

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RE. CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUNDS

(updated Sept. 18, 2020)



DISTRIBUTION OF FEDERAL CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUNDS



OPERATIONS

Expenses to keep staff and community members safe, such as increased safety precautions, personal protective equipment, extensive cleaning, hosting remote meetings, and telecommuting. We're prepared should another outbreak occur.



EDUCATION

The City is working with the school district to create outdoor classrooms and socially distanced learning opportunities at Fruita schools.



COMMUNITY

Providing timely and accurate communication to our community, Fruita businesses, and guests. Working with non-profit partners to provide resources for those in need.



ECONOMIC

To help Fruita businesses, the City is creating outdoor seating spaces for customers of downtown and southside businesses.

VISIT [FRUITA.ORG](https://www.fruita.org) FOR MORE INFORMATION



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General

What are Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds?

These are federal funds that resulted from the CARES Act passed by the US Congress due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds flowed through the states and each County in Colorado received a specific distribution.

How much funding did the City receive?

\$1,162,373 is available to the City of Fruita for eligible expenses between April 1 – Dec 31, 2020, on a reimbursement basis. The City met with Mesa County and the other cities and towns in Mesa County to determine how much each entity would receive.

When did the City find out it would receive funding, what eligibility requirements were and begin communicating with the public?

After it looked as if local governments in Colorado under 500,000 populations would not receive any allocations from the CARES Act, at the end of May 2020, we found out Mesa County would receive funding and need to work with local cities and towns to determine how to distribute. Guidance and eligibility criteria were not yet fully available and continues to be updated. On July 6, 2020, Fruita City Council approved a memorandum of understanding with Mesa County clarifying the allocation to the City. Much of the month of July City staff spent much time learning from and following newly released guidance on what expenses would be eligible. Staff presented ideas and brainstormed with City Council at their public workshop on July 28.

Now that guidance was clearer and staff had City Council support to focus on operations, economic, educational and community assistance projects, time was of the essence. Staff began working with the Fruita Area Chamber of Commerce, local businesses to solidify eligible projects to assist the community. The City worked with an architectural design firm, Studio Seed who had already worked for Downtown Colorado, Inc. on relief fund projects to begin designing outdoor spaces around town and at Fruita schools. On August 4, City Council amended the relief funds into the 2020 budget. On August 11, Planning & Development Director Dan Caris joined Mesa county Public Health Director Jeff Kuhr on a webinar provided to the Fruita businesses and placed on YouTube to discuss the projects the City was working on. On August 18, Mayor Joel Kincaid and City Manager Mike Bennett presented how the City was planning to spend relief funds to the State of the Grand Valley event streamed live throughout Mesa County. Updates were provided to City Council at nearly every Council meeting and in the City Manager's weekly updates found on the City's website or available via email subscription. The City began highlighting the downtown spaces and other projects on social media on August 24.



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What can the funding be spent on?

The US Treasury oversees the very specific eligibility criteria for what the funding may be spent on. In short, it may only be spent on unforeseen, un-budgeted expenses directly resulting from COVID-19. Some expenses commonly asked about that are not eligible include permanent capital projects, land acquisitions, or covering loss of revenue due to the pandemic.

What eligible expenses is the City spending the Coronavirus Relief Funds on?

The City is expending funds to four areas of eligible expenses: **(1)** operational expenses, **(2)** economic recovery, **(3)** educational assistance and **(4)** community assistance expenses.

Operating expenses due to the pandemic include technology upgrades for remote meetings, public meetings, preparing critical positions with remote capabilities, extra cleaning, additional personal protective equipment (PPE), improved air systems in City Hall, outdoor programming spaces at the Community Center, additional cleaning supplies, etc.

Economic recovery expenses include creating temporary, spaced out outdoor dining and shade spaces in addition to providing information to the Chamber and businesses of funding sources and creating a loan fund via the Business Incubator Center (with City funds, not relief funds).

Educational assistance expenses are covering the costs of multiple temporary outdoor classrooms at Shelledy Elementary, Rim Rock Elementary, Monument Ridge Elementary, Fruita Middle, Fruita 8-9 and Fruita Monument High School.

Community assistance expenses include a public information campaign Be Well. Be Fruita to assist in positive reminders about safely navigating the pandemic and information on temporary public spaces. The City is also working with Food Bank of the Rockies to determine whether any eligible expenses exist with the three Fruita food banks.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the City's financial position?

At the onset of the pandemic in early March 2020, the City immediately implemented its emergency operation plan, strategically cut expenses, and issued a [Declaration of Local Disaster Emergency](#). The City anticipated decreases in



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revenues due to the pandemic. The City relies most heavily on sales tax revenue to provide core services. Since 2017, each year has been a record year for the City regarding highest City sales tax collections due to the success of local businesses. Even during the pandemic, it turns out 2020 is trending 28.49% above 2019 through July collections. This does not mean every business is doing better, but many are. The categories of restaurants and lodging saw the largest decreases in revenues. The Fruita Community Center and recreation programs also saw a significant decline due to forced closures and restrictions. Fortunately, the City entered the pandemic with healthy reserves and fund balances, and a great start to 2020. Combined with the targeted cuts to expenses and healthy local economy, the City is in sound financial shape. This enabled the City to look beyond eligible operational expenses and to economic, educational and community assistance. To view monthly financial reports, click [here](#).

