

# MEMORANDUM



**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Karen Pinkos, City Manager  
**DATE:** March 26, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** City Manager's Update

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El Cerrito has been through another extraordinary week. I know it has been challenging for our residents and businesses alike as we are facing so many uncertainties. And yet, I am heartened by the kindness, creativity, and strength I have seen in my neighbors and co-workers. I continue to have faith in the resiliency of this community.

As you will read in the later sections of this update, the City has extended the closure of our facilities to the public through May 1, and cancelled events and non-essential meetings through May 31. Please check our website at [el-cerrito.org/covid19](http://el-cerrito.org/covid19) often for information on City services and resources for residents, businesses, employers, homeowners, and renters. I also encourage you to check out Contra Costa County's website at [www.coronavirus.cchealth.org](http://www.coronavirus.cchealth.org) for up-to-date information and resources at the County level.

The City Council held a special meeting on Wednesday, March 25, to enact a temporary moratorium to halt evictions for residential and commercial tenants financially impacted by COVID-19. Details are in the Community Development section of this update. The meeting was held by teleconference with the City Council, was streamed and archived online, and allowed for public comment via email and phone messages. Our City team is working to refine our processes for holding public meetings during this emergency and we appreciate the public's patience as we continue to do our best to improve the experience for everyone.

I want to once again encourage residents to shop and eat local and support El Cerrito businesses that are still open, if you are able to do so. You can find a list of open restaurants—and many deliver—at the Chamber of Commerce website at [elcerritochamber.org](http://elcerritochamber.org). I have personally taken on a quest to patronize an open El Cerrito business every day since this ordeal began. From grocery shopping, to getting fuel, to ordering take out or delivery at our wide variety of restaurants, I am glad to help keep El Cerrito open for business. I have challenged my friends and co-workers to do the same, and I invite you all to join me in supporting our wonderful business community in El Cerrito as much as you can.

Thank you all again for your understanding and compassion as we work through these uncertain times together. Please take care of yourselves and each other and stay safe and healthy.

Karen Pinkos, ICMA-CM  
*Karen Pinkos*  
City Manager  
City of El Cerrito

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## CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE – CITYWIDE CLOSURES AND LIMITED SERVICES

**City offices will be closed through May 1, 2020. All City events and non-essential meetings are cancelled through May 31, 2020.**

The closure of all City offices has been extended through May 1, 2020. City offices are closed to the public as a result of the shelter in place order by the County Health Department and the Governor to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19.

Additionally, all non-essential events and meetings are canceled through May 31, 2020. The summary of closures are as follows:

- City facilities will remain closed through May 1.
- Recreation services and programs will remain closed through May 1.
- Parks are open, but playgrounds are closed.
- All events and non-essential public meetings are canceled through May 31. Events through May include Earth Day (April 18); Bike to Work Day; and Garage Sale (May 16)

City Council meetings will continue the current schedule and some essential meetings (such as Planning Commission) may also need to be scheduled.

### **What can I do? What's open?**

These essential services will remain open:

- City/County government services: Police stations, fire stations, hospitals/clinics and healthcare operations, jails, courts, garbage/sanitation, transportation, utilities (water, power, and gas)
- Gas stations
- Pharmacies
- Food: Grocery stores, farmers markets, food banks, convenience stores, take-out and delivery restaurants
- Hardware stores/plumbers
- Banks
- Community benefit organizations on a case-by-case basis
- Laundromats/laundry services

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

### What's closed?

- Dine-in restaurants
- Bars and nightclubs
- Entertainment venues
- Gyms and fitness studios

### Open restaurants and cafes in El Cerrito

The El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce is maintaining a list of businesses, including restaurants and cafes in El Cerrito, that are open for take-out and/or delivery. Please visit [elcerritochamber.org](http://elcerritochamber.org) and support our local economy.

As the situation changes, we will post new information on our City website at [el-cerrito.org/covid19](http://el-cerrito.org/covid19). If you'd like to receive notices, please go to [el-cerrito.org/notifyme](http://el-cerrito.org/notifyme) and select "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update".

