



Yulie Woodward

The City of Spokane

Weekly News Update for July 27

Information about COVID-19 is evolving rapidly, and our important work as a City is continuing. We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information on both COVID and employee news. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.

A Message from Mayor Woodward

Housing is expensive and hard to come by in recent months, a brewing problem made exponentially worse by the global pandemic, which is why I have proclaimed a [housing emergency in Spokane](#). With that proclamation, I have also announced a lengthy set of actions to address the need for additional inventory and access.

We must take immediate, decisive steps to improve housing availability. That includes working with the City Council and citizen Plan Commission on legislative changes to regulations that may be outdated and impeding our progress as a community.

As a starting point, I have proposed more than two dozen priority actions that can be taken administratively and in partnership with the City Council. The recommendations are easily achievable this year and subsequent actions could be added on for even greater impact.

The actions are grouped into administrative and legislative items related to staffing, code requirements, and community engagement. They prioritize housing permit reviews, waive fees for large-impact projects that meet critical needs, streamline processes to speed up adding new inventory, and increase technical assistance to help navigate the often complicated regulatory environment. Some of the actions also loosen restrictions and requirements on some projects that add density. A full list is available at [My.SpokaneCity.org](#).

My plan follows months of gathering ideas, input, and feedback from experts and stakeholders. I have also worked closely with the City Council to brainstorm and exchange ideas. The conversations have been productive and, while we have a few things left to find agreement on, produced a better path that will begin making an impact in our neighborhoods and for the people who want to live in them.

I am encouraged by the collaboration and look forward to continue working together toward a solution to this housing emergency.

Masking and Reopening Plan

City policies have been updated to comply with current state guidance and be as consistent as possible with other organizational practices locally and statewide.

- **Employees** – State Labor & Industries requires the City to have a process in place to accept *voluntary* verification of employee vaccination status. The updated City policy will allow employees who elect to confirm that they are vaccinated to go without a mask at work. Confirmation can happen voluntarily via one of several confidential methods, including an [electronic option on PeopleSoft](#) in the Employee Self Service section under the Benefit Details tile and COVID-19 Vaccination link on the left column. The Safety Team has also scheduled several in-person meetings (schedule below) with employee groups who do not regularly access computers or email to discuss other options to provide voluntary confirmation of vaccination status. Records will be maintained confidentially by human resources.
- **Public** – Members of the public entering City facilities will be required to wear a mask if they are not vaccinated, as is common practice at organizations and businesses throughout the community. Masking will be optional for vaccinated members of the public. Updated signage will reflect that policy.

Bullying and shaming

The City will have a zero tolerance policy for bullying or shaming behavior related to mask wearing and vaccination status. Each person has their own reasons for the choices they have made about vaccination and many will choose to continue wearing masks to protect family members regardless of their vaccination status. Employees violating applicable City policy will be subject to discipline. Concerns should be reported to supervisors or via electronic mechanisms.

Return to work

City Hall and other City facilities that have been closed will reopen to the public on Monday, August 2. This date was selected to provide employees in areas that require onsite employee and customer support time to prepare and make child care, transportation, parking, and other arrangements. Employees can begin returning to work onsite sooner, if desired. The expectation is not necessarily to require all staff to be working onsite by August 2. In all cases, employees are expected to work with their supervisors about their work arrangements – whether they return to the office, work remotely, or create a hybrid approach – to determine how best to continue offering services to meet public needs and expectations.

Communication

Employees wishing to speak to the Safety Team regarding vaccination status are welcome to contact [Matt Lowmaster](#) with questions. Updated public signage will be in place by August 2.

Voluntary Hearing Aid Benefit

The City of Spokane has partnered with [AudioNet America](#) to offer a discounted Hearing Aid Program with fixed out-of-pocket costs.

NEW VOLUNTARY
Benefit:



VOLUNTARY HEARING AID BENEFIT
Effective Immediately




The City of Spokane has partnered with AudioNet America to offer a discounted Hearing Aid Program with fixed out-of-pocket costs*.

***FIXED OUT OF POCKET COST:**

Member (Employee with FT Benefits or Eligible Dependent) pays maximum one/two ears

Mid Level	Mid-High Level	Advanced Level	Flagship Level
• \$1,050/\$2,050	• \$1,300/\$2,550	• \$1,550/\$3,050	• \$1,700/\$3,350

Call AudioNet Customer Service for assistance

 (586) 265-5465

or

Visit the website for a participating provider today!

 www.audionetamerica.com

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Three Ways to Learn Patience and Amp up Your Well-Being](#)
Research tells us that there is a relationship between patience and well-being. Various studies have found that people who are more patient experience less low mood, are more empathetic and feel greater gratitude. Your level of patience may even be related to your level of happiness. [Click here](#) for three practices that have shown to help build mindfulness and improve patience.
- [Four Proven Ways You Can Feel Happier](#)
Ready to focus on improving your happiness? There may be an even bigger payoff for you. Research has shown that when people focused more on kindness and other good works, they not only felt happier but also developed a stronger ability to fight off disease. Now that's a win-win. [Click here](#) for four practices that can help you feel more joy and happiness in your life.

Employee Information Portal (covid19.spokanecity.org/)

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.