

# OPEN DURING CONSTRUCTION

## A Guide for Kelowna Businesses



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## Get involved early

The City of Kelowna is proactive in its approach to community engagement throughout the planning, design, and delivery of major projects. It is important for the City to reach out to property and business owners impacted by construction. This will likely occur through mailings to business owners inviting them to planning meetings for the project. Your concerns, suggestions and questions are important to the process and your involvement in the early stages of the planning allows for flexibility to incorporate changes into the project as it moves forward. Please watch for mailings and attend these meetings to learn more about the project and provide your feedback.

Each year in December, City Council approves the annual Financial Plan for the upcoming year which includes a list of capital construction projects. At the same time the City will finalize construction designs. In the spring, the City hosts a media briefing to describe all the projects being constructed within Kelowna. In most cases, the City will tender out major projects for construction early in the year and contractors will be hired to start construction as weather and environmental conditions permit. The City will then host public information sessions relevant to the project to ensure everyone is aware of the construction schedule, traffic management plan proposed and important construction contacts. Notification letters to property or business owners impacted by the construction will be mailed out in advance and news releases and advertisements will be placed.

While road construction can be challenging for small businesses, care of utilities and other infrastructure are necessary to serve the city's population. Mobility improvements will enhance flow of traffic and pedestrian/cycling connections making customers more likely to frequent businesses.

Transportation and utility infrastructure plans are typically known several years in advance. The Transportation Network Servicing Plan provides a snapshot of transportation infrastructure to meet the future needs of the city as it continues to grow.

Disruption from construction can be mitigated if there is proper coordination with business owners, City officials, consultants, contractors and businesses. Remember, the earlier concerns are shared, the better prepared the project team will be to respond appropriately.

In the best interest of your business, it is important to stay in touch with current events and upcoming projects. Communicate with your staff, visit the City's website for updates, join local business organizations and attend information sessions.



## Contribute ideas · Share concerns · Stay connected

- ▶ Fill out comment forms and return them by deadline.
- ▶ Attend public hearings and meetings.
- ▶ Schedule appointments with individuals from the project team.
- ▶ Call, email or write to the team in charge of the project. This information is available on [kelowna.ca/cityprojects](http://kelowna.ca/cityprojects) or can be obtained by contacting the Design & Construction Department at 250-469-8559.
- ▶ The City's website at [kelowna.ca/roadreport](http://kelowna.ca/roadreport) informs the public of road closures, construction projects, and potential delays. The City's Road Report Map Viewer collects data from road usage permits issued by the City. All public and private contractors are required to obtain a road usage permit for any work affecting traffic flow.

## Business planning: proactive approach before construction begins

As a business owner, you are always taking the initiative to improve your business model. When informed ahead of time, road construction is something you can prepare for. Here are some suggestions from business owners who've been through the construction process already.

**B**e prepared by review your staffing needs. It's an unfortunate reality, but if you expect a significant decrease in customers once construction begins, you may need to adjust staffing levels. Other options might include job sharing or planned vacation time.

**R**educe inventory. When possible, reducing inventory can be a useful strategy.

**S**ecure a line of credit while times are good. It's important to get a line of credit during a good time when sales are up. That way you'll have it when and if there's an emergency.

**G**ather customer contact information. Keep your customers informed before construction begins so they are aware of road conditions, best routes and promotional specials during the construction period. You might consider sending weekly opt-in emails to customers with the idea that if you

keep them informed and in the loop, they won't be as likely to change their buying habits during construction.

**I**nform customers in advance. Keeping your customers informed gives them the ability to maneuver construction and access your business. Examples can include putting up signage or passing out copies of alternative routes to the business prior to construction beginning. Staying within the sign bylaw is important. Contact Bylaw Enforcement to ensure you don't put yourself into a position of contravening the bylaw.

**W**ork with your employees to develop a game plan. Talk to your employees about processes and strategies to stay prosperous during construction. Discuss marketing efforts and allow employees to share any concern they may have. Your employees will appreciate the opportunity, and the dialogue may produce new ideas that will benefit your business.

Everything  
from inventory  
to customer  
and employee  
communications



# What to expect once construction begins

Create a friendly rapport with construction workers. While the on-site construction workers aren't the appropriate people to contact about concerns, creating a friendly rapport with them will only serve to improve your situation. Positive interactions could lead to contractors being customers themselves and helping your customers access your business.

Support your neighbouring businesses. Make the extra effort to shop locally,

If there are construction related concerns, communicate these directly to the supervisors and project leaders. This is the best way to be productive. Negative conversations in public forums may create an environment where customers would rather stay away.

