

City of Richmond Hill

Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan



Introduction

The global escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a public health crisis in Canada and abroad. The measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 have resulted in a number of unintended consequences including significant local and regional economic impacts. To mitigate the economic impacts, the City has been working with all levels of government and local business partners to coordinate access to available support programs and launch new programs to assist businesses to adapt to the current business environment.

On April 22, 2020, Richmond Hill Council approved the establishment of a Recover Richmond Hill Task Force to help lead the development of this Plan. The Task Force is responsible for providing strategic recommendations to Council on programs and strategies to help Richmond Hill businesses to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Task Force is working with partners (provincial and federal governments, community agencies, educational institutions, business associations and local businesses) to develop and recommend economic recovery programs to Council. This Plan represents the feedback and advice received by local businesses, business associations, other levels of government and stakeholders. When considering planned recovery, the Task Force identified the following three general types of activities that will inform recovery:

1. Reopening Activities: Activities aimed at supporting local businesses to re-open when directed by the Province of Ontario and York Region Public Health.
2. Recovery Activities (Pre-Vaccine): Activities aimed at supporting economic recovery with existing or amended public health restrictions that impact economic activity.
3. Recovery Activities (Post-Vaccine): Activities aimed at supporting economic recovery with no substantial public health restrictions in place that impact economic recovery.

The Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan is focused on providing support for the re-opening and pre-vaccine recovery activities as described above. It is anticipated that activities will need to be re-evaluated and recalibrated to support economic recovery in a post-vaccine environment. Building on the work currently underway at the federal, provincial and regional levels of government, the Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan provides a clear set of activities and actions that the City will undertake with its partners to support local business.



What We Heard

The Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan was developed in response to feedback received by the local business community. Since mid-March, the City has been actively engaged with local businesses to provide support during the COVID 19 pandemic. These activities are highlighted by the following:

- 400+ Business Consultations
- Direct Restaurant and Hospitality Outreach
- Feedback from 550+ Webinar Participants
- Feedback from 2 Board of Trade Essential Business Webinars
- Results from TechConnex Business Survey
- Results from Board of Trade Business Survey
- Results from the York Region Business Recovery Survey
- Weekly meetings with local business associations
- Recover Richmond Hill Task Force feedback

These activities have resulted in hundreds of direct business interactions and significant interface with local businesses that have informed the development of the Plan. The recurring themes of these engagement activities are highlighted below:

- Businesses require ongoing financial support during recovery.
- COVID-19 has significantly increased operating costs (PPE, Cleaning, temporary shutdowns), which are impacting profitability.
- Rent obligations are challenging as a result of the sustained shutdown.
- Support for re-opening is needed particularly in the small business sector.
- There are concerns around shifts in consumer behavior and its impact on business.
- Rate of change is challenging businesses to innovate to survive.
- Entrepreneurs are developing and revisiting ideas for new businesses and require continued support.
- Businesses are prioritizing and need support for continuity planning.
- Businesses are concerned about the prospect of permanent closures and layoffs.
- Concerns about supply chain reliability.

These recurring themes are at the core of this Action Plan and directly align with the Action Items proposed.



Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

Vision Statement

The vision for the Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan is *to actively assist Richmond Hill businesses to thrive in the post pandemic economic environment.*

Mission Statement

Our mission is *to provide active support to local businesses and targeted support for investment and entrepreneurs to help grow the business sector in Richmond Hill.* This approach is focused on assisting new and existing businesses to realize the business development opportunities that have and will continue to emerge over the coming months. This includes assisting businesses to:

- Re-align operations to maintain continuity;
- Reopen business locations following the closure;
- Re-establish normal business operations as rapidly as possible;
- Encourage residents to shop local;
- Re-establish sales and revenue;
- Re-establish and diversify supply chains; and,
- Prepare business continuity plans.

Guiding Principles

The following Guiding Principles were developed to help guide the development of the Action Plan. These Guiding Principles include:

- Action Plan should support a wide range of sectors since economic impacts of COVID 19 are generally widespread;
- Highly impacted sectors such as retail trade, hospitality, tourism, entertainment, food services, cultural services and personal services may require additional emphasis;
- Structural changes in the economy and consumer behaviour accelerate change and emphasize the need to support innovation and entrepreneurship;
- Education, training and advanced skills development should help stimulate innovation and business recovery;
- Local, regional, provincial and federal governments should align support programs to maximize impact; and,
- Action Plan should leverage best practices applied to the local context and existing program delivery infrastructure.



Strategic Goals and Action

The Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan vision and mission are supported by 10 actions within three strategic goal areas that are further described below:

Goal: Delivering Business Support Programs

1. Launch a Business Support Hotline to assist local businesses to access reopening and recovery programs during predetermined times.
2. Deliver Re-opening Webinar Series, in partnership with the Richmond Hill Board of Trade to assist local businesses to develop reopening plans.
3. Continue to maintain online resource hub as a resource for local businesses to access information related to available support programs.

Goal: Supporting Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

1. Launch ShopHere, in partnership with Digitalmainstreet.ca to assist businesses to build or optimize their online platform.
2. Launch a Municipal Business Innovation Contest and Innovation Showcase to provide small businesses with the opportunity to partner with the City of Richmond Hill on innovative products and services.
3. Launch a Local Innovation Centre, in partnership with post-secondary partners, to support entrepreneurs, incubate new businesses and accelerate business investment.
4. Deliver Small Business Micro-grants, in partnership with York Region and the province of Ontario, to assist local businesses to implement recovery plans.

Goal: Encouraging Local Residents and Business to Shop Local

1. Permit the temporary creation and/or expansion of outdoor patios and retail areas to support local businesses through recovery.
2. Launch a Shop Safe Downtown Program featuring enhanced cleaning and safety, in partnership with York Region Public Health and York Regional Police, to promote historic downtown as safe shopping destination.
3. Work with the Richmond Hill Board of Trade and Village of Richmond Hill Board of Trade to support a business led Shop Local Marketing Campaign to encourage local residents to support local business.

Implementation

The effective implementation of the Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan requires that the organization support this program in the following ways:

- Support the implementation of the Action Plan.
- Establish collaborative cross-functional teams to support the implementation of the Plan where appropriate.
- Enable and enhance existing internal and external partnerships to advance identified action items.
- Regularly monitor and report on the progress towards the implementation of the Action Plan.

The implementation of the Recover Richmond Hill Action Plan is guided by the development of an Implementation Matrix that outlines the accountability structure, support services, specific actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that allow the Action Plan to move forward.

