

MEMORANDUM

Office of the City Manager



DATE: November 7, 2020
TO: Mayor and Council
THROUGH: Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*
FROM: Ashwini Kantak, Assistant City Manager *Ashwini Kantak*
SUBJECT: Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 Update #28

The health of our employees, residents, and businesses remains the highest priority for the City of Milpitas.

Overview:

The City of Milpitas continues to implement its response to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus and the COVID-19 disease in Santa Clara County, in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health. The previous Council update on October 21 discussed updates on the State's vaccination plan, which will be implemented in several phases and includes the formation of a scientific safety review workgroup tasked with developing guidance for the prioritization and allocation of vaccines. Information about the contrast between the State allowing resumption of stadium operations in the Orange tier at 20% capacity and County officials not allowing audiences to convene for any local sporting events was also shared.

As the lead agency on public health, the County is regularly updating its guidance, which is available in five different languages and can be viewed [here](#). The County also has a [data dashboard](#) that is updated with all the latest information. The City continues to work closely with the County to ensure the safety and security of our community.

Key Updates:

State

New Testing Laboratory

On October 30, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the opening of an innovative new laboratory in California that will increase the state's COVID-19 testing capacity, reduce test turnaround time and create hundreds of new California jobs. The \$25 million lab, built in conjunction with major diagnostics company PerkinElmer, will begin processing tests starting in November and work toward full capacity of 150,000 tests by March 2021.

The additional testing capacity will allow California to better serve schools, health care providers and hard-to-reach communities like essential workers, those in congregate settings and communities of color, who are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19. The additional capacity comes just as flu season arrives and the need for testing is expected to spike statewide because the symptoms of COVID-19 and flu are similar. The laboratory has already created 300 new California jobs. When the lab is running at full capacity, it will employ 700 people, with an emphasis on California hiring.

County

Decreasing the Infection Rate During Colder Months

During a virtual Zoom conference with Silicon Valley leaders on October 30, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director, Dr. Anthony Fauci discussed the five things that would drastically alter the future months: universal wearing of masks, physical distancing, avoiding congregated settings and crowds, doing things more outdoors instead of indoors and washing hands. As the country braces for the colder winter months, Dr. Fauci reiterated his concern over many outdoor activities — as [approved by the CDC](#) for socially distancing and congregating — will soon move indoors, which could lead to problematic situations for many. In Silicon Valley, the risk is slightly lessened due to the warmer climate but there have still been some recent spikes in Santa Clara County.

Status of Vaccine

Dr. Anthony Fauci shared that five of six vaccine trials are in advanced Phase 3 trials, with anywhere from 30,000 up to 60,000 volunteers per trial. Once a trial is confirmed successful, public health officials should be able to begin administering vaccine doses by the end of 2020 or in the beginning of 2021. Major vaccine production and dissemination is anticipated to be over the subsequent four to six months of 2021 (hopefully by the third quarter of 2021).

COVID-19 Testing Milestone

County COVID-19 testing officer Dr. Marty Fenstersheib shared that Santa Clara County has surpassed 1 million tests for the novel coronavirus since the pandemic began in March. Between 7,000 and 8,000 tests are being conducted per day in Santa Clara County, which includes tests conducted through the State's testing infrastructure and by large health care companies and nonprofits like Kaiser Permanente and Sutter Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

The county's rate of new cases per day, however, has decreased sharply in recent weeks as testing availability has expanded. Santa Clara County's rate of new cases per day per 100,000 residents — one of the metrics state officials use to determine which businesses counties can reopen — has fallen from an adjusted 8.6 in late August to 3.4 as of the end of October.

Mandatory Directive for Gatherings – Updated

While COVID-19 is still circulating in the community, the County Health Office strongly discourages any gathering with people from other households especially with the holiday season just around the corner. Dr. George Han, the Deputy Health Officer for Santa Clara County Health Public Health Department strongly recommended not traveling and getting creative with virtual family gatherings as well as engaging in activities limited to people in the same household during a live County briefing on November 4. Traditionally the week around Thanksgiving and Christmas is the busiest time at the airports. Dr. Han suggested utilizing private vehicles as an alternative given the amount of people going to the airport and the risk involved with the usual activities that expose travelers such as waiting in the terminals, using high-traffic public restrooms and sitting for hours inside an aircraft, etc. The state also has guidance for private outdoor gatherings of up to three separate households as long as participants comply with all the requirements set forth to reduce risk and keep everyone as safe as possible. For additional recommendations and up-to-date information on Gatherings, please visit the County Public Health Department's [website](#).

City of Milpitas

Unemployment Rate

For many years prior to the pandemic, Milpitas' unemployment rate was approximately 3% or sub-3%. In April 2020, Milpitas' unemployment rate dramatically increased to 12.9% due to Santa Clara County's Shelter-in-Place Order meant to prioritize public health and safety. In the past few months Milpitas' unemployment rate has been decreasing: 10.6% in July, 8.2% in August and 7.9% in September.

California Rebuilding Fund

The California Rebuilding Fund will provide capital loans to small businesses to help them "retool, rebuild, and reopen." The California Rebuilding Fund is made up of philanthropic, public and private sector funds and is intended to serve the small business community. Applicants will be able to apply through a central online portal where they can complete a pre-application. If a favorable initial eligibility determination is made, an applicant will be matched with a participating community lender. Applicants must meet eligibility requirements, including having no more than 50 full-time employees and less than \$2.5 million in annual revenues. The fund and application process will launch soon; more information can be found [here](#).