Downtown Public Seating Areas

Why outdoor dining spaces?

It has become evident during the pandemic that health and safety restrictions have created a lack of dining seating and outside is a safe area to social distance and enjoy Fruita's amazing local establishments. Even though Fruita sales tax is trending higher than any year in history, not all businesses are doing great and food establishments as a category have taken a hit due to capacity limitations. We hope this temporary space helps more residents and guests frequent local businesses by finding space to remain in town and frequent retail establishments in addition to restaurants, coffee shops and breweries.

What are the rules for the downtown outdoor dining spaces?

As this is temporary and new, rules may be adjusted as necessary, but so far, they are:

Enjoy Fruita's Outdoor Dining Space

- Hours of Operation: 7am – 10pm

Dont's

- Bring Glass – It'll Break and Cause a Mess
- Smoke for Your Health and Everyone Else's
- Bring Booze – unless it's from One of Our Local Businesses that Sells it TOGO
- Drink Anywhere Else but in the Fenced Area

Do's:

- Be Considerate of Others and Have Fun



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- Leave Your Furry Friends at Home
- Drink Responsibly and Don't Drive if Drinking
- Ride Your Bike – It's the Fruita-Way!
- Space Out – to Stop the Spread, what'd you think we meant!
- Clean up After Yourself – No One Wants a Mess
- Shop Local as in Shop Fruita
- Spread Cheer, Not Germs

How long will the spaces be open to the public? Are the spaces temporary or permanent?

These are temporary spaces. As you will notice, water cisterns hold the tents in place and all materials are moveable for emergency situations. While the City can retain all materials and re-use in other ways in the future, the eligibility requirements do not allow the City to construct permanent improvements. The City anticipates the spaces to be up for the remainder of 2020. Depending on COVID-19 restrictions and the success of the spaces, considerations to briefly extend will be determined.

Why block the roads and what about parking?

The two locations in downtown on North Peach and North Mulberry Streets from Aspen to the alley were selected for a few reasons. The locations are extremely close to all restaurants, coffee shops and breweries in the downtown, even within sight. They are both located next to large public parking lots. Unlike many cities that have converted their "main streets" to pedestrian only, the City recognized closing Aspen Ave. would potentially cause more negative impacts than positive. Many cities also blocked parking places for dinette seating in front of restaurants to prove a table or two per establishment, which the City also saw as a detriment and saw this configuration a way to establish more dining open to the public and customers of all businesses. We realize that it is always a bit inconvenient for drivers when a road is closed, but hope these two minor, temporary closures will benefit the whole more than a quick extended around the block drive. The City is also moving to install better signage to help people navigate to the three public parking lots in addition to the on street public parking.

Has the City considered colder temperatures?

Yes, you will notice standing post heaters in the spaces for those colder temperatures.

Can anyone sit there?



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Yes, these are public spaces, so anyone is welcome who is following the rules and the law. The City strongly encourages people using the space to shop local as the purpose of the spaces is to provide additional areas for people to safely enjoy the City and be customers to Fruita businesses.

Can I consume alcohol in the spaces?

Yes, if it is purchased from local restaurants and breweries who have properly packaged the alcohol in State of Colorado approved to go packaging. Customers of this can then bring the alcohol into the fenced portion of the spaces to consume before exiting. Drink responsibly and do not drink and drive. It is not allowed to bring in your own alcohol. Executive Order 20-093 suspended the prohibition on public right of ways (e.g. municipal sidewalks and streets) being ineligible as areas where localities may authorize public consumption.

Southside Business Area outdoor Dining spaces

Is the City only doing outdoor dining spaces in downtown?

The City has purchased enough materials to also add tents, tables, chairs in the Kokopelli Business area near Rib City, Pablos Pizza and Strayhorn Grill. The City is working with the businesses to see if all businesses in the area approved of allowing space for these areas to be placed in the private parking lots since these are not owned or maintained by the City.

Shade Areas

Why is there a tent in Civic Center Park?

An open tent will soon be placed in Civic Center Park to provide additional shade for people to lounge under on the grass, a blanket, or their own camping chairs. We have seen you huddling under each tree to catch a glimpse of shade, so hopefully this helps people catch some shade while spreading out. If available after supplies are used in the Kokopelli Business area Fruita schools, the City may add another shade tent behind the Community Center.



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Outdoor Classrooms

What are they?

These are temporary structures utilizing large event tents or connecting shade structure between buildings and creating social distanced seating outdoor, equipped with a white board, etc. Fruita was unique in expending funds in this manner and is now helping other communities consider this. The City connected Studio Seed with the School District Administration and each school's principal to look at available area and need per school.

Where will they be?

They will be located at Shelledy Elementary, Rim Rock Elementary, Monument Ridge Elementary, Fruita Middle, Fruita 8-9 and Fruita Monument High School.

Why is the City funding these?

The City views effective partnerships as leading to most all successes in this community and works closely with the Fruita schools in many ways. It is important that our students, teachers and school administrators have every means possible to remain in in-person learning. With pandemic restrictions and wearing masks, these classrooms will enable students to get outside more in a safe way while learning. These spaces help schools social distance students. Many studies show outdoor learning has positive impacts. If further restrictions were needed, this give more latitude to stay in school. If for any reason we had to return to remote learning, perhaps these spaces could provide for students to come use chrome books and access Internet if a school was authorized.

