measures be deployed to contain the spread in communities, not to specifically prevent illness, but rather to slow down the rate at which people get sick.

Today, in coordination with Clark County Public Health, I have issued a Declaration of Emergency for the City of La Center. This follows similar declarations made by the President, Governor, Clark County and other communities across the State. This declaration is a preparative measure that allows the City organization to move swiftly and legally in our response through streamlining processes and providing access to federal, state and local emergency resources and funds. Any emergency orders and actions taken under the declaration are anticipated to be done in coordination with a regional response.

The City is planning for several contingency scenarios throughout its operational areas. Effective March 16, the City will implement a series of initial changes in operations and services as preventative measures to limit the spread of coronavirus among our employees and the community, including:

- Cancellation of all City-permitted public events with planned or forecasted attendance of 250 or above.
- Suspension of all non-essential public meetings.
- Suspension or modification of all programming that caters to vulnerable populations.
- Suspension of non-essential travel and training (including where trainers are brought in from outside the organization).
- Enhanced sanitation of all public buildings and facilities.
- Encouraging symptom awareness and asking employees to stay home if they are sick.
- At this time, scheduled City Council meetings will continue to occur, but with social distancing modifications including increased space between chairs and encouraging the public to view by livestream at this [link](#). In the event the decision is made to cancel in-person City Council meetings, we will plan to allow for Council meetings to be conducted via teleconference, including the ability of the public to participate in some manner.

The situation continues to change rapidly and our response will evolve and change accordingly. We will share additional information and updates as they are available. In the meantime, information on the state and regional response can be found on the following websites:

- Clark County Public Health: www.clark.wa.gov/public-health/novel-coronavirus
- Washington State Department of Health: www.doh.wa.gov
- Washington Governor Jay Inslee: www.governor.wa.gov
- Multnomah County Health: multco.us/health
- Oregon Health Authority: public.health.oregon.gov
- Oregon Governor Kate Brown: Oregon.gov.gov

We encourage everyone to consistently practice the hygienic and social distancing measures recommended by Clark County public health and the CDC. It is vitally important that we all stay informed, stay calm and work together to keep our community safe and healthy and reduce the spread of the virus in our region. On behalf of the Council and staff at the City, we extend our thanks to the La Center community for rising to the occasion.

Sincerely,

Greg Thornton, Mayor