



CITY OF CARSON

Legislation Text

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Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Discussion

SUBJECT:

COVID-19 UPDATE (CITY COUNCIL)

I. SUMMARY

During this unprecedented pandemic, the City of Carson has had to adhere to State and County Executive orders that are intended to help slow the spread of the virus but have also negatively impacted our economy. For the first time in its incorporated history, the City is not allowed to operate in any capacity outside of health measures dictated by these higher levels of government.

We continue to monitor and report on changes to the State and County health orders to determine how they may impact Carson businesses and residents and the services the City provides to the community.

CURRENT SITUATION

A State mandated regional stay-at-home order went into effect on October 6, 2020 due to the ICU capacity dropping below 15% in the Southern California region.

On December 9, 2020, at the recommendation of the Disaster Council, City Hall reduced days of operation to Monday's and Thursday's only. Until further notice, City Hall will be closed to the public on Tuesday's and Wednesday's. 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.

As of December 10, 2020, the Los Angeles County Public Health released an updated Safer-at-Home order indicating that outdoor playgrounds, which were initially closed under the State regional order, have been allowed to reopen by the State.

As of the preparation of this report on December 10, 2020 Los Angeles County Public Health Department has reported 3,199 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the City of Carson, with 475,271 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 the City 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 has also been seeing a rise in the number of employees who tested positive for the COVID-19 virus after being exposed outside the workplace. This led the City Manager to encourage more telecommuting as long as essential city services are adequately maintained and to reduce visitation by the public to City Hall by limiting appointments to two (2) days a week.

To combat and slow the spread of COVID-19, the following measures have been ongoing:

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 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.

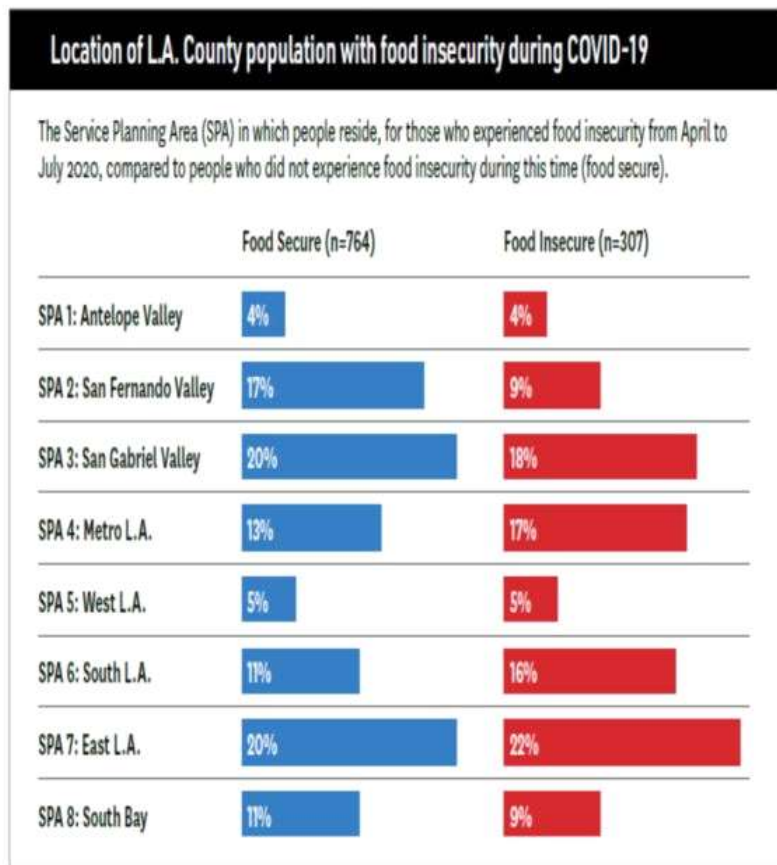
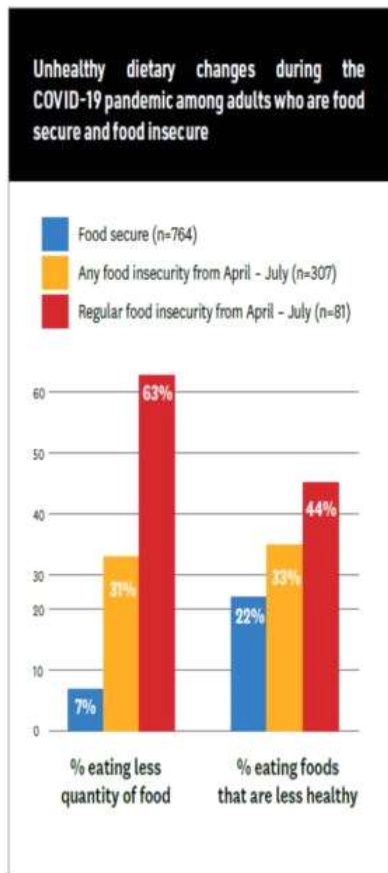
Study Findings Overview

