

HOME 2020 COLORADO RESILIENCY FRAMEWORK UNDERSTAND PLAN RECOVERY ROADMAPS ACT RECOVERY RESOURCES ABOUT

The Colorado Resiliency Office is highlighting the work of local governments, organizations, and businesses who are adapting to the changing COVID-19 crisis.

Arvada Resiliency Taskforce

The culture of resilience was present in Arvada before the COVID-19 pandemic through both informal connections and the beginning stages of a formal planning process. The City of Arvada identified community resilience as a strategic goal in its 2020-2025 plan last year and worked with the Colorado Resiliency Office to develop a resilience framework, which positioned the city to be responsive to disruptions. This work prepared them to respond adaptively when it became clear the COVID-19 pandemic would affect the city. The local Chamber of Commerce and the Arvada Economic Development Association (AEDA) stood up the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce in early March of 2020 to help the community cope with the crisis and its effects on local businesses.

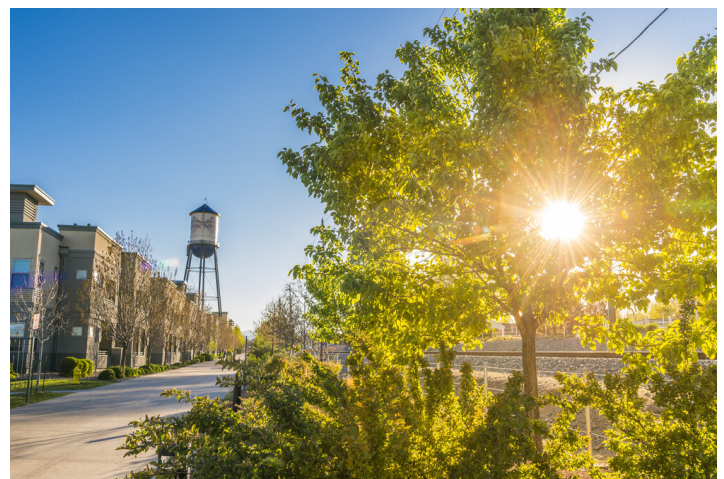


Image Credit: Arvada Economic Development Association

FEMA estimates that [40-60% of small businesses do not reopen after large-scale natural disasters](#), which makes their resiliency and recovery an important focus for

communities like Arvada. The CRO spoke with Daniel Ryley, the Executive Director of AEDA, about the creation of the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce, its relationship with local business, and the innovations it has produced throughout Arvada's response to COVID-19.

Creation of the Business Taskforce

Ryley's role is two-fold: managing the funding for economic development in Arvada that is allocated by Arvada City Council to AEDA (a nonprofit, volunteer-based Board of Directors) and supporting the larger economic development goals and initiatives as part of the larger community and economic development work system within city government. AEDA and the Arvada Chamber of Commerce brought their informal partners to the table formally when they created the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce. The Taskforce includes [a cross-section of local partners](#).

Rapid Response

The Taskforce got to work on daily video calls to triage questions coming in from local businesses about conflicting health orders and clearing up rumors about what was happening during the early phase of response to COVID-19. As the response phase progressed, they were able to categorize the types of questions coming in from local businesses and recognize a few actions they needed to take immediately. The group decided to build a [webpage on the Arvada Chamber of Commerce website](#). This was the home for all the information businesses would need with additions published as needed. They created both a [business toolkit](#) and a [workforce toolkit](#). Taskforce members had been taking personal phone calls from business owners, but now there was a centralized resource to post new information throughout the crisis.

Bridging the Gap

The next concern the Taskforce heard from local businesses was that they were not going to survive the time between applying for federal aid like the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and when payments actually hit their account. The federal funding was "not going to show up very quickly and [wasn't] going to be very equitably distributed," according to Ryley. Through this feedback collected from the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce, Ryley proposed the City of Arvada partner with AEDA on developing an [interest free, partially forgivable loan program](#) targeted to small brick and mortar business in Arvada. Ultimately, the City of Arvada formed the Arvada Emergency Small Business Loan Fund, which included \$2.5 million in total contributions from the City of Arvada General Fund, AEDA and the Arvada Urban Renewal Authority. Weeks later when payments from federal programs like PPP are coming through, recipient businesses are interested in paying back the bridge loan they received from Arvada. (The City is still setting them all up as accounts so they can begin repayment). Repayments on the loan are not due until 2021.

Sharing Adaptations

Another adaptation was publishing the [Creative Commerce page](#), which hosts a list of local businesses and how they are adapting to regulations imposed during COVID-19. Some innovations are well-known to small businesses around the state like distilleries pivoting to hand sanitizer or retailers pivoting to e-commerce. Others display different innovations, like:

- The [Jefferson Animal Clinic](#) is offering Car-Side Check-Ins for all clients and patients.
- [Balefire Goods](#) lets customers book custom appointments to discuss jewelry needs in person or virtually. Custom and repair work can be performed via mail or curbside drop-off/pick-up to minimize contact.
- Shoppers at [Carly's Boutique](#) can do video calls with staff who will discuss their shopping needs and walk around the store to show them products. Items can be shipped or delivered locally.
- The owner of [Snarky Sweet Cake Chick, LLC](#) has been doing “virtual tastings” for wedding clients where she delivers a tasting box (dropped at their doorstep) and then consults with them on a Zoom conference call from the safety of her studio.

The listings on “Creative Commerce” serve as an example to their fellow business owners about how to adapt when change comes quickly.

Transition to Open

To help local business as the city transitions to safer-at-home, the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce is providing businesses that comply with public health guidelines branding that states they are “[Safe and Open](#).” The Taskforce is supporting this effort with signage for storefronts, web icons for social media, and other marketing. Over 140 businesses have taken the pledge. Posters are showing up in windows all over town. Ryley was sure to note this safe and open concept goes two ways; “Businesses are going to take precautions, but they're also asking the customers to take precautions,” he said. Building confidence as we transition to open goes both ways.

Each action taken by the Arvada Resiliency Taskforce is informed by the input of local businesses. This community case study shows how a central organization can streamline feedback and turn comments into action. As the City transitions into long-term recovery, the Taskforce will continue to hear feedback and respond adaptively.