Dust and noise is a reality. Although every effort is made to minimize dust, you will need to be mindful of dust issues and be prepared.

Make sure signage is clear. Traffic delays are expected during construction, however signage can be helpful. See what sort of signs are going up to direct traffic and make sure they make sense for your customers. Construction crews

aren't aware of your specific needs and often it's just a matter of asking. Also, make sure there's signage properly directing your customers to parking spaces.

Signage is highly recommended to accommodate better access for your customers during construction. If you wish to place temporary signs, contact the City of Kelowna to ensure the signage for your property does not affect sight lines for motorists and provides a clear thoroughfare for pedestrians, particularly those with accessibility challenges.

Other accesses to your business, such as a back lane may be an option for alternate customer access during construction. If you choose this option, providing signage directing your customers to the alternate entrance will prove helpful. If you have a back door, consider using it as another entrance to your business.

Advertise temporary entrance locations and parking in flyers, web, radio, TV spots or newspaper ads, or include in your updates to your customers.

## How to retain your customer base during construction



## Temporary signage:

Temporary signage is the responsibility of the City project manager. There are two types of temporary business signs that can be installed to assist customers: driveway signs and, alternate business access signs/directional signs.

Driveway signs visually aid motorists where to turn since construction can make it confusing. Businesses are responsible for providing and installing driveway signage on their own property.

Alternate Business Access or Directional Signs are installed by the City or contractor on City right-of-way. These signs state "Alternate Business Access" and have an arrow on them. They are placed in advance of the intersections to inform motorists where to turn. These signs are produced by the City and installed by the project's contractor. Contact the City project manager regarding the installation of these signs.

## Tips once construction begins

Communication is critical during the construction projects. As a business owner, communicate with the construction project managers, your employees, other businesses and most importantly, your customers.

1. Keep project manager's contact information close at hand.
2. Provide directions and access information for your employees. Don't let them make the area more congested. Depending on the number of people you employ, you might consider offering a carpool from an agreed location or promoting transit. Rewarding change in traveling behavior creates a win-win situation for all involved. Reducing congestion allows better access for your customers
3. Join local business organizations. Plugging into the business community, sharing ideas and expressing concerns to your business association provides an excellent conduit to express ideas or concerns to local, regional, or federal governments.
4. Provide signs to guide customers to your business but ensure your signs are placed appropriately. Once again, go out and make sure signs put up by construction crews make sense for your business. If they don't, contact the project supervisor.

and acknowledging employees' commitment to the environment will create a positive work environment and encourage continued commitment in the future.

## Other strategies

### Deliver products to your customers

Another method worth exploring is implementing delivery services to reach customers unable or unwilling to navigate through construction.

### Telephone script near your phone

Consider keeping a script next to your phones, so that you and your employees have quick and easy directions to provide to customers. Make sure all your employees know what to say and how to say it.

### Stay informed!

Attend all public information sessions related to the construction project. Be sure to open all City correspondence or subscribe to email updates, add the City's Twitter or Facebook accounts as another method to receive real-time information.

### Extend business hours

Consider being open later in the evening after construction crews are finished for the day. Be flexible to accommodate customer needs.

### Make the construction work for you

If you were considering a remodel for your business, why not do it during the construction period. Use this opportunity to get things done that you haven't had time to do.

### Be creative

Think outside of the traditional advertising concepts and go above and beyond what you would usually do in your business to attract customers.

### Collaborate with others

Consider pooling advertising resources with other businesses within the construction corridor to let the public know you're still open for business. Link your website to project information on the City's website.

### Be positive

Encourage and generate a positive, healthy environment to support your staff and in the end ensure retention of valued employees.

## Creative promotions

Businesses have come up with many creative ways to make the construction period fun for customers.

During significant construction in Calgary's downtown, Earl's Restaurant staff dressed in construction clothing and set up daily specials with construction themes.

Another business set up its own version of "Where's Waldo," inviting customers to search store windows each week for a hidden character. People then submitted the location into an orange barrel and these names were used for a contest draw each week.

A fabric store had employees take pictures in front of orange construction barrels holding swaths of the store's fabric. Postcards were then sent to customers saying, "We at the Fabric Gallery know that a fabricaholic won't let a little road construction stand in the way." This store set up an 800 number customers could call to get construction updates and directions to the store.

Another idea employed during major utility replacements in Banff was the branding "Banff Refreshing" positioning the construction as a "must see" event, including a street-festival atmosphere, with attractions to draw customers to businesses.