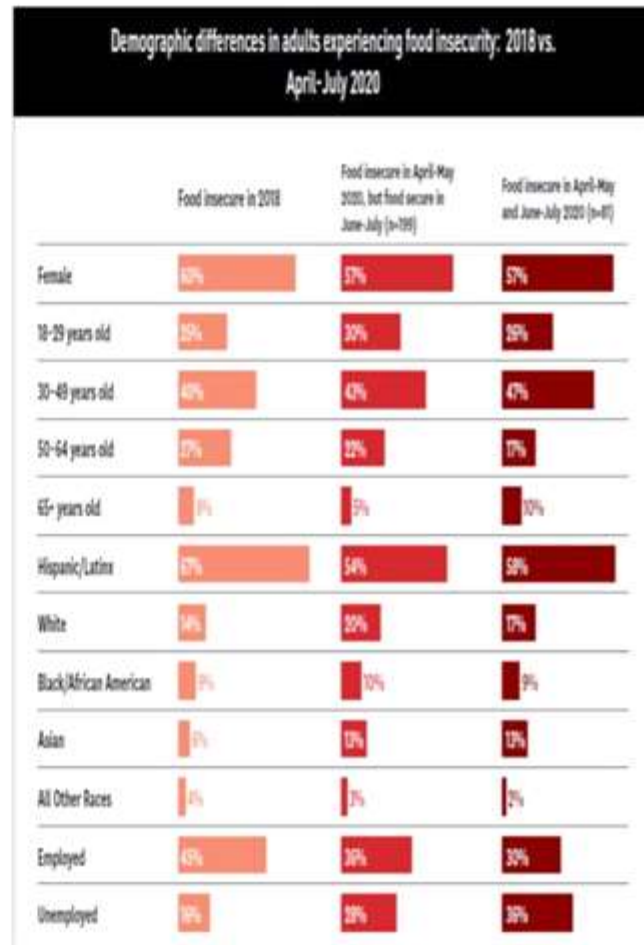
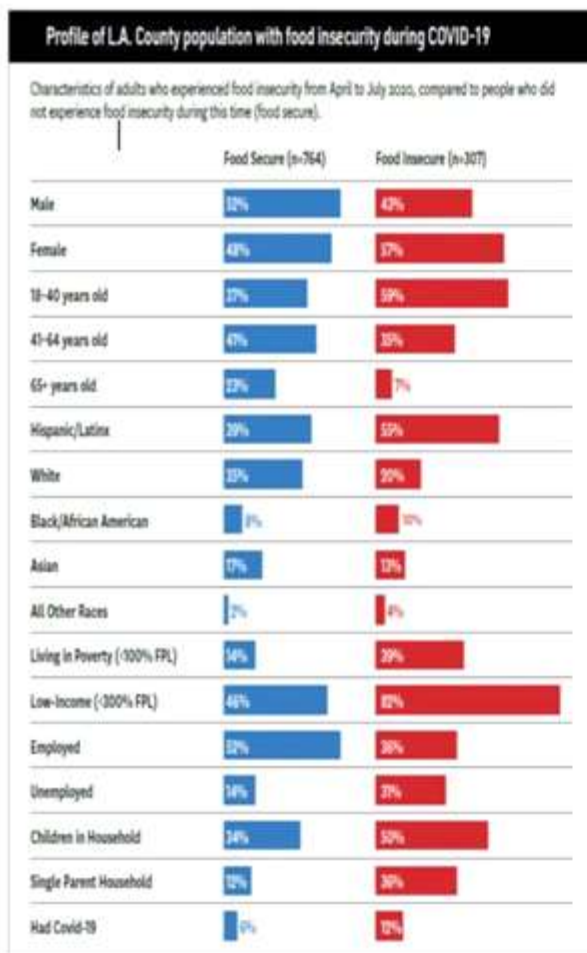
Two-thirds of households that experienced food insecurity at the onset of the pandemic transitioned to food security by June/July (18.6% of the L.A. County population), and food and financial assistance programs may have helped them to do so. Households that were not in poverty and who received unemployment 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 unhealthy 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.





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 December 10, 2020:

Statistics on Food Programs since each was initiated:

The research referenced above supports the City's robust efforts to provide food to our most needy populations.

