Summary Title: Community and Economic Recovery Workplan (Update #2)

Title: Second Progress Report on Palo Alto's Community and Economic Recovery Workplan

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Administrative Services

This informational memorandum transmits updates for each of the eleven (11) work items in the Community and Economic Recovery Workplan as it was approved by the City Council on March 22, 2021. No action is required.

It is anticipated that this report will be provided on a regular schedule in order to keep the City Council and the Community up to date on developments of the workplan. Additionally, individual items will continue to be brought forward to the City Council for discussion and action as appropriate to make progress on the workplan. More information on the City’s Community and Economic Recovery Workplan can be found at www.cityofpaloalto.org/communityrecovery and information on upcoming events can be found at the City’s calendar online here: https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/Home/Calendar

Community and Economic Recovery Workplan Updates:

Manage through the Pandemic
  a) Maintaining services while managing daily pandemic needs such as testing, contact tracing, exposures, and other tasks necessitated by COVID-19 is currently the highest need of the City.

UPDATE: The local conditions related to COVID-19 have improved significantly since the last Community and Economic Recovery Update; infection rates have decreased as vaccination rates have increased. This has resulted in continued progression through the State’s Blueprint for a Safer Economy; the County moved from Orange to Yellow tier between the last reporting period and this report. The Governor’s Office has announced a retirement of the Blueprint and a reopening of California effective June 15 to resume usual activities without restrictions. As an employer, the City is required to comply with regulations mandated by California Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA), the County of Santa Clara, CDC and other entities that provide guidance applicable to the workplace. Staff will continue to monitor regulations, requirements, and guidance as they are issued by various regulatory bodies to ensure compliance as well as the health and safety of the workforce and community.
b) Continue high-volume public communications and enhanced community engagement on managing through the COVID-19 pandemic to the City and the Community.

**UPDATE:** The frequency of the City’s COVID-19 newsletter, which is sent to more than 50,000 followers, has changed from twice a week with special reports as needed, to once a week. Staff expects that cadence to continue. In June, the Coronavirus Report, the current weekly digital newsletter, will transition to be focused on community recovery; specifically connecting the community together to City service changes and programs; restaurant and retail opportunities; wellbeing, wellness and family resources; and community engagement and ways to get help or help those in need through volunteer opportunities. The goal will be to further the City’s community recovery efforts and connect the whole community - residents, non-profits, public art opportunities, and business-together.

Since the last reporting period, the following activities took place with enhanced communications to engage and inform the community: Wellness Wednesday event series continued, staff hosted a Budget Town Hall and launched a budget related online survey, a series of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and race and equity events took place through May, and more race and equity events are scheduled in June and July.

c) Provide an updated clear comprehensive Workplace Activation Plan (including remote staffing models) ($500k)

**UPDATE:** The updated Workplace Activation Plan was submitted to the City Council as an informational item on April 5, 2021 as CMR 12161. A study session was also held with the City Council on June 1, 2021 in regards to the format of public meetings tentatively beginning in August 2021 where the Council affirmed direction to pursue necessary adjustments for a hybrid meeting with both in-person and remote capabilities for all participants.

Santa Clara County Public Health required all to make a first round of self-certifications to confirm the vaccination status of employees by June 1. Employers are required to continue follow-up every 14 days for employees who reported their status as not vaccinated or declined to state. For this first round of reporting, 76% of the workforce responded, with 62% reporting their status as fully vaccinated. Human Resources staff are continuing to follow up, with a goal of obtaining 100% reporting.

