



# Open for Business:

## MAKING THE BEST OF ROUGH ROAD CONSTRUCTION



**A toolkit to help your business  
through Spokane's street projects**



# Letter from Mayor David Condon

A healthy, robust transportation system makes our city move. Goods and people pass efficiently, orderly and safely from place to place, driving commerce, engagement and enjoyment.

As we improve the drivability of streets, enhance safety, and extend the life of water and wastewater utility systems, we are also reminded of the potential community impacts.

I am pleased to present this Open for Business toolkit designed to help you plan for and manage the potential impacts of street construction. The toolkit includes practical ideas to help minimize any inconvenience on your business.

Good, reliable streets are a lifeline for businesses, and we are committed to helping ensure the success of Spokane businesses. Our efforts are aimed at enhancing the connectivity to points within our community and beyond.

We are constantly looking for ways to provide multiple benefits for your investment of time and money, and aggressively pursuing those opportunities whenever possible. That means timing utility work to coincide with street projects, identifying opportunities to enhance our stormwater system and improving the management of vegetation and other modes of transportation – all at the same time.

The net result is your dollar works harder and the inconvenience of construction is much less in your neighborhood and along your travel route.

We are working to improve our business environment and create jobs. A thriving economy provides opportunities and long-term stability for our region.

Please feel free to send feedback to me at [mayor@spokanecity.org](mailto:mayor@spokanecity.org). Thank you for your patience and support as we build the City of Choice.

David A. Condon  
Mayor, City of Spokane

# Take Action to Protect Your Business

Attention Spokane business owners: if your business is located in a major street or utility construction project area, your business likely will be impacted. To help businesses survive street construction, the City of Spokane created this survival guide containing appropriate municipal and business contacts and tips for surviving the construction process.

In this guide you'll find:

- The best time to get involved in a project—early!—and have your voice heard.
- Early business planning strategies to ready your company for the street construction project ahead.
  - Everything from inventory to customer and employee communication.
- What to expect once construction begins.
  - How to retain your customer base during difficult times.
- Survival tips for making it through the construction project.
  - Communication, staying on message, staying positive and using creative promotion and business strategies.
- Post-construction ideas to get your business back on track.
- Additional business resources.

While street construction can be hard on businesses, the maintenance and repairs will be good for your company and the community in the end. Projects will improve street conditions, help with traffic flow and allow customers better access to frequent your business. With this positive outcome in mind, we want you to be prepared ahead of time. Plan carefully so that once the project is completed, your business can thrive.



## Mission Statement

**To focus on the community's business needs and coordinate revitalization programs with an emphasis on sustainable economic growth.**

**–Business and Development  
Services Department**



## Get Involved Early

The City of Spokane typically includes street and utility construction projects within its Six Year Capital Program Plans which are updated annually and presented to the City Plan Commission for recommendation and to the City Council for adoption. These programs provide a blueprint for improving the City's sewer, water and transportation infrastructure in a rational, coordinated, and cost-effective manner. These plans typically include construction projects several years in advance of when construction is to occur. Information about the Six Year Capital Program plans and upcoming projects can also be found on the City's web site at [www.spokaneengineering.org](http://www.spokaneengineering.org).

Most projects contain funding from various local, state or federal funding programs, which have very specific criteria as to what can be included within the project. For example, many of the street projects that the City has completed over the past six years and will continue to complete over the next two are the result of the 10-Year Street Bond approved by City voters in 2004. Citizens voted for a \$117 million bond issue to pay for a 10-Year Street Bond program that will repair 110 miles of Spokane streets. Bond project construction started in 2005 and will be completed in 2015. The bonds are paid for by an increase in property tax estimated at \$68 per year for a \$100,000 home for 20 years, or approximately \$5.67 per month. The street bond projects are limited to repair and/or replacement of the roadway surface between the curbs and gutters. In some cases, funding from other programs are paired with the street bond to accomplish additional work within the right of way such as sewer or water line upgrades.

Several months before construction, the City will start the process of reaching out to businesses within the impacted corridor. This likely will include mailings to business owners inviting them to a meeting(s) for the project. Your concerns, questions, and suggestions are very important at this early stage in the planning process as the City still has the greatest flexibility to incorporate changes into the project at this time. Please watch for mailings, and attend these meetings to learn more about the project and to provide any input that you may have.

