



Restaurant and Hospitality Industries COVID-19 Restart Support Plan

The restaurant and hospitality industries have been devastated by COVID-19 and related mandatory shutdowns and occupancy limitations. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in Palm Beach County alone. Palm Beach County will be encouraging Governor DeStantis to begin lifting restrictions on restaurants as early as May 11, 2020. It is anticipated that the initial re-opening of restaurants will limit interior seating to 25% of the existing approved occupancy of the establishment along with other social distancing and protective measures. While the limits may be relaxed over time, best practices and recommendations from applicable health authorities and consumer safety norms are expected to prevail long after legal restrictions are lifted. The economic devastation is resulting in significant hardship for these industries and many business closures. For example, recently Too Jay's, a Palm Beach County staple, filed for federal bankruptcy protection. The seasonal restaurant and hospitality industries will have to try to endure a negative cash flow during the period of June through October, and this is difficult even when operating at full capacity. Many North County businesses also face the turmoil sure to be created by the multi-year closure of the US Highway One bridge over the Loxahatchee River. Reduced occupancy, social distancing, increased costs for public safety and personnel protective equipment and rising food costs resulting from disruptions in the supply chain will continue to cripple the industries.

The following is a list of recommended accommodations which should be immediately implemented by our local municipalities and the county in an attempt to save as many of our businesses and jobs as possible and create a safer environment for the public to regain confidence to patronize local business and reengage in leisure activities.

1. Expanded Outdoor Seating:
 - a. Social Distancing will adversely affect occupancy limitations and diminish the capacity of our restaurants to succeed and return to full employment. Proprietors should be permitted to redistribute their pre-existing allowable seating to anywhere on property as long as public safety is not at issue.
 - b. Restaurants adjacent to public open space, i.e. parks, squares, sidewalks, used rights of way, etc., should be permitted to set up temporary outdoor dining areas.
 - c. If on-site open space does not exist, consideration for using vehicular use and parking areas adjacent to their establishment should be permitted. This is a practice that occurs throughout the urban environment. Proper safety measures and health regulations would need to be adhered to.
 - d. Table and seating spacing will adhere to the applicable authority orders, recommendations and best practices, including the Critical COVID-19 Guidance Standards for Hospitality Reopening developed by the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association.
2. Outdoor Entertainment
 - a. Restaurant entertainment amenities will help attract people back to their establishments. Relaxation of outdoor entertainment standards should be considered to allow for non-amplified live music during this period.



PALM BEACH NORTH
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

- b. All existing noise standards will remain in full effect.
- c. The use of amplified outdoor live music will require a special event permit.

Policy Arguments:

- a. Since tourism will be depressed, residents will travel less, and staycations will be popular for the duration of the Covid concerns, for the benefit of the residents having local places to safely eat, drink and be merry, this Plan should be adopted by all local governments. The residents need this as much as local businesses and their employees.
- b. People need to be safe in new normal
- c. Local governments must support its local businesses in time of need
- d. Employment in the restaurant and hospitality industries needs special support
- e. Business startups need support
- f. Impending US Highway One bridge work will devastate area business
- g. Local and chain business need support
- h. Tax base needs growth

Implementation:

Municipal and County Governments should be encouraged to immediately issue emergency orders provided for the relaxation of existing regulations until such time that the COVID-19 pandemic is over and business activity returns to pre pandemic economic levels.