



# MEMORANDUM

City Manager's Office

**DATE:** August 27, 2020  
**TO:** Mayor and Council  
**THROUGH:** Steve McHarris, City Manager *Steve McHarris*  
**FROM:** Ashwini Kantak, Assistant City Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Food Distribution Programs in Milpitas

## Overview:

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused extreme unemployment and economic distress, putting additional strain on families living in the high-cost-of-living Bay Area. To help meet the needs of families who are struggling with food insecurity, the City of Milpitas has worked with local nonprofits and agencies to provide food, groceries, and hot meals to residents.

A State of California program called Great Plates Delivered was also instituted after COVID-19 shutdowns to ensure seniors have access to healthy meals, and to support restaurants struggling due to the inability to offer indoor dining. The combination of programs has helped deliver countless meals to those in need.

## Key Updates:

### **Second Harvest Food Bank Milpitas Distribution Site**

Recreation and Community Services staff organized and led the opening of a new food distribution site at the Milpitas High School, operating on the first and third Saturdays of each month. This coordination required agreements and commitment of resources including site access and staffing between the City, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Milpitas Unified School District. The City's commitment of resources includes staff time for: ongoing distribution organization with Second Harvest Food Bank; recruitment of volunteers (more than 50 needed per distribution date); community outreach and awareness; traffic control (including VTA reroute); closing of streets; and site restroom access. Distribution began on May 16 and the program has served over 16,000 food boxes. This distribution effort is scheduled to run through the end of 2020.

### **Senior Nutrition Program at Barbara Lee Senior Center**

The existing Senior Nutrition Program has continued without interruption, serving hot and healthy meals to Milpitas seniors ages 50+. The program, which previously served seniors indoors at the Senior Center, pivoted to a "To Go" lunch service under the Shelter-In-Place Order (SIP). Since the SIP, over 9,000 meals have been served to seniors. Additionally, one hundred and twenty-three new seniors, and counting, have enrolled in the Senior Nutrition Program and are receiving daily meals. Forecasting the increased community need, City staff applied for and received \$50,000 of federal Community Development Block Grant dollars to accommodate the increased need. The program runs Monday through Friday with 4 to 5 full-time staff and two part-time staff. Recently, the program has added weekend meals so seniors can pick up meals for Saturday and Sunday during their Friday meal pick up.

### **Meals on Wheels Referral and Support**

Recognizing at the onset of the SIP order that many senior center members should not or could not manage grocery shopping and/or food preparation, Recreation and Community Services staff contacted over 1,200 senior center members to inform them of their new eligibility for the Santa Clara County Meals on Wheels (MOW) program. Staff not only informed residents of this program but also assisted seniors in completing the necessary applications and submitting them to the county. These efforts resulted in over 130 new enrollments of Milpitas seniors. Prior to this effort, MOW delivered to 21 Milpitas residents.

### **MUSD Student/Family Meal Assistance**

In response to a Santa Clara County Emergency Operations Center request for aid, the City staffed a Milpitas Unified School District (MUSD) effort to increase their end-of-school-year meal program to parents. The City staffed two sites, twice per week for four weeks, to distribute meals, coordinating with MUSD Nutrition staff to prep the To-Go meal kits, and the City of San Jose to provide personal protective equipment, inventory and deliveries with provider Revolution Food. This effort resulted in the distribution of close to 4,000 meals. Additionally, staff worked with the MUSD during its 6-week summer day camp program to provide free lunches to children through the annual MUSD Summer Feeding Program.

### **Spirit of Giving 4<sup>th</sup> of July Food Drive**

As part of Virtual 4<sup>th</sup> of July activities, City staff worked with local Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops to conduct a food donation drive to benefit the Milpitas Food Pantry. The food drive resulted in over 8 barrels of food and gift card donations.

### **Great Plates Delivered**

Great Plates Delivered is a State of California program designed to support adults 65 and older and adults 60-64 who are at high-risk from COVID-19, in staying home and staying healthy by delivering up to three (3) nutritious meals a day, and also provide essential economic stimulus to local businesses and workers struggling to stay afloat during the COVID crisis. The program that is currently being administered by the City of San Jose on behalf of Santa Clara County and cities within the county. As this is a state program, 75% of costs are covered by FEMA, 18.75% are covered by the State, and 6.25% are to be covered by municipal governments. There is no cost to individuals or restaurants to participate in this program.