For most projects, the City will release bids and hire a contractor during the winter or spring prior to the start of the spring or summer construction season. Once a contractor is hired to complete the work and construction begins, the City will typically host weekly meetings with the contractor and business owners. The goal of the meetings is to share information to ensure everyone is aware of the upcoming construction schedule and pertinent construction contacts. Make sure to find out when and where the meetings will take place.

Disruption from construction can be mitigated if there is proper coordination between property owners, City officials, contractors and businesses. Remember, the earlier your concerns are voiced, the better prepared the project team will be to respond to them.

It is in your best interest as a business owner to keep informed of current and upcoming construction projects. Communicate with your Council person, read the City's web site for updates, join local business organizations and attend as many meetings as you can.

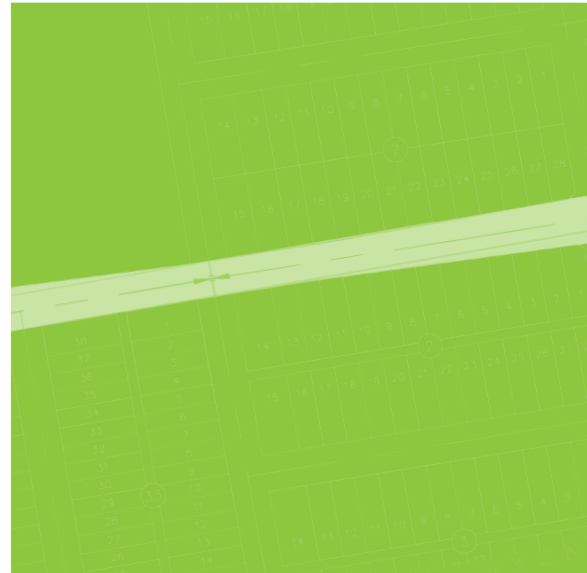
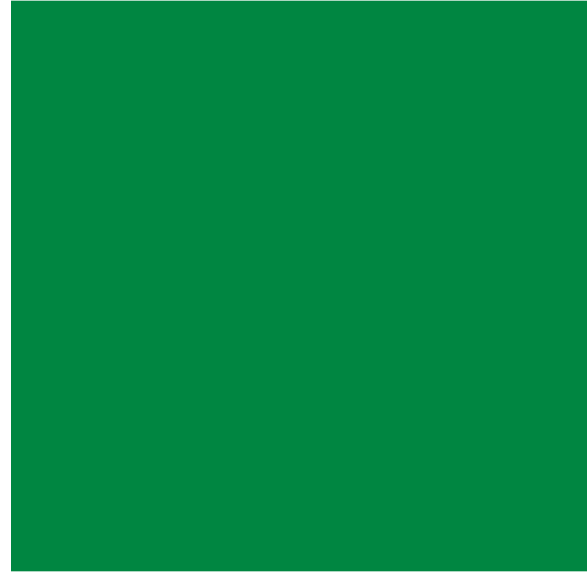


# Business Planning

## WHAT YOU CAN DO BEFORE CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

As a business owner, you are always planning and improving your business model. When you're informed ahead of time, street construction is something you can prepare for. Here are some suggestions from business owners who have been through the construction process already.

- Keep your staff lean. It's an unfortunate reality, but if you expect a significant decrease in customers once construction begins, you may need to consider keeping a lean staff. If someone quits in the spring, you may decide to keep the position vacant if there is a construction project coming up that summer. Other options might include job sharing or reducing hours.
  - Some business owners shared that when they became aware of an upcoming construction project, they would leave positions vacant when there was a natural attrition of employees, rather than rehiring.
- Evaluate several scenarios for how your business might be affected during the construction period. Include analysis of the financial performance of your business based on the predicted changes for each scenario during the construction period and for the year as a whole. This will help identify opportunities or adjustments that you can make in your business plan to help your bottom line and allow you to address areas of concern in a proactive rather than reactive manner.
- Reduce inventory. When possible, reducing inventory can be a useful strategy to respond to slower periods due to construction.
- Secure a line of credit when times are good. It's important to get a line of credit during good times when sales are up. That way you'll have it when and if there's an emergency.
- Gather customer contact information before construction begins. This way you can keep them informed of road conditions, best routes and promotional specials during the construction period. You might consider sending weekly e-mails to customers with the hope that they won't be as likely to change their buying habits during construction. Express to customers that their loyalty during construction is important.
- Inform customers as much in advance as possible. Keeping them informed gives them the ability to maneuver construction and access your business. Examples can include putting up posters or passing out copies of alternative routes to the customers before the project.
- Work with your employees to develop a plan. Talk to your employees about the process and strategies to stay prosperous during construction. Discuss marketing efforts and allow employees to share any concerns they may have. Your employees will appreciate the opportunity, and the dialogue may produce new ideas that will benefit your business.
- If you are planning any improvements or changes to your property that may need or require construction within the street such as for a new water service line or sewer connection, NOW is the time to get that done. Once a street has been repaved, the City's Pavement Cut Policy will place a moratorium on any new cuts to the pavement for a period of three years.