Grab-n-Go Meals: 107,323

Meals on Wheels Delivered by city staff: 11,146

Resource Call Center calls handled: 13,603

Carson Essentials to Go: 1,574

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 have 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 December 10, 2020:

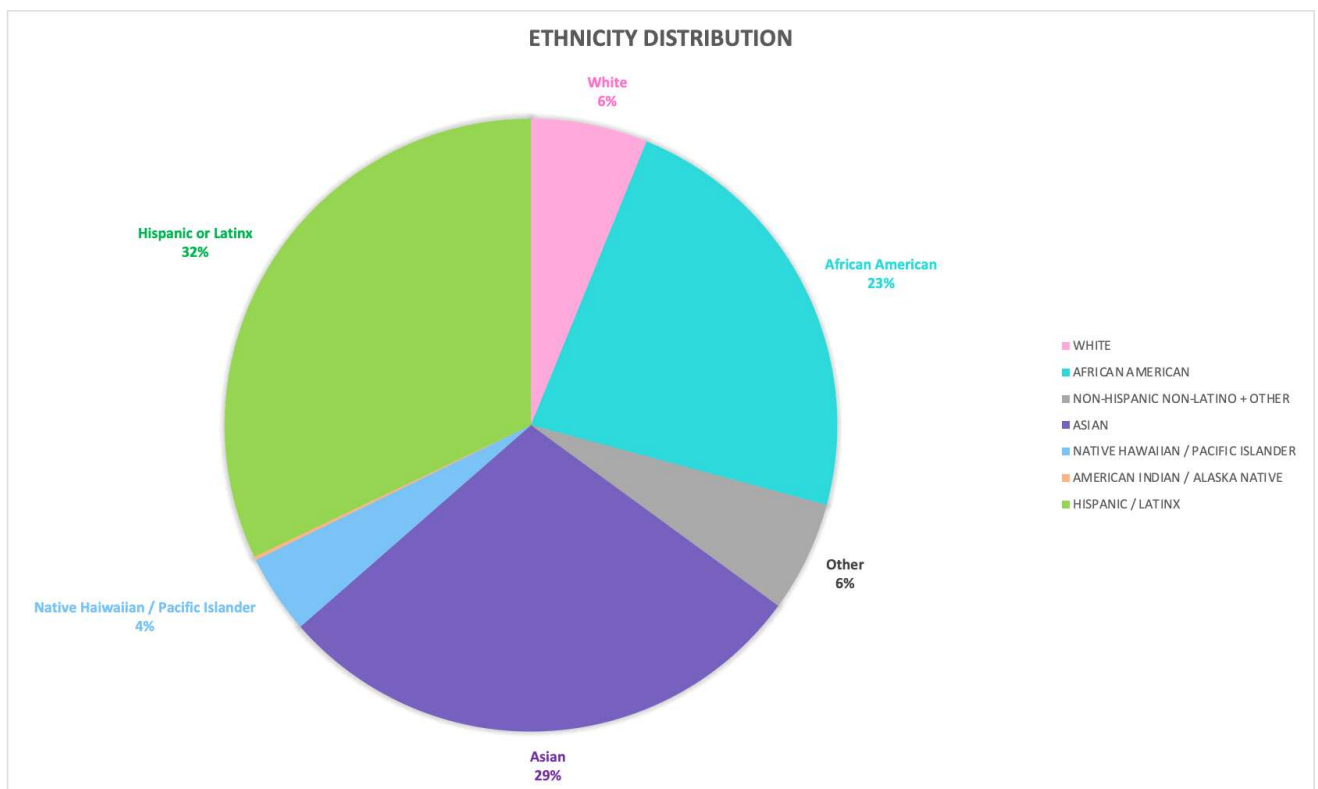
COVID Testing Call Center calls handled: 6,934

COVID Tests Administered: 19,442

Carson Test Site Results for the week of Dec 7, 2020 - Dec 10, 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 December 7 - December 10, 2020

PARK	ALL DAY	AFTERNOON	TOTAL
Calas	14	0	14
Carson	5	0	5
Del Amo	4	0	4
Dolphin	13	0	13
Veterans	18	0	18

Aquatics

The Aquatics Program reopened for limited service on July 29, 2020 and continued to operate through the end of October when the pools traditionally 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 had been 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 with Tuesdays and Wednesdays closed to the public until further notice. 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 December 7th - December 10th:

CITY HALL	APPOINTMENTS
Human Resources	9
Building & Safety	30
City Clerk/City Manager	3
Business License	39
Community Development	2
TOTALS	83

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.

As of December 9, 2020 all personal care services and outdoor dining are closed through December 22, 2020.

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 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. Most recently the City Council extended the cancellation of all City events other than drive-thru events through June 30, 2021.

With the second wave of COVID cases during the flu and holiday 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. Currently, state has authorized reopening of playgrounds and Fitness Equipment, while Ball Fields have remained 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 June 30, 2021.

VI. EXHIBITS

1. HOO - Safer At Home - Surge Response

1.

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