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MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Leahy and Members of the City Council
FROM: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
DATE: October 13, 2020
SUBJECT: Compliance with Social Distancing and Face Requirements

Motion by C. Nuon on 9/22/2020 - Req. City Mgr. And Appropriate City Department Look For Ways To Encourage Residents To Comply With The State Social Distancing And Masks Wearing Requirements.

On May 6, 2020, Governor Baker issued an executive order requiring the use of face coverings in public places where it is not possible to maintain adequate social distance from other individuals. This order remains in effect in Massachusetts. Under a revised order from the Governor effective August 11, indoor gatherings are limited to 25 people in a single enclosed space, and outdoor gathers are limited to 50 people. The order further requires that participants in any gathering maintain a physical distance of at least 6 feet from every other participant, and requires that face coverings are worn at any gathering with 10 or more participants. The order applies to both public and private venues, including private residences with limited exceptions. Enforcement of both orders is largely deferred to municipal governments.

From the outset of the pandemic, the City of Lowell has emphasized public awareness in encouraging adherence to these orders and to other public health guidelines aimed at limiting the transmission of COVID-19. The City has used a number of communications methods and platforms to convey pertinent messaging, and has reinforced these efforts in recent weeks as new cases of COVID-19 have begun to increase.

Face Covering Signage

In May, when the executive order requiring the use of face coverings was issued, the City created signs for display in store fronts and other public spaces which advise members of the public of the requirement. The signs are available in English, Spanish, Khmer and Portuguese. Through the City's Code Enforcement Inspectors, signs have been distributed to nearly all businesses in the City. Businesses may request additional signs as needed by contacting Development Services or the Health Department. Signs are also available to download online at: <http://lowellma.gov/1449/Wear-A-Mask-In-Public>

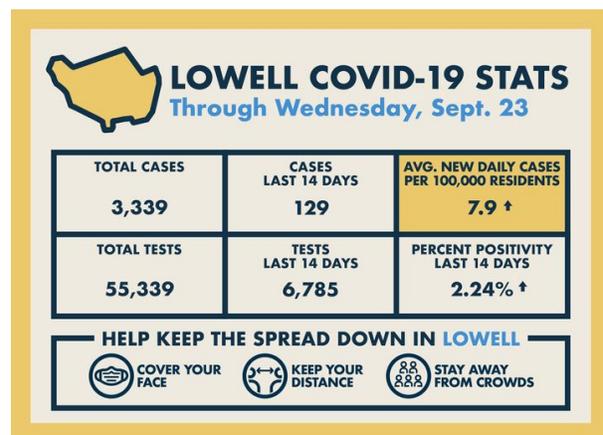
Lowell business owners have reported that the availability of standardized, multilingual signage from the City has been an effective tool in enforcing the mask requirement.



Sample of face covering signage provided to Lowell businesses

Social Media

The City has effectively utilized social media throughout the COVID-19 crisis to generate awareness within the community on both the status of the virus and public health guidelines aimed at limiting its transmission. The City has developed an extensive library of succinct and informative graphics which are distributed through frequent postings on our facebook and twitter pages. COVID-related posts from the City’s facebook page routinely reach an audience of upwards of 10,000-20,000 users. Please see below for a sample of recently posted and widely viewed posts.



In addition to graphic-oriented social media content, I also periodically release video statements containing pertinent updates regarding the status of the COVID-19 crisis in the City as well as messaging encouraging residents to follow public health guidance. These video updates have been widely shared among Lowell-based networks and have, in the past, received up to 20,000 unique views. After a hiatus from these updates, we released a video on October 1 in response to the uptick in new cases urging renewed vigilance among residents. Given the demonstrated value of a multi-pronged digital media outreach strategy, I will continue to provide updates through this method as appropriate.

Street Level Signage

In order to visibly reinforce the City’s COVID-19 messaging given the ongoing uptick of transmission, the City intends to place clear, multilingual signage in public spaces throughout the City. In the coming weeks, a-frame signs at roughly 80 locations throughout the City (schools, city owned buildings, parks, etc.) which currently contain messaging related to the US Census will be replaced with signs reminding residents to adhere to public health guidelines. The signs will be 24x36, and will be visible to both pedestrians and motorists, depending on their location. See below for a mock-up of the anticipated signage:

DO YOUR PART TO
KEEP LOWELL SAFE
& PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

 **WEAR A MASK OR FACECOVERING IN PUBLIC.**

 **MAINTAIN A MINIMUM DISTANCE OF 6 FEET FROM OTHERS.**

 **AVOID CROWDS, PARTIES & LARGE GATHERINGS.**

 **BE ALERT TO SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19 & STAY HOME IF YOU'RE SICK.**

  **LEARN MORE: LOWELLMMA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS**

DO YOUR PART TO
KEEP LOWELL SAFE
& PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

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MANTENGA LA SEGURIDAD DE LOWELL Y PREVENGA LA PROPAGACIÓN DE COVID-19.

  **LEARN MORE: LOWELLMMA.GOV/CORONAVIRUS**

Other Enforcement Measures

The City's Code Enforcement Inspectors work actively to ensure that businesses and public venues in the City are aware of and compliant with industry specific guidelines that have been issued by the state in response to the pandemic. In instances where the City receives complaints related to a non-compliant business, such as failure to require the use of face coverings or failure to implement accommodations to allow for social distancing, an inspection will be conducted and the establishment's operators will be made aware of requisite changes. Citations and fines are issued in cases where businesses continually fail to comply after repeated intervention.

In instances when the City is made aware of large or excessive parties or gatherings, the Police Department is authorized to intervene under the August 7th order stipulating the limitations. In most cases, intervention in response to such gatherings focuses on informing participants of current restrictions. The Department may, however, issue civil fines of up to \$500 per violation as deemed necessary.