

Valpo Announces Back on Track Operations

The City of Valparaiso is both cautious and eager to get Back on Track according to Governor Eric Holcomb's guidelines. "We're both excited to see business resuming and vigilant in observing guidelines to keep everyone safe," said Mayor Matt Murphy. "We're really encouraged by the success we've seen in the phased reopening of our city golf courses – Forest Park and Creekside. People have been very respectful of guidelines and pleased to be back in action," he said.

In support of Governor Holcomb's 5-stage Back on Track plan to reopen Indiana's economy, Valparaiso is entering the second week of Stage 2. This means:

- Since May 4, groups up to 25 may gather, following social distancing guidelines. This will continue until at least May 23. "While gatherings are permitted, available data still suggests that a person is more susceptible to contracting COVID-19 if they are in close contact with others," said Murphy. "I continue to encourage all residents to act reasonably – specifically those over the age of 65 or those with an existing health condition."
- As of today, hair/nail salons, barber shops, and spas may operate by appointment. Employees must wear face coverings, workstations must be spaced to meet social distancing guidelines, and customers are encouraged to wear face coverings where possible. "In speaking to some local businesses, I'm told that customers will wait in vehicles until their appointment times. As these businesses begin to reopen, please give them your support," encouraged Murphy.
- Also, today, restaurants and bars that serve food may open at 50% capacity. Bar seating remains closed and live entertainment is prohibited. Servers and kitchen staff must wear face coverings. "I realize that some restaurants have made the decision to remain closed for an additional amount of time. Whether open for dining or carry-out, please continue to support our restaurant operators and staff," said Murphy.
- To further support downtown businesses, the City of Valparaiso is suspending downtown parking enforcement through at least July 4. "We will work closely with our downtown businesses and tweak our parking policies if needed," said Murphy.
- The City of Valparaiso has also expedited its approval process for outdoor dining spots. "Adding outdoor spots gives our restaurants more room to spread out tables and provides more opportunities for patrons to dine outdoors," said Murphy.

Here is how the City of Valparaiso is working together to also reopen City offices:

1. Essential Services (Police, Fire, Public Works and Utilities) have continued with no interruption. To date, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 among City employees. "I remain in constant contact with our Police and Fire Chief to ensure they have the resources necessary to protect all City residents," said Murphy.

2. As of last week, Valparaiso's Public Works Department is back to operating at full strength. "During this COVID crisis, Valparaiso residents have not seen any impact to trash collection service. In addition, as of this week, almost all curbside lawn waste has been collected. Thanks to Brent Dickson and all the dedicated employees for their hard work," said Murphy.
3. "Valparaiso Parks has shown great leadership in opening golf courses with safety guidelines that have been well received and well observed," said Murphy. The driving range At Creekside opened on May 11, with guidelines in place. "We're looking forward to seeing the clubhouses open at 50% starting May 24. The cautious and successful opening of our golf courses has provided important information and guidance as the City moves to reopen other aspects of City operations," said Murphy.
4. Parks and playgrounds are also scheduled to reopen on May 24, observing social distancing guidelines. The City is exploring options to maintain a safe environment for all playground guests. More information will be available in the next two weeks.
5. City Hall employees began returning today with an expectation that all City Hall employees will be back on Monday, May 18 -- although exceptions will be made for employees with any health limitations. "Fortunately, we have an abundance of PPE and we're grateful to Assistant Police Chief Mike DeHaven and Assistant Fire Chief Scott Arnold for their work in ensuring City Hall has all the necessary supplies," said Murphy.
6. Clerk Treasurer, Holly Taylor and her staff have been coordinating the purchase of additional supplies and working with other City Departments. City Hall employees will have daily temperatures taken and will be required to wear facemasks in common areas to protect our entire workforce. Although employee testing for COVID-19 was considered, there are no current plans to mandate testing of all employees.
7. The current plan is to open City Hall to the public on June 1. "We're currently finalizing plans on how to limit the number of guests for safety. We're also considering how best to conduct public meetings in the City Council Chambers while exercising appropriate social distancing," said Murphy. More information will be provided in the coming weeks. At this time, City meetings are still being conducted by Conference Call. Plan Commission is scheduled to meet tomorrow at 5:30 and the Redevelopment Commission is scheduled to meet on Thursday at 4:00. City residents are encouraged to participate by phone.
8. Transit services are set to resume on June 1 with the ChicaGO Dash express bus resuming with 2 buses to and from Chicago daily. Transit Connect services to the South Shore Line will also resume on June 1. The V-Line has continued operations uninterrupted to serve our community. All of the city's transit services will remain free of charge through June. "I want to acknowledge Beth Schrader and her team for navigating the City's transportation operations through these last two months," said Murphy.
9. Valparaiso Events is launching their season with the Valparaiso Market, opening June 2nd -- both Tuesdays and Saturdays at the Urschel Pavilion. They will host two drive-in style movies -- on June 16 and June 30. Summer Concerts are scheduled to begin July 16.
10. Working with Holly Taylor, Mike Jessen and City Council members, "I continue to monitor City finances very closely," said Murphy. "I conduct a weekly meeting to review fund balances and plan for possible reductions in future tax draws. Holly and her staff have been extremely helpful in preparing necessary reports and providing historical context to better understand our financial position. Although the City is operating with an abundance of caution, I am also

optimistic that we will be able to navigate this crisis without reduction in City services,” he said. More will be known after the City’s first tax draw in early June.

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Honestly Accountable Surprisingly Responsive Boldly Proactive Creatively Frugal Respectfully Compassionate