Food Distribution: Second Harvest Food Bank Site (Milpitas High School)

Recreation and Community Services Staff are coordinating with Milpitas Unified School District Staff and Second Harvest Food Bank staff to arrange the extension of a Food Distribution through April 2021. The current site located at the Milpitas High School distributes food to over 850 households every 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month. Since its launch in May 2020, over 28,000 boxes of food have been distributed. Due to the anticipated return of high school sports and extracurricular activities on the weekends, other locations in Milpitas will be assessed as a new distribution site beginning in early Winter 2021.

Youth Sports Field Usage

With Santa Clara County moving into the State's Orange tier, additional in-person sports programs are eligible for reinstatement. In compliance with both the State and County of Santa Clara orders, Recreation and Community Services has begun working with youth sports representatives on the allowance of organized youth sports programs for skills and conditioning activities in Milpitas. With this effort, youth sports groups would be allowed field usage to organize small pods of youth sports team members for non-game (competitive, practice or scrimmage). Staff will be working with each individual group's leadership on ensuring that required social distancing protocols, record-keeping and notification procedures are in place for a safe participant experience.

Additionally, to accommodate public request for evening access to the walking track at the Milpitas Sports Center, staff will be turning on the field lights, daily, until 9:00 PM. Staff will be monitoring the use of the field area in the evenings to ensure that no unauthorized play under, the State and County orders is occurring. Additionally, some areas of the Sports Center fields will be limited while there are youth sports programs, to ensure everyone's health and safety. Additional signage and messaging for this returning use will begin next week, and lights will be turned on starting Monday, November 16.

Milpitas Response and Preparations

The City of Milpitas continues to operate at Stage 5 (Extremely High Response) of our Pandemic Management Plan. Operating at Stage 5 translates into the suspension of all non-essential City programs and services, the closure of City facilities, and full activation of the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Our City's response will enable us to fulfill the four priorities of our Pandemic Response Plan:

1. **Protecting Our People:** Ensuring the safety and well-being of our employees.
2. **Continuity of Essential City Operations:** Sustaining delivery of critical City services.
3. **Effective Communication:** Ensuring timely and consistent communication internally with our employees and externally with our community.
4. **Support the Santa Clara County Public Health Department:** Provide resource and communication support to assist the County Public Health Officer, the County, and all our partners in mutual commitment to protect the people of our communities.

Current Status on City Services and Operations:

All City facilities are closed to the public until further notice. The Office of Emergency Services continues to operate the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at a full activation level.

- **Police Department Public Lobby:** The Milpitas Police Department lobby is open during business hours, 8 AM to 5 PM. Supplemental safety measures are in place to ensure the safety of our staff and visitors. Community members can contact the non-emergency number (408-586-2400) for any further questions.
- **Public Meetings:** Starting with the October 6 City Council meeting, live, audio-only comments at public meetings was introduced. This was based on requests from the Council and community. The majority of Board, Commission, and Subcommittee meetings are transitioning to this new format to engage live public participation. The public may livestream the meeting on the City's [Website](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube channel](#) if not able to attend the live virtual meeting.
- **City Employees:** The City is continuing to have employees work in person or remotely on essential services and other City functions. City staff has developed a self-check protocol that enables the safety of all employees. The protocols apply to all employees who are regularly coming to work to perform an essential service and may interact with the community or with other employees. Each City Department is responsible to coordinate the process for their respective employees. The self-check protocols are based on guidance from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention and will be updated according to any changes to CDC guidance.
- **Permit Center and Inspection Services:** Although the Permit Center located at City Hall is closed for in-person services, staff continues to provide permit and plan review services via email, website information, telephone, and tele or web conferencing. All construction is currently allowed in Santa Clara County. However, construction activities must implement mandatory risk reduction measures, and comply with the [Mandatory Directive for Construction Projects](#). For detailed City service descriptions, refer to the latest [Permit Center and Inspection Services Information Flyer](#).

- **Recreation and Community Services:** All community programs and gatherings remain cancelled until further notice, including private rentals in City facilities and park picnic areas. The Senior Center remains closed for programming. The center offers “to-go” lunches, as a continuation of its Senior Nutrition Lunch Program.
- **Other City Services:** Water, sewer, stormwater, and traffic signal operation services continue to operate at normal levels. Staff also continues to provide maintenance services for facilities, fleet, parks, enhanced cleaning for some City facilities, emergency services for trees and streets, and Underground Service Alert services for construction projects that are allowed under the County order. Staff continues to work with Milpitas Sanitation to ensure adequate staffing is available for solid waste collection in the City. Public Works staff are also working to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations for all public works services. The City has established a virtual Utility Call Center from employees’ homes to ensure continuity of services. Meter reading staff will continue to respond to water service calls and maintain the City’s meter reading schedule.
- **Volunteers:** The City's Milpitas Volunteer Program (MVP) continues to recruit volunteers for various community support efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community members looking to register as a volunteer and receive regular monthly updates on local volunteer needs can [visit our volunteer page](#).

Public Information:

The City will continue to update its [COVID-19 webpage](#) that has been established specifically for information about coronavirus. We will also be providing regular public updates through our social media accounts on Facebook, Nextdoor, and Twitter.