



CITY OF CARSON

Legislation Text

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Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, December 01, 2020

Discussion

SUBJECT:

COVID-19 UPDATE (CITY COUNCIL)

I. SUMMARY

During this unprecedented pandemic, the City of Carson has had to adhere to Federal, State and County Executive orders, which initially helped slow the spread of the virus but it did so by shutting down our local businesses and severely impacting our economy. Our residents and businesses were directed by the State to follow stay-at-home orders, with the exception of employees who were determined to have an essential job or for residents to shop for essential needs. For the first time in its incorporated history, the City was not allowed to operate in any capacity outside of health measures dictated by the Federal, State and County governments.

The Governor began to reopen the state in various phases, allowing cities and businesses to reopen but with restrictions. This has helped fuel the resurgence of the economy; but at the same time thousands of positive cases have been reported in multiple counties causing the Governor to reevaluate the state's position and restrict several businesses to essential services and limited services at this time. LA County's restrictions are often stricter than the State's and where that is the case, the City of Carson is subject to the stricter provisions.

We continue to monitor and will report on changes to the State and County health orders to determine what additional services the City may provide to the community, as directed by the City Council.

New Framework for Reopening the State's Economy

California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday, August 28, 2020 announced the Blueprint for a Safer Economy <<https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>>, a statewide plan for living with COVID-19. The plan imposes risk-based criteria on tightening and loosening COVID-19 allowable activities and expands the length of time between changes to assess how any movement affects the trajectory of the disease. The Blueprint builds on lessons learned from the first six months of the disease - and the new scientific understanding that has been collected - to create a new system for regulating movement and COVID-19

transmissions. It includes:

- At least 21 days to expand activities beyond the initial tier to ensure California better limits the spread of the virus;
- Mandatory metrics - case rates and test positivity - to measure how widespread COVID-19 is in each county and guide what is allowed;
- A uniform state framework, with four categories instead of 58 different sets of rules;
- A more nuanced way of allowing activity: Instead of open vs. closed, sectors can be partially opened and progressively add to their operations as disease transmission decreases; and
- A new process for tightening back up again quickly when conditions worsen.

Based on recent data, each county will fall into one of four colored tiers - Purple (Widespread), Red (Substantial), Orange (Moderate) and Yellow (Minimal) - based on how prevalent COVID-19 is in each county and the extent of community spread. That color will indicate how sectors can operate. For example, in the Purple (Widespread) tier where COVID-19 is widespread, restaurants can only operate outdoors. But once a county has achieved a lower level of virus transmission and moved into the Red (Substantial) tier, restaurants can operate with 25 percent capacity indoors or 100 patrons, whichever is fewer. Visit the 'States COVID page <<https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/>> to learn more about the State's tiered system.

L.A. County remains in the purple tier currently. The County's Orders for what businesses may open are stricter than the State orders. Consequently, the ability for sectors to re-open will still require amendments to the local Health Officer Orders that are developed by the L.A. County Public Health Department in consultation with the L.A. County Board of Supervisors.

County risk level	New cases	Positive tests
WIDESPREAD Many non-essential indoor business operations are closed	More than 7 daily new cases (per 100k)	More than 8% Positive tests
SUBSTANTIAL Some non-essential indoor business operations are closed	4 - 7 daily new cases (per 100k)	5 - 8% Positive tests
MODERATE Some indoor business operations are open with modifications	1 - 3.9 daily new cases (per 100k)	2 - 4.9% Positive tests
MINIMAL Most indoor business operations are open with modifications	Less than 1 daily new cases (per 100k)	Less than 2% Positive tests

CURRENT SITUATION

The Public Health Order established last week set triggers to close outdoor dining (4,000 cases/day avg.) as well as a new Safer-at-home order closing non-essential businesses (4,500 cases/day avg.). Those triggers were met over the weekend and yesterday respectively, but at its meeting on November 24, 2020, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors indicated that it was not expected that these thresholds would be met so quickly and so asked Department of Health to review the positive daily average the following day, November 25, before instituting the more restrictive measures .

