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## High-profile development projects halted by governor's order



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It took Dan McCaffery five long years to get his chance to redevelop the iconic produce terminal in the Strip District. Now he finds himself waiting once again, with construction halted because of COVID-19.

The \$62.6 million rehab is one of a number of high-profile development projects in the city shut down because of the order by Gov. Tom Wolf to close all nonessential businesses, including those involving construction, in a bid to slow down the spread of the virus.

McCaffery Interests across the street from the produce terminal as well as Liberty East, the \$50 million redevelopment of the former Penn Plaza site in East Liberty. It is to be anchored by a new Whole Foods Market.

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The project shutdowns come as some in the construction industry weigh the merits of seeking exemptions so that they can continue to work versus the risk to workers' health.



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On Friday, Jon O'Brien, executive director of Keystone Contractors Association in Harrisburg, took to social media to marvel: "Governor shut us down while beer distributors can operate. Does anyone else find this crazy? Is this real?"

The trade group represents more than 100 commercial construction companies across the state, and upon finding his industry in the not life-sustaining column, Mr. O'Brien started drafting a letter to Gov. Wolf and the state Legislature.

But instead of issuing a plea for a blanket exemption for construction — the way that the manufacturing trade groups had done — Mr. O'Brien's board wavered and decided to sit this one out.

“We’re sitting here at our desks,” they said. Is it really right to advocate that the construction workforce, which is aging, operate as before?

“So we opted not to do it,” Mr. O'Brien said. “We just said, ‘Let it play out. Let the dust settle.’”

Instead, the trade association has been helping with individual exemption requests which, in construction, happen on a project by project basis.



Mick Stinelli

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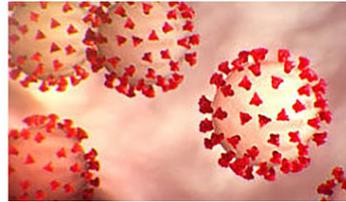
Mr. O'Brien said he's seen health care construction projects approved — even a medical marijuana plant — while projects like school construction are denied.

“But just because a project has a waiver doesn’t necessarily mean it’s going to keep working,” he cautioned. “Every contractor

McCaffery Interests, meanwhile, expected to complete the produce terminal redevelopment on Smallman in August. Now that timetable is up in the air given the halt in construction

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“It’s very upsetting,” said Pamela Austin, senior project manager of development for McCaffery. “Our timeline has been further prolonged.”

Ms. Austin said McCaffery is continuing to monitor the statements from the governor to stay abreast of developments and is meeting remotely with the project’s contractors and architect.

She does not believe McCaffery has applied for waivers to allow work to continue.

In all, the five-block-long produce terminal redevelopment is expected to feature 157,237 square feet of shops, restaurants, brewpubs and a food-centric market at one end.

There also will be pedestrian passageways at 17th, 18th, and 20th streets, two of which will allow direct access to the Allegheny riverfront. There will be 277 parking spaces in the back of the building.

Across the street, the 1600 Smallman project also was scheduled for completion this summer. But that also could change with construction on hold.

That old warehouse is being converted into three floors of office and street-level retail, a total of 140,000 square feet in all. There

Euclid and South Negley avenues started around the first of the year.

LG Realty Advisors is planning roughly 246,000 square feet of office space, 54,600 square feet of retail and about 700 parking spaces. Representatives could not be reached for comment Monday.

Beyond that, work on a 12,000-square-foot flagship retail store at Heinz Field, which also involved the relocation of the ticket office, has stopped.

In addition, the Burns Scalo real estate firm also has seen two of its high-profile office projects — the Vision on 15th in the Strip and the Riviera at Pittsburgh Technology Center in south Oakland — abruptly halted.

Construction on the Strip development, a joint venture with Bridgeville-based RDC Inc. had just started, while the Riviera was nearing its completion.

James Scalo, Burns Scalo president and CEO, was philosophical about the delays.

“We must put people in front of money. Health is wealth,” he said. “Two-three months is nominal for the overall health of our organization.”

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Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald speaks during a press conference Saturday, March 21, 2020, at the Allegheny

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2 **image taken w** NEWS  
scanning electron microscope shows SARS-CoV-2 (yellow), the virus that causes COVID-19.

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MENU



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Bernstine, foreground,  
joins protesters as they  
gather outside the Capital  
Complex in Harrisburg, Pa., on  
Monday, April 20, 2020. They

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5 handout illust LOCAL  
image obtained February  
27, 2020 courtesy of the  
National Institutes of Health  
taken with a scanning  
electron microscope shows

Peters Township declares COVID-19 disaster emergency

## Four Quick Questions

**Although daily routines have drastically changed for most people since the eruption of COVID-19, are you still maintaining your normal schedule for waking up / going to bed?**

- Yes, same as always
- Trying to, but it's been difficult
- Meh, I'm fine with sliding a bit
- No, why bother?
- I've never kept / had a 'normal' schedule
- I wake up / go to bed whenever I want!
- Other / Does not apply

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