Here are links to other agencies' pages for service and information updates:

- [State of California](#)
- [Contra Costa Health Services](#)
- [California Department of Public Health](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [West Contra Costa Unified School Closures](#)
- [AC Transit Service Updates](#)

## CITY MANAGEMENT

### City Council Meetings and Public Comments

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and suspension of certain provisions of the Brown Act (Pursuant to Executive Order N-29-20), City Council meetings will be held remotely, with no physical location for public participation. The public will still have the same ability to listen and view from home. The next regularly scheduled City Council meeting will be on Tuesday, April 7 at 7:00 p.m.

Public comments can be submitted in one of two ways:

1. Via email to [cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us)
2. Via voicemail at (510) 306-2558

For complete and up-to-date details on how to submit public comments during the COVID-19 State of Emergency, please visit [www.el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials](http://www.el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials) or select [this link](#).

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Planning and Building Divisions

As a reminder, while City offices remain closed, the Planning and Building Divisions will continue to process permits with modified procedures. For more information, please visit [www.el-cerrito.org/CommDev](http://www.el-cerrito.org/CommDev). For information about your particular project, please email [building@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:building@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or [planning@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:planning@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us)

### Business Resources & Support During Covid-19 Crisis

If you are a business owner, the City has compiled a list of resources and services to support you during these difficult times. Please visit [www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19 and click Business Resources](http://www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19_and_click_Business_Resources) for more information. If you have questions, please contact Community Development staff by email at [community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:community@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us).

Contra Costa Small Business Development Center provides business located in the County with help applying for relief, navigating available resources, cash flow concerns, supply chain interruptions, workforce capacity, insurance coverage and more at no cost. For one-on-one consultation and advising, please contact their office by phone or email at: (925) 222-5228 or [admin@contracostasbdc.org](mailto:admin@contracostasbdc.org).

The City and our partners at the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce encourage community members to help support our local restaurants, cafes, grocery stores, hardware/home goods, vehicle-related stores and other essential service businesses whenever possible. Many are operating under limited hours but continue to provide take-out and delivery options as well as gift cards for purchase. For a list of businesses, please visit [www.elcerritochamber.org](http://www.elcerritochamber.org).

### COVID-19 Effect on Tenant Protections

On March 25, 2020, the City Council joined other local cities in adopting an [Urgency Ordinance](#) enacting a temporary moratorium to halt evictions for residential and commercial tenants financially impacted by COVID-19. At this time, the Ordinance is set to expire on May 31, 2020, consistent with the [Governor's Executive Order](#), unless extended through a future action. The Ordinance does not establish rent forgiveness but provides temporary rent forbearance to those who qualify by providing 6-months, from the Ordinance expiration date, to catch up on unpaid rent and suspends late fees from being charged for qualified tenants who can demonstrate loss of income or revenue due to COVID-19.

The City encourages tenants to notify their property owner/manager to discuss a repayment plan if you are experiencing loss of income from work, childcare costs related to school closures, or healthcare costs related to COVID-19. Property owners also have expenses mounting and similar actions are being taken by the Federal Government and banking industry to provide mortgage and other relief.

City staff is currently working to develop Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that will be posted on our website in the coming days. Please visit [www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19](http://www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19) for the latest information. Additional information regarding tenant protections is available at [el-cerrito.org/tenantprotections](http://el-cerrito.org/tenantprotections). If you have questions, please contact Aissia Ashoori, Housing Analyst, at [aashoori@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:aashoori@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us).

### FIRE

#### Coronavirus Impacts

The El Cerrito Fire Department currently has no one in isolation or quarantine due to the coronavirus. Two members who were out last week with potential symptoms have returned to work when the conditions subsided without further problems. However, the County has 30 fire personnel who are off work and in isolation for possible exposures. Most of these are in Con Fire and operate County ambulances.

The Fire Department has had an increase in medical incidents with contact being made with screened positive patients. Using personal protective equipment, we have been able to keep our exposure risk low.