The Board of Supervisors and County Public Health discussed the current COVID-19 surge and considered a motion to keep indoor dining open at 50% occupancy. However, the motion failed on a vote of 3-2. **Thus, the prohibition of outdoor dining is set to go into effect at 10 PM on Wednesday for a period of three weeks.**

Public Health Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer also recommended issuing the following:

- All public and private gatherings between different households be prohibited except outdoors worship services and protests.
- Occupancy limits reduced for the permitted outdoor activity as well as essential and non-essential indoor retail.

- Non-essential spaces to close including non-essential office space businesses, playgrounds except for childcare and schools, bars, clubs, card-rooms, etc.
- Day-care, K-12 schools, day camps to remain in current protocols except to close for 14 -days in the event of an outbreak (3 or more cases in one location within a 14 day period).
- Parks, trails, and most shared recreation to remain open with adherence to current protocols.

However, it is unclear if these statements will become part of an additional public health order or if they will only remain recommendations. In the press release (attached) following the Board meeting, the only item that was enumerated was a “strong recommendation” for households not to gather with other households, even outdoors.

As of the preparation of this report on November 25, 2020, Los Angeles County Public Health Department has reported 2,529 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the City of Carson, with 378,323 cases within Los Angeles County (which includes cases reported by the Long Beach and Pasadena Health Departments). This underreports the actual spread of the virus since those who do not display symptoms or are otherwise mildly impacted have not been tested.

II. RECOMMENDATION

1. DISCUSS and PROVIDE direction

III. ALTERNATIVES

TAKE another action Council deems appropriate.

IV. BACKGROUND

On March 17, 2020, the City Council unanimously voted (5-0) to declare a local emergency in response to COVID-19. The declaration of a local emergency has enabled the City to be more efficient and effective in its response to the outbreak, put in place a framework that supports the continuity of essential public safety services, enables the City to seek and utilize mutual aid, and ensures the City has all available tools at its disposal to keep the community safe. The declaration also allowed the City to seek reimbursement of funds from the State and Federal government.

When only essential services were being provided, the City of Carson saw a decline in the number of daily cases due to social distancing and other restrictive measures. After the Governor’s implementation of reopening phases, which were intended to jump start the state’s economy, there was a surge in positive COVID-19 cases. The Governor identified multiple counties throughout the state of California where this was a concern, including Los Angeles County, and reversed course to restrict some businesses and temporarily close others.

The City also saw a rise in the number of employees who tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. This led the City Manager to reduce services back to those that are essential and to reduce visitation by the public to City Hall by limiting appointments to two (2) days a week. To further combat and slow the spread of COVID-19, the following additional measures were set in place:

1. Deep Cleaning Services by a professional cleaner of City Hall, Community Center, Corporate Yard and City Parks.
2. Sneeze Guards and Stanchions purchased to separate the public and staff throughout all City facilities.
3. Providing Telecommuting to all employees who are eligible and meet criteria.
4. Reducing staff to be physically present on a needs basis.

Discussed below are recent initiatives and programs initiated by the Disaster Council and the City Council since the Declaration of Emergency.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County: April to July 2020

USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences (September 23, 2020 Study Report)

Summary/Take-Aways

Between April and July 2020, more than a quarter (26.4%) of all L.A. County households experienced food insecurity: an estimated 873,000 households. During this same timeframe, 41.6% of low-income households (households with incomes <300% of the federal poverty line (FPL) based on income assessed between April and July), experienced food insecurity. This is markedly higher than historical rates of food insecurity in L.A. County. Food deserts and income levels further exacerbates the food insecurity epidemic now amplified by the pandemic. A method to combat this may be to provide more food assistance programs directly to households or to non-profits that serve these communities (i.e. CalFresh), and improve access to these programs with community education and streamlining application procedures.

