

**City of Marco Island**  
**Press Release**

**03-25-2020 006**

Many residents are asking questions about closing Marco Island to non-residents. We want to reassure our community that the decision-making process related to all closures involves many things, at the forefront of which are public health and safety and constitutionally protected civil liberties. The City is not closing the bridge or restricting travel to and from the island at this point.

It has been widely reported that there are major gaps in the ability to test for COVID-19, and many who appropriately self-isolate may have symptoms and never be tested. Others may have no symptoms yet still carry the virus. Even if all outside access to the island were closed today, we would still face a period when the existing precautionary measures would remain in place.

The City is maintaining direct communications with local hotels, and as of yesterday they were reporting occupancy rates ranging from 4% to 22% and falling. Most of those people planned their travel long before the State of Florida closed bars completely and restaurants to indoor dining. What the hotels are expecting in the next two weeks is more cancellations than arrivals. Additionally, Governor DeSantis ordered statewide restrictions on travelers from New York, Connecticut and New Jersey, which will also depress the visitor numbers.

Another concern that has been expressed is that some beachfront hotel guests are accessing the beach, including the hotel's private beach property. From a health risk standpoint, the beach is no different from any other outdoor space. What's important is the incidence and density of human-to-human contact. The City is closely monitoring the beaches, and our direct observation is that what the hotels are telling us is true – they are policing any activity on the beach closely, and at least one is prohibiting access to the beach entirely. We are seeing the same level of adherence to the recommended social distancing measures from our beachfront condominium owners. Therefore, the steps we have taken on the beaches have been very effective.

The City must also consider the practical application of a selective closure. The act of identifying and sorting those who are and are not allowed would consume every bit of our public safety infrastructure. In addition, it would create significant delays for essential workers and supplies that we need on the Island. The equation is about the level of the emergency and how deeply we curtail civil liberties in its name, particularly when people do have significant ability to protect themselves from this threat. It is an ongoing analysis, and the City continues to monitor the situation every day in order to make decisions in the best interest of the residents of Marco Island. Working together we will get to the other side of this unprecedented event.