#### Prescribed Burns

There are several piles of brush left over from last year's vegetation management projects in the Hillside Natural Area that the Fire Department was getting ready to burn. However, with the current 'Shelter in Place' being enacted, the Fire Department has suspended these operations, due to the number of residents staying at home who potentially could be affected by the smoke. Once the current restrictions are lifted, attempts will be made to complete the burns prior to the weather getting too dry or warm.

#### Vegetation Management & Weather

The dry weather in February caused early curing of the annual grasses and fuels. This led to the several vegetation fires being started, many from homeless encampments in and around the City. With the recent rains these past two weeks, our Hillside Natural Area as well as residential parcels will be experiencing a second growth of annual fuels which is going to create greater fire threats and increase the need for vegetation inspections this year and potentially forced abatements. Fire Prevention will be starting these inspections no later than May 1 or possibly even earlier, depending on the weather. Updated information for the residents is being developed and will be added to the website in April.

#### Fire Safety Inspections

The Fire Department does over 700 fire safety inspections each year for all the commercial buildings and apartments in the City. Due to the current need to maintain social distance as well as many businesses being closed, we are suspending these inspections for now. This will require an increase in these inspections once the "Shelter

in Place" is lifted.

## POLICE

### Online Reporting and Health Order Violations

The Police Department has expanded the number of incidents that can be reported online. Along with theft, vandalism, and fraud incidents, community members can now report suspected violations of Contra Costa County Health Department orders. The community is encouraged to use this service to reduce the amount of in-person exposures.

<https://www.el-cerrito.org/985/Online-Police-Reporting>

### Police Department Deployments

The Police Department continues to patrol the streets and respond to calls. The ECPD is holding back a relief team to ensure that patrol operations continue, in the event of a coronavirus outbreak in the department. The ECPD encourages all our community members to stay in touch with their neighbors and help where they can, within the guidelines established by the Health Department.

## PUBLIC WORKS/RECYCLING CENTER

### Continuing Public Works Services during COVID-19

The March 16 order from the Health Officer of Contra Costa County directed all individuals living in the County to shelter at their place of residence, to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The order also provided exemptions for essential activities, including ensuring the continuance of "essential government functions." These include operations and maintenance of "essential infrastructure" which includes, but is not limited to, public works construction, utilities, storm drains, streets, and solid waste collection and removal.

Similarly, the state and federal government identified "essential critical infrastructure sectors" that are considered vital to the health and well-being of the public so that state and local government should strive to maintain normal operations during the COVID-19 emergency. Many Public Works functions fall under these categories. As such, although City buildings are closed to the public, the City's Public Works Department continues to operate many of its programs. These include curbside recycling pick-up, most maintenance and engineering services, and construction of capital improvement projects. We are encouraging the public to conduct all possible businesses via email and phone. We will do our best to respond in a timely manner.

### Recycling and Solid Waste Services

Curbside recycling and solid waste services are essential services that are continuing. However, the Recycling Center Drop-Off Area and Administrative Office are closed to

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

the public. For any Recycling related questions, please email [greenassistant@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:greenassistant@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or call the Recycling + Environmental Resource Center at (510) 215-4350. Visit our website for updates: [Recycling + Environmental Resource Center](#).

### Landscaping Maintenance

An example of essential maintenance services continuing at this time is landscaping operations, including work completed by City contractors. The City's landscaping contractors are as follows:

- Rubicon Enterprises for all parks and path easements;
- New Image for the Ohlone Greenway, Baxter Creek Gateway and Cerrito Creek pedestrian path; and
- Coast Landscaping for streetscapes, medians and building grounds.

Our landscaping contractors protect public health and safety by collecting litter and solid waste, ensuring sightlines are maintained for pedestrians and vehicles, and reducing fire risk by controlling weeds and vegetation, among other important duties. In performing all of these duties, the City is taking precautions to ensure employees wear Personal Protective Equipment, where applicable, and that Social Distancing requirements are met.

### Encroachment Permits

An example of essential engineering services continuing at this time is the processing of Encroachment Permits for infrastructure work in the public right-of-way performed by private contractors, such as sewer plumbing contractors, and utility companies, such as PG&E and EBMUD. We are providing property owners, contractors and utility companies options to electronically submit permit applications, and if absolutely necessary, also scheduling in-person appointments at City Hall.