# Construction

## WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO MITIGATE PROBLEMS

Dust, noise and vibration are all inevitable during a construction project and not areas where you will have a great deal of control. Traffic delays and blocked access routes are also difficulties that may arise during construction. Here are some ideas to deal with these issues.

- Allocate more time or money to cleaning. While there's little you can do to reduce the dust and noise of a construction site, you can focus on keeping your own business as dust-free as possible. If you only clean your windows once a week right now, you might consider increasing that during the construction period. You may also decide to allocate more time or money for general cleaning and upkeep, in order to keep construction dust to a minimum.
- Create a friendly rapport with construction workers. While the on-site construction workers aren't the appropriate people to contact about concerns, it can only improve the situation if you create a friendly rapport with them. You might supply complimentary ice water to crews in the summer. They may even be a source of business during construction.
- This said, it's important to emphasize that construction workers are following instructions from their supervisors, and communicating concerns to supervisors and project leaders is the best way to get results. To this end, know who those supervisors are and keep their contact information close at hand.
- Make sure signage is clear. Traffic delays will also be inevitable during a construction project, but signage can help a great deal. See what sort of signs are going up to direct traffic and make sure they make sense to your customers. Construction crews aren't aware of your needs and often it's just a matter of asking. Also, make sure you have parking available and provide your customers with directions to parking spaces. Reserve the best spots for customers, even if employees have to park farther away.
- Access to your business is often a problem during a construction project. Consider using a back entrance for better customer access. Make sure to know how to direct your customers to the right entrance and parking lot, and if you have a back door, consider using it.
- Communication will be critical during the entire construction project. As a business owner, you must communicate with the construction project managers, your employees, other businesses and, most importantly, your customers.

### Tips:

1. Keep project manager's contact information close at hand.
2. Provide directions and access information for your employees. Don't let them make the area more congested. Depending on the number of people you employ, you might consider offering a carpool from an agreed upon location.
3. Join local business organizations or consider forming one. Strength is found in numbers. Make sure to communicate with other local leaders so you can band together and make concerns heard, coordinate parking, events, and collaborative advertising.

# Tips for Survival

## ONCE CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN

Deliver products to your customers. To reach customers unable or unwilling to navigate the construction area, some creative restaurant owners have initiated a catering business delivering their meals to their customers.

- Keep on message. Consider keeping a script next to your phone, so that you and your employees have quick and easy directions to provide to customers. Make sure all your employees know what to say and how to say it and update the instructions as the project progresses.
- Stay informed! Attend all public meetings relating to the construction project. Be sure to open all City correspondence and adjust your communication plan, as needed.
- Extend business hours. Consider being open later in the evening after construction crews are finished for the day. Be flexible to accommodate customer demands and other perceived needs.
- Make the construction work for you. If you were considering a remodel for your business, why not do it during the construction period? Use this period to get things done that you haven't had time to address.
- Consider pooling advertising resources with other businesses in the construction zone to let the public know you are still open for business.
- Be positive. Encourage and generate a positive, healthy environment to support your staff and ensure retention of valued employees and customers.
- Be certain to communicate the project information with your suppliers to ensure good deliveries.

# You Made It

## CONSTRUCTION IS OVER, NOW WHAT

Once construction is over, it's time to focus on recapturing market share and inviting back customers. Consider promotions and advertising to let customers know the streets are free and re-opened. Promote the new image and convenience of the completed roadway.

Celebrate the project's completion. Take advantage of the opportunity by holding a ribbon cutting ceremony and invite the news media to the ceremony. Or consider pooling resources with local businesses for a grand celebration and/or shared advertisement. Finally, support other businesses that undergo a similar process. Give them your patronage and provide helpful feedback based on your experiences.