Study Findings Overview

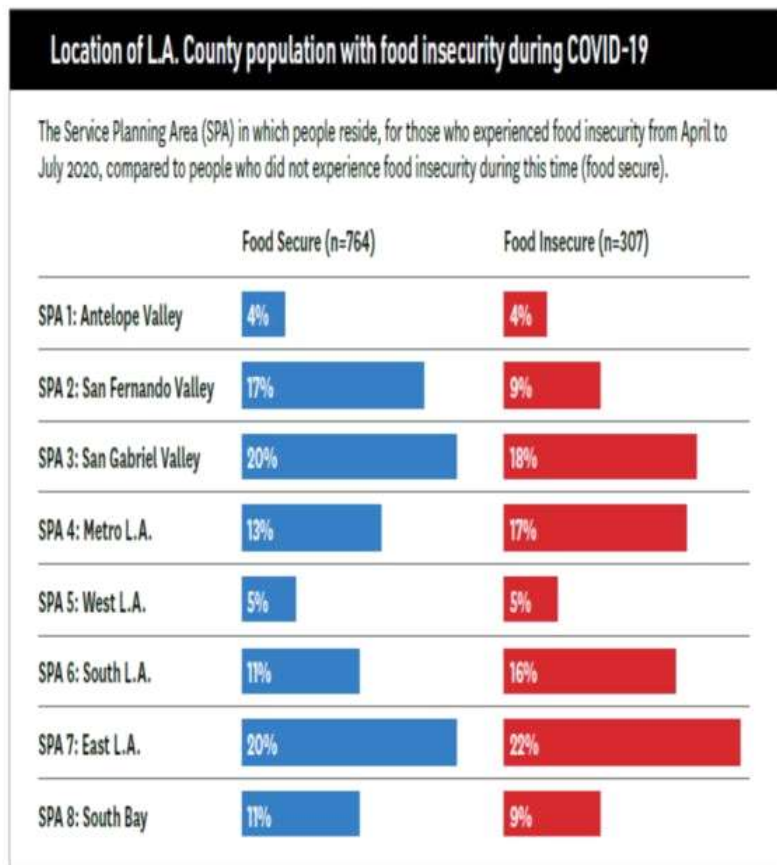
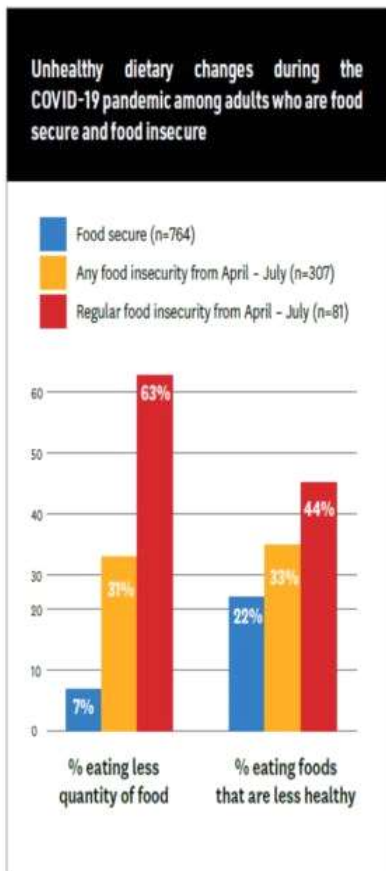
Two-thirds of households that experienced food insecurity at the onset of the pandemic transitioned to food security by June/July (18.6% of the L.A. County population), and food and financial assistance programs may have helped them to do so. Households that were not in poverty and who received unemployment insurance were more likely to make this transition. They may have been able to recover more quickly from financial loss and challenges accessing sufficient food by leveraging economic and social capital. A future surge in COVID-19 cases paired with economic shutdowns or withdrawal of financial support could put this group at risk of transitioning back into food insecurity.

