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## **East Providence launches COVID-19 loan fund program - by William Fazioli**

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William Fazioli

The city of East Providence has rolled out new emergency loan fund programs for small businesses.

In response to the impact on small businesses, mayor Bob DaSilva, together with chief planner Jim Moran, community development director Dave Bachrach, and myself, designed two loan programs.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has not only devastated the public’s health, but has forced hundreds of businesses to shutter their doors leaving thousands of people unemployed,” mayor DaSilva said. “We hope the rollout of these loans and modification of other loans will give our small businesses the support they need.”

The Community Development: Job Retention Loan Program, includes no payments for six months and no interest for the life of the loan and the Urban Development Action: COVID-19 Small Business Assistance Program offers no interest, no payments for six months. (You may find the applications here: <https://bit.ly/2UAJR6w> and here: <https://www.eastprovidencebusiness.com/incentives/pages/east-providence-covid-19-small-business-assistance-loan-programs>)

The two programs, which are supported with existing federal grant funds, address the short-term financial needs of local businesses and those who are self-employed. The two programs are designed to provide the necessary funding to cover the businesses’ various financial needs including: payroll, rent, utilities and other fixed expenses.

The city’s loans do not preclude borrowers from accessing any other loan source. City loans cannot be used to pay for the same itemized expenses that other loans will be used for.

In addition, the city has also modified the payment schedule for seven existing loan participants. Payments on current loan programs will be deferred for three months beginning this month.

“While the city recognizes this is an interim step to provide immediate assistance, we are more than ever committed to building a strong and resilient economy,” mayor DaSilva said.

The city is also working with our congressional delegation to leverage benefits from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, which will provide additional financial relief to manufacturers, small businesses and those who are self-employed.

In order to gain feedback on how local businesses have been impacted by the pandemic, the city, together with the East Providence Chamber of Commerce, has distributed a survey to East Providence businesses. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GJ5B3H9>

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