On June 3, the Board of Cal/OSHA acted to require employers to exempt vaccinated employees from masks and distancing in the workplace. If one employee in the work group is not vaccinated, all employees in the work group must continue wearing masks and distancing while indoors. Masks are not required at outdoor worksites, except for unvaccinated employees who are unable to maintain 6-foot distance from others. These revised regulations take effect June 15 to coincide with the Governor’s plan to drop the color coded tier system of restrictions for the general public. State officials and other agencies have acknowledged the difficulty on employers to monitor and enforce the revised rules. Cal/OSHA adopted several other workplace regulations that staff are reviewing to include in the City’s workplace reactivation planning; as noted in Item A, staff will continue to monitor rules, regulations, and guidance as they are released to ensure the health and safety of the workforce and the community.
Community Wellness and Wellbeing

d) Support Community Wellness and Wellbeing through development of a series of community events, presentations, and engagement opportunities e.g. Wellness Wednesdays

**UPDATE:** As briefly discussed above, a full calendar of City events can be found on the City’s website. As of this update, three Wellness Wednesdays have been held: Introduction to Mindfulness for adults and teens, and Earthquake Preparedness. These online events are held every third Wednesday of the month at 5:00 PM. A recording of each is available on the City’s YouTube channel. The next event, Wellness Resources for Seniors, will be Wednesday June 16. Registration for the Wellness Wednesday series, as well as additional resources for the community to access, can be found here: [http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/bewell](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/bewell).

Other programs and events include a Summit on Women and Girls on June 12, movies in the park, and summer concerts. **Summer camps** begin in June offering a wide range of programs including art and science camps, sports, special interest, and Foothills camps. A community event to celebrate the Fourth of July is in development for July 4, from 11 AM to 3 PM at Mitchell Park and will feature the Radio City All Stars band, food trucks, and a kids play area. The Library’s Summer Reading Program started June 1 and runs through September 8. The theme this year is “Reconnect With Your Community”. The Library has a [list of various programs](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/bewell), including weekly [Wacky Wednesdays](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/bewell) for kids and families, a few [author events](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/bewell) and more!

Focused Business Support

e) Continue, and further promote, Uplift Local and other retail supportive strategies

**UPDATE:** The Uplift Local initiative is an effort to connect the community with outdoor activities. Several community-facing opportunities are currently underway including a monthly community-check in to hear from the community on their experience with the program and ArtLift, a series of art focused initiatives located throughout Palo Alto. More on this effort can be found here: [https://viewer.mapme.com/cc87a9ff-ceaa-4f89-a05a-678fb335bf3c/](https://viewer.mapme.com/cc87a9ff-ceaa-4f89-a05a-678fb335bf3c/)

The City continues to engage with local businesses through monthly meetings with merchants from California Avenue, University Avenue, and hotel partners. Staff completed a vacancy assessment of downtown, California Avenue, Town and Country and Stanford Shopping Center. Point-in-time vacancy rates were approximately 16% for the California Avenue district, approximately 15% for the downtown district, approximately 11% for Stanford Shopping Center, and approximately 20% for Town and Country Village. Staff is conducting further point-in-time vacancy assessments along El Camino Real as well as the midtown district. This data, and other inputs, will help shape the future of Uplift Local programs as well as aid in formulating the recommended scope of economic development consulting work.

In June the City Council will consider several actions to support economic recovery in business districts, including the plan for rescission of the City’s Proclamation of Emergency as well as installation of advanced parking management infrastructure and convenient, fast electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
f) Provide technical support for workplace environmental upgrades to mitigate risks for local businesses

**UPDATE:** The City has proactively reached out to local businesses to facilitate indoor air quality improvements. The City’s consultant that will provide technical support for workplace environmental upgrades has received 28 signed agreements for scheduling onsite consultations; expected to begin mid-June. Consultations can provide recommendations ranging from explaining the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) guideline of hourly fresh air circulations to optimizing Heating, Ventilating, and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) systems. Staff continues to use a variety of marketing tools to promote the program to local businesses with the goal of contacting as many of the commercial customers throughout the city for the entire program.

g) Refine the scope and breadth of the City’s economic support activities

**UPDATE:** The City Council addressed this item through a discussion facilitated by the Good City Company on June 1, 2021. After discussing economic development and the potential range of options, the City Council directed staff to return to the City Council with a Request for Proposals for an economic development strategy consultant and an internal staffing plan to support connection to the business community with a focus on specific areas. Staff anticipates returning with the request for proposal and options for a scalable internal staffing plan to complement proposals after the City Council’s summer break.