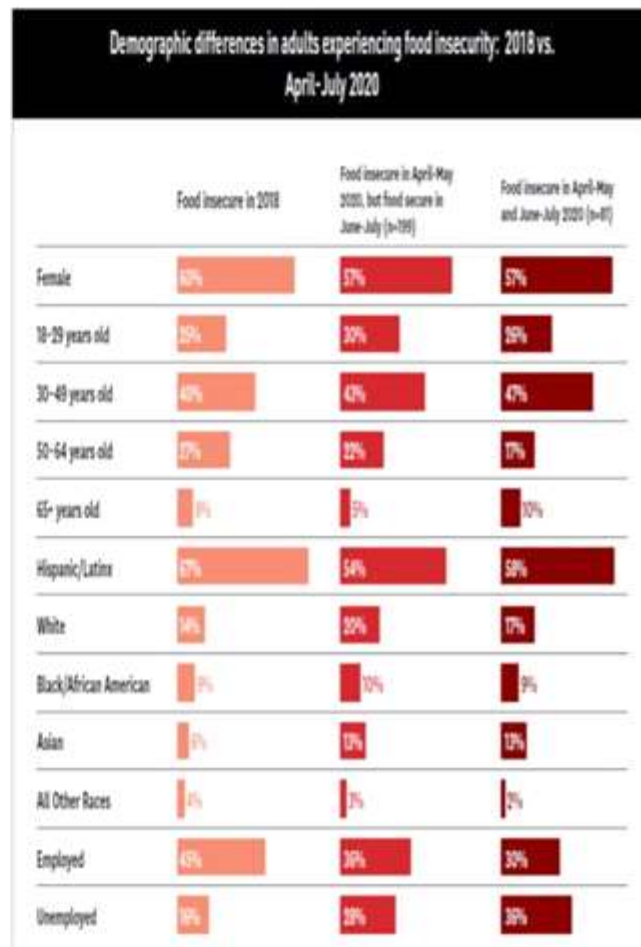
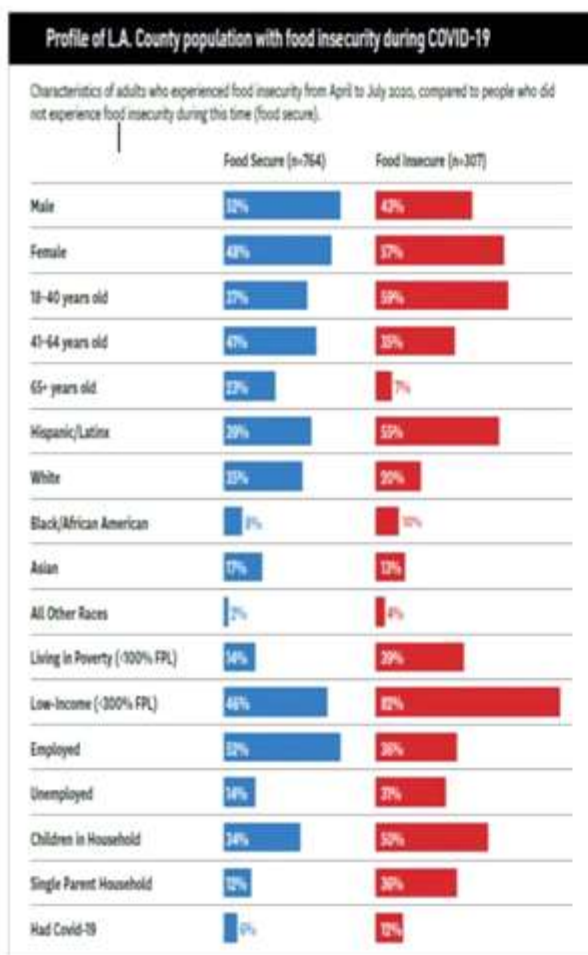
One in ten households in L.A. County experienced food insecurity at the onset of the pandemic, and remained food insecure as of July; rates that are substantially higher than pre-pandemic levels. This may even be underestimating the scope of the problem because

it is likely that some high-risk groups (e.g., individuals experiencing homelessness) are not captured by this survey. The vast majority of households that remained food insecure were low-income, and although household economic status is the biggest underlying driver of food insecurity, other factors emerged that may be affecting peoples' ability to acquire sufficient food. This group reported more difficulties getting food because of store closures, limited store hours, and a lack of personal transportation. They also had notably higher rates of being infected with COVID-19 (16.5%). One quarter (24.9%) of this group received CalFresh, but they reported more difficulties using it, and at least one-third are likely eligible for CalFresh but not receiving it.

