

# MILWAUKEE CONSTRUCTION SURVIVAL HANDBOOK



PUBLIC WORKS  
SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS  
PROGRAM



**DEAR MILWAUKEE BUSINESS OWNER,**

It's time to think of road construction in a new and positive way: When the city's infrastructure improves, the city's economy improves. The Milwaukee Department of Public Works (DPW) oversees nearly \$50 million of road work annually—and, because of federal stimulus funding, there will be even higher level of construction here during the next two years.

These improvements in Milwaukee's infrastructure are critical to its long-term economic development. However, we recognize that construction can impact surrounding businesses in the short term.

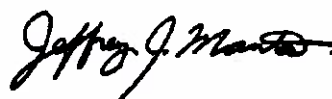
That's why we've created the **Public Works Support for Business Program**. Incorporating best practices from around the country, it is designed to help nearby businesses before and during construction.

This Milwaukee Construction Survival Handbook describes elements of the program and how you can take advantage of it, along with other useful information. We hope you find it helpful, and we sincerely look forward to your input.

Sincerely,



Tom Barrett  
Mayor of Milwaukee



Jeff Mantes  
Commissioner, Milwaukee DPW

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS /// PAGE 4**  
**WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR BUSINESS /// PAGE 6**  
**RESOURCES AND HELP /// PAGE 7**  
**KEY CONTACT INFORMATION /// BACK COVER**

## **PUBLIC WORKS SUPPORT FOR BUSINESS PROGRAM: AN OVERVIEW**

The Milwaukee DPW's Public Works Support for Business Program is designed to help your business before, during, and immediately after the construction period. Highlights of the program include:

- PUBLIC MEETINGS
- NOTIFICATION LETTERS
- INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH BUSINESSES,  
PROPERTY OWNERS
- COMMUNITY LIAISON SERVICES
- BUSINESS AND MARKETING
- PROJECT SPECIFIC E-MAIL UPDATES
- PROGRAM WEBSITE: MILWAUKEE.GOV
- BUSINESS SIGNAGE AND CUSTOMER LETTERS
- NEIGHBORHOOD SIGNAGE
- TRAFFIC SIGNAGE

# HOW THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS WORKS

While no two construction projects are exactly alike, they typically share several common phases. Understanding these phases can help businesses better plan for the construction.



## **PRE-CONSTRUCTION: COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

During this phase, the DPW reaches out to businesses to inform them of potential upcoming projects in their neighborhoods. This typically begins with a public meeting shortly after state approval has been granted, 15-24 months prior to the anticipated start date. The public meeting initiates a series of interactions between DPW, neighborhood groups and businesses during which the duration and timing of the project is established and access solutions and other specifics are determined.

Approximately 5-6 months prior to start, assessment letters are sent to property owners, followed by letters addressing encroachments, driveway access and other issues. Roughly four months before ground breaking another public hearing takes place, as part of a City Public Works Committee meeting; in most cases, this provides the final "green light" for the project. During this end phase of pre-construction, community liaisons will meet with businesses and neighborhood groups, assessing their needs, helping them plan and matching them with Public Works Business Support Program (and other) resources.


## **CONSTRUCTION PHASE: CONTRACTORS, CONTRACTS AND TIMELINES**

Construction work on City of Milwaukee streets is done by private contractors who've successfully bid on project contracts. Once a contract is awarded, the contractor is given a 10-day notice to proceed.

The construction phase begins with a pre-construction meeting where a proposed schedule is submitted by the contractor and reviewed by various public and private utilities and agencies. Businesses are also invited to attend this meeting and provide input. Once the schedule is finalized, construction notices are sent out. After the pre-construction meeting, notices are hand delivered by city staff to all abutting properties a few days before the work starts.

City of Milwaukee construction contracts always have a target completion date. They also have a maximum allowable number of working days, which





is determined by DPW staff based on historical data. Contractors face various financial penalties if the work is not completed on time. There are some exceptions if unforeseen conditions arise that are outside the contractor's control. While occasional delays can be expected, contracts are structured to encourage contractors to minimize stops and starts.

Depending on the nature of the project, there are times where it appears work has stopped even though it really hasn't. Water main testing and sampling, for example, are not readily apparent, since they involve only one person. Another example of a crucial (but seemingly "invisible") phase of construction is the curing of newly placed concrete, which takes about seven days.