*City Priority Initiatives*

h) Further accelerate Fiber to the Home (FTTH) and pursue expanded community engagement

**UPDATE:** On May 24, Staff and Magellan presented the fiber backbone expansion and FTTH business case to the City Council. The Council discussion focused on the importance of affordable, fast, reliable, and City-operated ISP broadband service at homes and businesses. Staff, UAC and Magellan recommend the City-operated ISP model with insource and outsource functions because it provides the City full control of pricing and customer experience and significantly higher financial return in the long-term. The FTTH business case assumes a take rate of 32%, which is conservative compared to a take rate of 42% for other municipal owned FTTH networks.

Council unanimously approved (7-0) staff and Utilities Advisory Commission’s recommendation to complete the detailed engineering design of the City’s fiber backbone and FTTH distribution network; accelerate community education and engagement regarding FTTH; complete a residential and commercial broadband survey, and return to Council with a City-operated internet service provider (ISP) model and business plan to offer FTTH service.
i) Downtown redesign for cars, pedestrians, and bicycle travelers and visitors ($150k, design work only)

**UPDATE:** As the City considers plans for reopening University Avenue and California Avenue to vehicular traffic (to be discussed by City Council on June 22), efforts are underway to evaluate updating the streetscape and activating public spaces to support vibrancy of these spaces. The City is developing potential shorter-term street configurations and improvements that would allow for flexible closure of blocks along University Avenue and provide additional outdoor space for businesses once the street is reopened to traffic.

Staff is also looking into more attractive methods to close California Avenue, as closures for the Farmers Market will be ongoing and California Avenue restaurants will have the opportunity to provide outdoor parklet dining. Lastly, staff is preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to prepare conceptual designs and community engagement, including a potential design charrette, for University Avenue streetscape improvements by expanding pedestrian and outdoor spaces available for use by visitors and businesses.

j) Exploration of potential ballot measures

**UPDATE:** The Finance Committee will be discussing potential ballot measures on June 15, 2021 – subsequent to the release of this report. Potential ballot measures include options ranging from a business tax, which was previously discussed with the City Council prior to COVID-19, to other taxes, and options for raising revenue from specific uses such as affordable housing to funding general services. Staff hopes to narrow the range of options through discussion with the Finance Committee to ensure optimal use of limited staff resources in pursuit of potential ballot measures which will require additional contractual funding this calendar year.

k) Research and return to Council with recommendations for updates to the Foothills Fire Management Plan and certain other measures, including a Foothills Fire Early Warning Systems (FFEWS).

**UPDATE:** The Office of Emergency Services has prepared an Informational Report, CMR 12315, as part of the June 21 City Council packet. The report provides details and updates regarding wildland fire preparation, mitigation, and planning efforts from various departments (including the Office of Emergency Services, Fire, Police, Community Services, Utilities, Public Works, and Information Technology). The Report focuses on the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and wildfire but also touches on other hazards, which can be found in the community risk assessment. Staff anticipates returning to the City Council for discussion as well as regular updates through this CER Update as well as subsequent information about ongoing conditions, actions, and needs.
Legend

As seen in the updates above, a stoplight symbol is displayed to the left of each individual work item. This indicator is meant to provide a visual indication of the status of each work item as described below.

- **Green** – Progress on this work item is underway, consistent with what was described in the Community and Economic Workplan as adopted by the City Council.
- **Yellow** – Progress on this work item is underway, but may have upcoming vulnerabilities or decisions that need to be made to impact future progress.
- **Red** – Progress on this work item is not underway; this represents when work has stalled or encountered barriers that need to be overcome in order for work to continue.