Adults who experienced regular food insecurity during the pandemic were more likely to report eating less food (63.0%) and less healthy food (44.2%) compared to people who were food secure. These research findings highlight how important it will be for L.A. County to continue raising awareness of CalFresh and other public food resources and to maximize access to financial assistance programs that make household income more available for food. The County is also using the findings to inform the development of a COVID Food Assistance Grant Program which will fund community organizations that are providing additional forms of food assistance to people who are affected by the pandemic and in need of help. Unsurprisingly, people who experienced food insecurity during the pandemic were more likely to have unhealthful changes in their diet. This has important long-term health implications: if many of the 1 in 4 households in L.A. County that experienced food insecurity are eating less healthy foods, we could see increased risk for many diet related diseases like diabetes, obesity, heart disease and some cancers. These are diseases that are already much too common in L.A., particularly among people who are low-income and of color.

This research supports the City's robust efforts, detailed below, to provide food to our most needy populations.





Food Programs

Immediately following the Declaration of Emergency, the City mobilized a Grab 'n Go lunch program for seniors, Carson Essentials To-Go Program and a grocery delivery program in partnership with Norms. This program has received funding by the Watson Land Company, the Carson Company, the Carson Community Foundation and Phillip 66.

In addition, in partnership with the Lighthouse, YMCA Meals on Wheels, and the ERB Foundation, the City is providing meals and food kits to seniors and homebound residents. <http://ci.carson.ca.us/CoronaVirus.aspx>

Due to the change in the Los Angeles County funding structure, the Meals on Wheels program added additional meals for pickup while fewer meals are being delivered. For those who require delivery of meals, services for delivered meals has continued without interruption.

Food Program Stats as of November 25, 2020:

Grab-n-Go: 102,523

Meals on Wheels Delivered by city staff: 11,146

Resource Call Center calls handled: 13,416

Carson Essentials to Go: 1,422

Carson Grab-n-Go Program:

The Lighthouse has agreed to extend the Grab-n-Go Program through the end of June 2021. Its continued partnership has provided 600 meals daily at no cost to the city. For the last 12 years, The Lighthouse has provided meals for the City's Kids Club Program and Summer Day camps.

Carson Essentials To Go Program:

This program was created to support homebound and vulnerable residents in need with a safe alternative to grocery shopping during the pandemic. The City of Carson appropriated \$150,000 from the general fund to start this program, but generous donations from Phillips 66, Carson Companies, Watson Land Company, and Carson Community Foundation and amounts collected from those receiving the groceries will cover the program's costs and provide Carson families with affordable groceries delivered to their home (following a safe, non-contact protocol). Local businesses and organizations made generous contributions that allowed the packages to be discounted for local residents. The City of Carson partnered with Norms Restaurant to create a variety of affordable grocery packages. City employees take orders over the phone while Norms staff members package the items. Carson employees deliver the packages to homes using proper PPE and social distancing. This program continues to be popular with our residents. Because it is fee based with a subsidy through the generosity of our contributors, we foresee continuing this program for as long as funding and staff are available.

COVID-19 Test Site

The City was able to arrange, at no cost to Carson, free COVID-19 testing for residents and non-residents alike in collaboration with a nonprofit entity, U.S. Health Fairs. It was one of the first facilities to allow testing without the requirement that the individual has symptoms or was exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Test Site and Call Center Stats from March 23, 2020 to November 25, 2020:

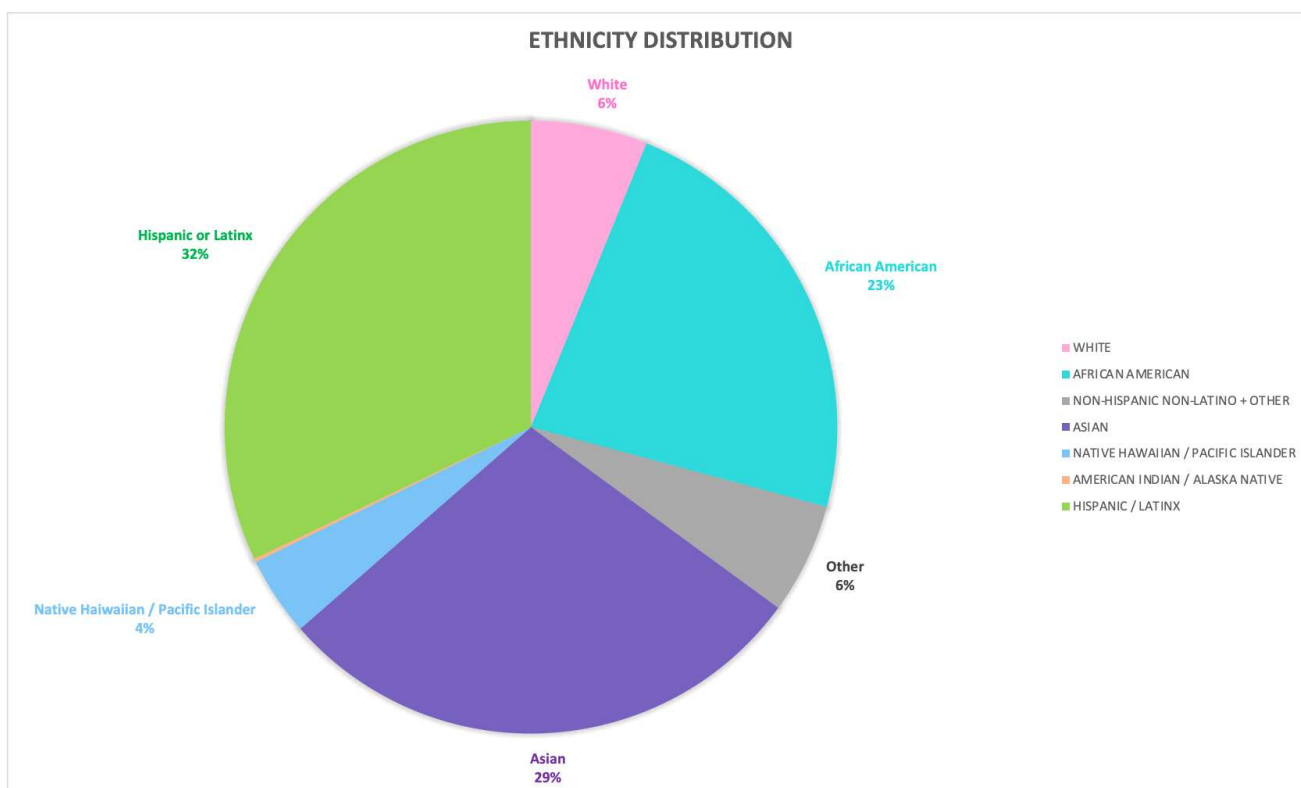
COVID Testing Call Center calls handled: 6,824

COVID Tests Administered: 18,494

Carson Test Site Results for the week of Nov 23, 2020 - Nov 25, 2020

Total Tested	960
Total Positive Cases	40
Carson Residents Tested	297
Carson Positive Cases	12

Ethnicity Distribution of Carson residents tested



Kids Club/Summer Day Camp

Per guidance provided by State and County authorities, the City was permitted to reopen a number of programs, namely Kids Club/Summer Day Camp and the Aquatics Program.

On August 14, 2020, Summer Day Camp transitioned to Kids Club as children went back to school. The first day of Kids Club was August 17, 2020. The following table summarizes

the number of participants for the week of October 12, 2020.

Week of November 23 - November 25, 2020

PARK	ALL DAY	AFTERNOON	TOTAL
Calas	0	0	0
Carson	0	0	0
Del Amo	0	0	0
Dolphin	14	0	14
Veterans	21	0	21

Aquatics

The Aquatics Program reopened for limited service on July 29, 2020 and continued to operate through the end of October, when the pools traditional close. Foisia Pool and Dominguez Aquatic Center had been open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, from 10:00 AM through 7:00 PM. Carson Pool and Hemingway Aquatic Center had been open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, from 11:00 AM through 7:00 PM. Family Swim was offered at all Aquatic facilities; Lap Swim at Foisia Pool, Dominguez Aquatic Center, and Hemingway Aquatic Center; and Swim Conditioning at Foisia Pool only. Protocols were established at all sites to ensure the health and safety of both staff and participants.

