



COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE
DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER

March 30, 2020

The Honorable Governor Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002 Olympia, WA 98504-0002

VIA Email

The Honorable Governor Inslee:

We would like to again thank you for the strong leadership and ongoing communications from your team during this unprecedented period in our state.

We understand and support your focus on the science and metrics of efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. We also understand you will be reviewing the progress the state is making on infection rates, hospitalization rates, and traffic demand under the “Stay Home, Stay Save” executive order.

We encourage you to consider allowing private-sector commercial and residential construction as soon as possible in Washington. Any re-start of construction would need to meet safety plans for worker protections consistent with State Department of Health and Labor and Industries recommendations and include enhanced and enforceable personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements and social distancing rules. To underscore our commitment to jobsite worker safety we have included some examples of these policies from one of our members. We believe these plans can address COVID risk.

On Saturday March 28th, the Department of Homeland Security published its updated guidance on Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers. The updated March 28 memo can be accessed at: https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/CISA_Guidance_on_the_Essential_Critical_Infrastructure_Workforce_Version_2.0_1.pdf. Notably, DHS recognized residential construction as essential:

- Residential Construction. Workers performing housing construction related activities to ensure additional units can be made available to combat the nation’s existing housing supply shortage.

This new federal guidance recognizes the balance between strong measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to tackle other emergencies like our housing shortage. Housing is currently 14.6% of Gross Domestic Product and a major engine of the economy. The construction industry employs over 16,000 in the Puget Sound region alone. In addition, Washington faces an affordability crisis in our residential market. We know that Washington has a growing housing gap with over 225,000 units that are needed to keep pace with our job growth. Keeping the men and women of the construction industry – including many union trades on the high-rise towers and job sites in the Puget Sound – working and building should also be a state priority. If the construction industry and its supply chain is disrupted, it creates a domino effect leading to dire negative economic repercussions for an already-burdened economy.



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We, request that you consider construction of single-family and multifamily housing, as well as commercial construction as an essential service, so that individuals may continue to perform work necessary to the operations and maintenance of “Essential Infrastructure.”

In addition, many existing projects are at critical stages of construction where, even during the shutdown, need certain inspections to continue. This is especially critical if a project is near or seeking a temporary certificate of occupancy. The revised federal guidance also addresses this key issue.

- Workers supporting the construction of housing, including those supporting government functions related to the building and development process, such as inspections, permitting and plan review services that can be modified to protect the public health, but fundamentally should continue and serve the construction of housing (e.g., allow qualified private third-party inspections in case of government shutdown).

The construction industry is vital to the success of Washington and critical to the resiliency of our housing and economic markets. More importantly, we know that coming out of this COVID crisis, people will need housing, medical facilities and research space more than ever. Maintaining the construction industry, when conducted properly using all applicable CDC and Dept. of Health recommendations, will be a critical mechanism to ensure a quick economic recovery from COVID.

Please consider additional guidance under the Executive Order to allow private commercial and residential construction, subject to rigorous jobsite COVID prevention and PPE plans, to continue.

Thank you for your consideration. We are available to discuss this at any time with you or your team.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Peggi Lewis Fu'.

Peggi Lewis Fu, Executive Director
NAIOP Washington State