In many projects multiple contractors may be used. Paving projects, for instance, are preceded by utility work which is done by a separate contractor under a separate contract. Preliminary work is typically coordinated as closely as possible to the primary project's start date to minimize gaps between the phases.

### **STAFFING: THE KEY PLAYERS**

All City of Milwaukee construction projects are assigned two DPW employees, a construction supervisor and a public works inspector. **Construction supervisors** are experienced professional engineers who visit project sites at least once a day to address contractor concerns, monitor changes in conditions and to provide answers and solutions.

**Public works inspectors** oversee the contractor's work, and ensure that the concerns of the public and the abutting owners and businesses are being addressed. Working in tandem with the community liaison and the construction supervisor, the public works inspector becomes familiar with the businesses and the routine activities surrounding a project.

**Community liaisons** are private contractors hired by the Milwaukee DPW to be the neighborhood's primary point of contact for major construction projects. In this role, they work closely with the community to explain DPW procedures and timetables and to articulate neighborhood concerns and viewpoints to DPW. They are also instrumental in helping local businesses access Public Works Business Support Program tools, such as signage and consulting.

# PLAN FOR SUCCESS

Road construction can provide challenges for any business. But with some planning you may be able to minimize its impact on your bottom line, and possibly even find new sources of revenue. Here are a few planning tips:

## WHAT TO DO BEFORE CONSTRUCTION:

### KEEP YOUR STAFF LEAN

If you anticipate a decrease in customer traffic once construction begins, consider keeping a lean staff. For example, if someone quits just before construction starts, you may want to keep the position vacant until construction ends.

### REDUCE INVENTORY

When possible, this is a useful response to slower periods.

### SECURE A LINE OF CREDIT

Get a line of credit during a good time when sales are up – just in case you need it later (when sales are down).

### GATHER CUSTOMER CONTACT INFO

Ask your customers to provide their email or mailing addresses so you can keep them apprised of road conditions, best routes and promotions you may be offering during construction.

### COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS

Let customers know ahead of time how to access your business during construction! Posted signs, maps, e-mail blasts and your web site are all good tools for this.

### BRAINSTORM WITH EMPLOYEES

Talk with your employees about ways to stay prosperous during construction. They will likely offer insights from “the front lines” that can help you prepare.

### ADDRESS THE INTERIOR OF YOUR BUSINESS

If you anticipate a drop-off in foot traffic, the construction period may be a good time to tackle a remodeling project you’ve been considering.

## WHAT TO DO DURING CONSTRUCTION:

### MAKE FRIENDS WITH CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

You’ll be seeing a lot of them for the next few months, so why not cultivate their business? They could become great short-term customers. They may also provide valuable insights on the project and help you avoid construction-related headaches.

### CREATE AND USE SIGNAGE

Talk with your current signage vendors about your options and talk with your community liaison about getting a Public Works “Open for Business” A-Frame sign featuring logos of neighborhood businesses. “Open for Business” signage is also available for your storefront or window – download it at [www.milwaukee.gov/mpw/](http://www.milwaukee.gov/mpw/)

### INVEST IN CLEANING

Face it – dust is a customer turn-off. You may want to allocate more time or money for cleaning to keep window and counter dust at a minimum.

### EXPLORE ALTERNATE BUSINESS MODELS

Look at your customer challenges as a business opportunity! If access to your bricks & mortar business becomes an issue, consider expanding your e-commerce capabilities or offering delivery. This might also be a great time to hold a sale or run a promotion.

### STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR COMMUNITY LIAISON

Your community liaison is your single point of contact for this project. They’ll keep you updated, and help you access program tools and assistance. Keep this handbook nearby so you have contact names, numbers and emails at your fingertips.

## WHAT TO DO AFTER CONSTRUCTION:

### LET CUSTOMERS KNOW!

Use the database you created prior to construction to let your customers know the dust has settled.

### CONSIDER ADS, PROMOTIONS OR A SPECIAL EVENT

Give your customers a reminder and an incentive to return to your business. Maybe a grand re-opening?!