City Hall Appointments

City Hall is operating by "Appointment Only" for necessary services. We continue to encourage our residents to utilize all on-line services. Residents who plan to make an in-person visit can use the City's website to contact the department they are interested in conducting business with or can call the main City Hall Office line at (310) 830-7600.

Below are the numbers of residents who have come to City Hall for services:

For the week of November 23rd - November 25^h:

CITY HALL	APPOINTMENTS
Human Resources	4
Purchasing	1
Public Works	1
Building & Safety	14
City Clerk/City Manager	2
Business License	13
Community Development	2
TOTALS	37

To minimize the number of residents coming to City Hall, Building & Safety continues to

promote its online Plan Submittal process and to determine what additional technological improvements can be made.

Small Business Programs

The City of Carson, in partnership with the California Community Economic Development Association (CCEDA), launched the Carson Small Business Coronavirus Business Assistance Program to provide support for small business impacted by the COVID-19 virus and associated restrictions. The program has been providing technical assistance to businesses seeking Emergency Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL), Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funding (now ended), other loan programs as well as general business assistance in managing this crisis. Businesses in Carson are eligible for emergency loans of up to \$30,000 from the City of Carson's own Loan Program funded with \$500,000. Please visit **carson.cceda.com** or call (213) 348-7504.

At the direction of the Disaster Council, staff created a Temporary Outdoor Dining and Retail Operations Expansion Program to support businesses adversely affected by the County's social distancing requirements. The City has streamlined the process by waiving permit fees allowing the Community Development Director to approve the requests and allow the companies to restart their operations as soon as possible. Staff mailed the notice and application to 330 restaurants and 1800 retail establishments, and then visited shopping centers to hand-deliver hard copies of the information and application.

Businesses that have responded are service oriented businesses such as beauty salons and nail shops (7), places of worship (1), and restaurants (4) with requests including but not limited to expansion onto the sidewalk and parking lots.

City Rental Assistance Program

The City of Carson has created a one-time Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) for individuals and families renting in Carson and financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The program will continue until funds run out.

The financial assistance is available for up to a maximum of \$10,000 per qualified households and based on actual need for monthly rent payment, and does not have to be repaid.

For more information on the ERA program please visit:

http://ci.carson.ca.us/CommunityDevelopment/housing_cdbg.aspx or call (310) 233-4829.

City Events

When the emergency was first declared, the City Council cancelled all City events through the end of the 2020 calendar year. On August 4, 2020, the City Council extended the cancellation of all City sponsored events through March 31, 2021. This decision recognized that the first wave of the coronavirus has continued since the initial outbreak with record numbers of new infections in Los Angeles County. With growing concerns of the expectant second wave during the upcoming flu season, the State and County have continued their orders disallowing the gathering of masses of people such as would occur at City events.

Staff will continue to monitor the status and provide updates and recommendations to the City Council.

Outdoor Parks

The City Parks have been open since June 17, 2020. As of October 14, 2020, at the City Council's direction, Playgrounds, Fitness Equipment and Ball Fields opened. Pursuant to State and County requirements, the following protocols will be in place:

1. Signage
2. Hand Sanitizer
3. Distance Markers
4. Daily Cleaning
5. Scheduled Sanitation Spraying
6. Adult Supervision
7. Limit visit to 30 minutes

The City will continue to take precautions to ensure the health and safety of park guests, visitors, staff and the community.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

Staff costs are being incurred by the City for the coordination, surveillance, communication, and management of the COVID-19 local emergency, as well as costs for procuring related services and supplies. City costs are either being covered by existing department appropriations or new appropriations from the General Fund. All costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic are being tracked separately in the City's Disaster Fund and staff will pursue any available Federal and State reimbursements for eligible City costs incurred. The City will realize a small savings as a result of City Council's action to further extend and suspend City sponsored events through March 31, 2021.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. Public Health Press Release
- 1.

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