### Resources

#### City of Spokane and Local Government

Engineering Services: 625-6700  
Construction Management: 625-7722  
[www.spokaneengineering.org](http://www.spokaneengineering.org)

Business and Development Services:  
509-625-6300  
[www.spokanecity.org/business](http://www.spokanecity.org/business)

Spokane Regional Transportation  
Management Center  
[www.srtmc.org](http://www.srtmc.org)

Street Maintenance  
[www.spokanecity.org/streets](http://www.spokanecity.org/streets)

#### Local Business Resources

GSI – BIZStreet /  
Small Business Growth Program  
[www.greaterspokane.org/  
small-business-help.html](http://www.greaterspokane.org/small-business-help.html)

SNAP Financial Access –  
Small Business Development program  
[snapwa.org/services/neighborhood/  
business-development](http://snapwa.org/services/neighborhood/business-development)

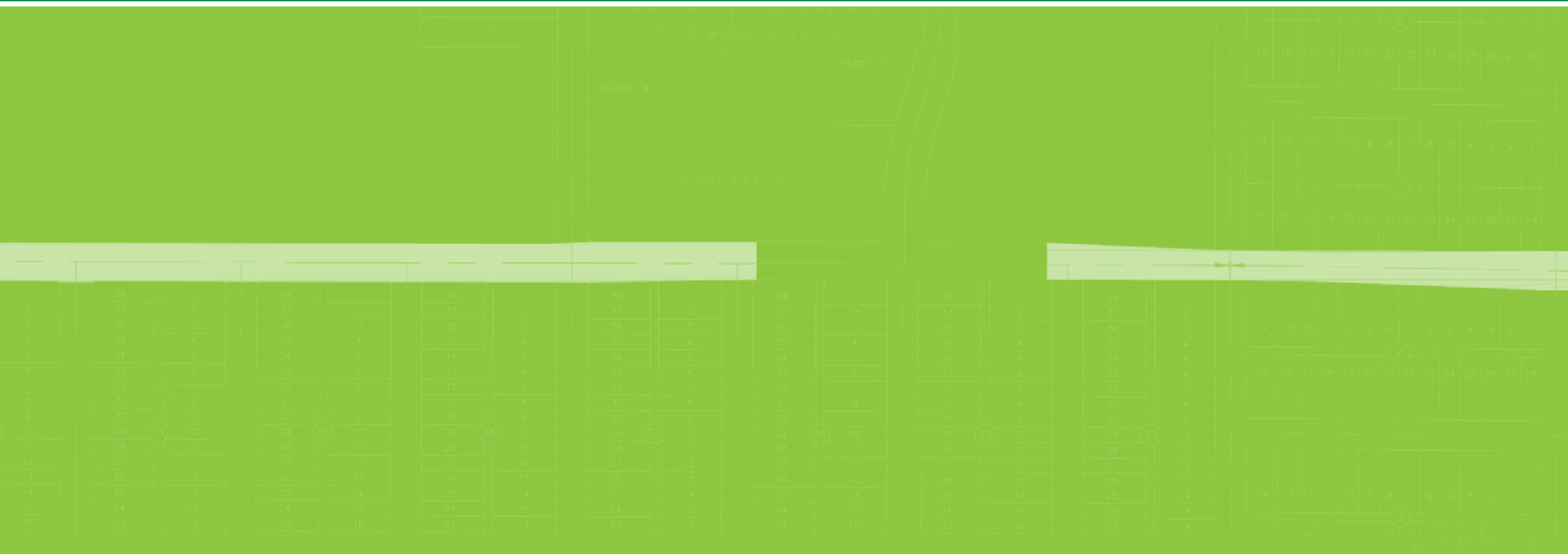
Downtown Spokane Partnership  
[www.downtownspokane.org](http://www.downtownspokane.org)

Connect Northwest Community investors  
[www.connectnw.org](http://www.connectnw.org)

Evergreen Business Capital  
(An SBA 504 lender)  
[www.evergreen504.com](http://www.evergreen504.com)

Northwest Business Development  
Association (An SBA 504 lender)  
[www.nwbusiness.org](http://www.nwbusiness.org)

WSBDC Washington Small Business  
Development Centers  
[www.wsbdc.org](http://www.wsbdc.org)



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