# RESOURCES AND HELP



## **COMMUNITY LIAISON**

The Milwaukee DPW has established a team of community liaisons, with one liaison assigned to each major project. The liaison will serve as the neighborhood's "lead" point of contact regarding the construction project. Working in conjunction with DPW staff, liaisons will interact with neighborhood members at all points prior to and during the construction process, meeting with neighborhood organizations, participating in public meetings, sending letters and e-mail updates and meeting individually with neighborhood businesses and property owners. The liaison's primary roles will be to:

- Explain DPW plans, procedures and timelines to the neighborhood
- Educate neighborhood businesses and property owners on potential impact mitigation resources available
- Advocate on behalf of businesses with DPW
- Assess the impact of the planned construction on the neighborhood and request consulting support (see below)

## **BUSINESS/TECHNICAL CONSULTING**

Milwaukee DPW will facilitate and underwrite opportunities for neighborhood groups and businesses in highly affected areas to receive professional consulting on issues ranging from business management and financial planning to human resources and information technology. Qualifying entities will be selected on a case-by-case basis, based on the assessment and recommendations from the community liaison in coordination with DPW.

## **MARKETING/ADVERTISING CONSULTING**

Neighborhood groups may also qualify for marketing/advertising consulting through the Public Works Business Support Program. As with business/technical consulting, qualifying entities will be selected on a case-by-case basis, based on the assessment and recommendations from the community liaison in coordination with DPW.

This support is made available through the City of Milwaukee Support for Business Program and is provided by local marketing/advertising professionals, business consultants and/or professors from the College of Business Administration at Marquette University, the Sheldon B. Lubar School of Business at UWM. The consulting is sponsored by the City of Milwaukee Department of Public Works.

## **SIGNAGE AND LETTERS**

You can download helpful tools from <http://www.milwaukee.gov/mpw/supportforbusiness>. You'll find letters you can send to your customers as well as "Open for Business" signage. Your liaison can also help groups of businesses access neighborhood signage.

## KEY CONTACT INFORMATION

### **IN THE CASE OF INQUIRIES FROM MEDIA, PLEASE CONTACT:**

#### **CITY OF MILWAUKEE DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Cecilia Gilbert, Permits and Communications Manager  
841 N. Broadway  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414) 286-2489  
cecilia.gilbert@milwaukee.gov  
www.milwaukee.gov/mpw

### **FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

#### **CITY OF MILWAUKEE DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Ghassan Korban, Coordination Manager  
841 N. Broadway  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414) 286-2489  
Ghassan.korban@milwaukee.gov  
www.milwaukee.gov/mpw

#### **COMMUNITY LIAISONS**

A complete list of community liaisons may be found at  
www.milwaukee.gov/org/mpw/supportforbusiness

#### **BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS (BIDS) IN MILWAUKEE**

A complete list can be found through the Milwaukee  
Department of City Development Web site at <http://www.mkedcd.org/business/busbid.html>

#### **MILWAUKEE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Dave Latona  
809 N Broadway  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414) 286-5800  
davelatona@medconline.com  
www.medconline.com

#### **MILWAUKEE METROPOLITAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

756 N. Milwaukee St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
(414) 287-4100  
NAME@mmac.org  
<http://www.mmac.org/>

#### **HISPANIC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – WISCONSIN**

Evolyn Agosto, Business Support Specialist  
1021 W. National Ave.  
Milwaukee WI 53204  
Phone: (414) 643-6963  
Fax: (414) 643-6994  
NAME@hccw.org  
<http://www.hccw.org/>

#### **WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (SOUTHEAST REGION)**

Dennis Shook, Communications  
141 NW Barstow Street  
P.O. Box 798  
Waukesha, WI 53187-0798  
Phone: (262) 548-5902  
Fax: (262) 548-5662  
Dennis.Shook@dot.wi.gov

#### **WISCONSIN WOMEN'S BUSINESS INITIATIVE CORPORATION**

Wendy Baumann, President/CVO  
2745 N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.  
Milwaukee, WI 53212  
Phone: (414) 263-5450  
Fax: (414) 263-5456  
<http://www.wwbic.com/>

#### **U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ASSOCIATION**

Eric Ness, District Director  
310 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53203  
(414) 297-3942  
answerdesk@sba.gov  
<http://www.sba.gov/>

The Public Works Business Support Program was created by the Milwaukee Department of Public Works, with the partnership and support of the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development and the City of Milwaukee Department of Administration's Community Development Block Grant agency.

For the web microsite use:  
[Milwaukee.gov/mpw/supportforbusiness](http://Milwaukee.gov/mpw/supportforbusiness)



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