

BACKGROUND / OVERVIEW

POST PLAN

BACKGROUND

The Postal Service announced in July 2011 that nearly 3,700 Post Offices would be studied for possible closure. The consideration of whether to close a Post Office is just one strategy in a series of actions the Postal Service is considering in the wake of continued mail volume decline, ongoing financial challenges and changing customer behavior.

For decades, the Postal Service's retail offices were built or leased in locations where the population had grown and in the areas that experienced the most retail activity — in the centers of towns or near other government structures, for example. However, as cities and towns have expanded outward over the years, and as the population reestablished in more urban and suburban settings, the Post Offices remained in place, resulting in a network of retail offices located in areas where few people live, work or shop.

The need to realign these offices to match today's community activity, mailing habits and postal resources is critical.

In the months that followed the July 2011 announcement, thousands of community meetings were held and surveys were conducted in each affected location. The feedback generated by those meetings and surveys, and from stakeholders at every level, helped outline the new options being announced now.

OVERVIEW

Although retail sales and foot traffic for most Post Offices has declined significantly in recent years, the Postal Service has received considerable feedback from communities around the country, requesting their Post Office remain open for business.

A new strategy designed to preserve rural Post Offices, announced May 9 of this year, refines the Postal Service's approach regarding Post Office structure by offering an option that could keep most existing Post Offices in place, but with modified retail hours to match customer use. Access to the retail lobby and to P.O. Boxes will remain unchanged, and the town's ZIP Code and community identity will be retained.

The new option consists of maintaining the existing Post Office, staffed by a postal employee, with modified retail hours to match customer use.

This new strategy complements existing options, which include:

1. Providing mail delivery service to residents and businesses in the affected community by either rural carrier or highway contract route;
2. Contracting with a local establishment and creating a Village Post Office; and
3. Offering service from a nearby Post Office.

The list of Post Offices to be studied can be found at <http://about.usps.gov/ourfuturenetwork/>.

The new strategy would be implemented over a two-year, multi-phased approach and would not be completed until Sep. 2014. At the end of May, the Postal Service intends to seek an advisory opinion from the Postal Regulatory Commission on this plan.

Community meetings and surveys will be conducted to review the options in greater detail. Communities will be notified of the date, time and location of these meetings.