In order to be eligible for this program, an individual must:

- Be 65 years of age or older, or 60-64 and “high-risk” as defined by the CDC, including:
  - Individuals who are COVID-19 positive (as documented by a state/local public health official or medical health professional),
  - Individuals who have been exposed to COVID-19 (as documented by a state/local public health official or medical health professional), or
  - Individuals with underlying health conditions;
- Live alone or with one other program-eligible adult;
- Not be currently receiving assistance from other state or federal nutrition assistance programs;
- Earn no more than 600% of the federal poverty limit (for Milpitas this is no more than \$76,560 for a single person, and \$103,440 for a couple); and
- Affirm an inability to prepare or obtain meals.

In order to be eligible for this program, a restaurant must:

- Be locally determined (in Santa Clara County, this qualification is done by World Central Kitchen);
- Be small and independently owned, with ownership diversity;
- Have the ability to meet volume and nutritional standards, source locally grown foods, and meet cultural dietary needs;
- Not be currently participating in a state or federal meal service program;
- Have the ability to quickly activate for program delivery ; and
- Have close or convenient proximity to participants (based on incoming calls and senior congregate sites).

The City of San Jose contracted this program out to Sourcewise to qualify participants, and to World Central Kitchen to qualify restaurants and manage meal orders and fulfillment. Sourcewise has qualified 1,443 people throughout Santa Clara County, with 1,129 actively participating in the program as of August 21. Over 500 restaurants applied to participate in the program, and eight restaurants were selected. The program officially began on May 17 and is approved by the State of California to run through September 9. Prior extensions to the program end date were not granted or announced by the State until the date the program was slated to end. Should the State approve an extension of the Great Plates Program, cities and counties would be notified on or around September 9.

The City of Milpitas currently has 65 people participating in the program, receiving meals on a weekly basis. The City is monitoring the potential costs of this program as offered through the Santa Clara County/City of San Jose administered Great Plates program, for its 6.25% local share in costs. At a recent City Council meeting, the program cost for this program was identified in the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) Expenditures Justification Plan (Plan), which was approved by City Council. As noted by staff, the expenditures incurred so far and estimated for the remainder of 2020, as captured in the Plan, far exceed the funds available for reimbursement by the Federal Government, which means the General Fund is partially paying for COVID-19 related activities.

There have been some recent inquiries from community members as to why the City of Milpitas is not administering this program at the local level to support Milpitas restaurants.

For a city to become a local administrator, it must first prepare and submit a Program Stakeholder Plan. Partnerships with other agencies serving seniors are strongly encouraged. Additionally, in order for a city to be a program administrator, the city would need to do the following:

- Enroll eligible Californians through a self-certification process;
- Select multiple licensed local food providers that prioritize local jobs, worker retention, worker health and safety, and standards of equity and fairness in employment practices, wages, hiring, and promotion to participate; to include those in hotels, as well as licensed kitchens operated within airports and other entities (the intent of Great Plates Delivered is to support local food vendors by stimulating the local economy). Please note, the Governor's intent of this program is to leverage multiple small- to medium-sized restaurants to meet participant demand;
- Establish delivery services that include appropriate background check procedures; and
- Submit weekly data collection reports using the Great Plates Delivered Data Reporting Questionnaire to the GreatPlates@soc.caloes.ca.gov email inbox every Monday and Thursday by noon.

There are a few cities that are currently running this program on their own but have relatively small populations (from 6,751 to 25,313).

In order for the City of Milpitas to administer this program, a significant amount of resources would be required to process, and qualify residents and restaurants, manage orders and deliveries, respond to customer complaints, and collect and report data. Additional staff would need to be hired equivalent to approximately six (6) FTEs of varying levels and expertise.

Further, reimbursement of meals and delivery costs may not be guaranteed. According to the Great Plates Delivered program [website](#), FEMA “may” reimburse 75% of costs which presents some level of uncertainty. Additional costs incurred from administering the Great Plates Delivered program, outside of meal and delivery cost, such as labor or equipment, could be eligible for reimbursement as management costs. These costs must be directly related to the program and cannot exceed 5% of the cumulative cost of the program. The State share (18.75%) is administered through the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). CDAA provides for the reimbursement of local government costs associated with certain emergency activities undertaken in response to a state of emergency. The reimbursement of these funds is also not guaranteed. Further, as staff discussed during the August 4<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting, FEMA only reimburses for food programs, if it is a new program administered by an agency and not an expansion of a program that existed prior to the pandemic.

Because of the significant resources that would be required to administer the program at the City level and the uncertainty related to reimbursement of costs as well as program duration, the Great Plates Delivered program is more cost effective and efficient when being administered at the County level.