### Additional Public Works Services

If you need assistance during this time, please contact the following:

- *Maintenance Services* - For any maintenance requests or concerns related to street trees, streets, storm drains, streetlights, please email [maintenance@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:maintenance@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or call Maintenance at (510) 215-4369. In case of an urgent Maintenance issue, such as flooding, after regular business hours or during a weekend or holiday, please call El Cerrito Police Dispatch (Non-Emergency) at (510) 233-1214.
- *Engineering Services* - For any Encroachment Permit, Capital Improvement Project or traffic improvement-related questions, please email [street@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:street@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) or call the Engineering Division at (510) 215-4382.

For additional Public Works information, please visit [el-cerrito.org/136/Public-Works](http://el-cerrito.org/136/Public-Works).

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

We appreciate your understanding as we try and navigate through this difficult time.

### Temporarily Closing Playgrounds

During the shelter-in-place order, many community members are relieving stress and staying healthy by going for walks or runs in El Cerrito neighborhoods, as allowed by the order, which may include visiting a neighborhood park. However, in doing so, it is important to practice Social Distancing and to be careful of the potential for the spread of COVID-19 on shared surfaces. In response to heavy park usage and new concerns, the City has determined it is necessary to temporarily close City playgrounds. These closures will help reduce the potential spread of the virus in El Cerrito, and the City looks forward to lifting the closures as soon as it's safe to do so.

### Special Events Cancelled

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 emergency, several special events led or supported by the Public Works Department have been cancelled or postponed through the end of May, including:

- Earth Day Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event and Community Work Parties
- El Cerrito Hillside Festival (visit [www.ectrailltrekkers.org](http://www.ectrailltrekkers.org) for more information)
- City of El Cerrito Bike to Work Day Energizer Station
- Spring Citywide Garage Sale

### Eureka Avenue and Lexington Avenue Street Improvement Project Underway

During this COVID-19 public health crisis, public works construction, including capital improvement projects, are considered an essential service. As a result, the City has given GradeTech Inc., the City's contractor, a notice to proceed with construction of the Eureka Avenue and Lexington Avenue Street Improvement Project. The El Cerrito City Council awarded the construction contract to GradeTech Inc. in January 2020. Construction began on March 23, 2020 and is anticipated to take approximately five weeks depending on weather. Construction activities will typically start at 8 a.m. and finish by 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on an occasional Saturday. Vehicle travel lanes may be temporarily obstructed, so the public may experience a brief delay during this time.

The project is located on Eureka Avenue from Kearney Street to Liberty Street and Lexington Avenue from Eureka Avenue to one block north, and is within a two-block radius of Fairmont Elementary School, El Cerrito Library, Centennial Park, and the Ohlone Greenway path. The pavement on these roadways are currently in poor conditions, two of the lowest in the City. In addition, street trees have severely displaced sections of pavement, sidewalk, curb and gutter, and shallow storm drainpipes within the roadway are damaged.

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

The project will rehabilitate the roadway pavement; reconstruct sections of sidewalk, curb, and gutter that have been damaged by the existing trees; reconstruct storm drain facilities; install new and modified curb ramps; and install new traffic signing and pavement markings. This project will also install an on-street disabled parking space, curb ramps and high-visibility crosswalk to serve the recently renovated Centennial Park at the intersection of Liberty Street and Eureka Avenue.

The project is funded by the City's Measure A Street Improvement funds and SB 1 Local Partnership Program funds and will directly benefit school-age children, current residents, and future residential development by providing safe and accessible walking, biking and driving routes. The project will also extend the useful life of these road segments.

Public Works and GradeTech Inc. have provided notices to residents in the area and had coordinated with Fairmont Elementary School before the school closures. The notices include key contact information for both Public Works and contractor staff. For general questions about the project or other assistance, please contact the City's Engineering Manager/Senior Engineer, Ana Bernardes, at [abernardes@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:abernardes@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us); or call the Public Works Department at (510) 215-4382.

## RECREATION

### COVID-19 Response

As part of the City of El Cerrito's COVID-19 transmission mitigation efforts, in accordance with El Cerrito City Council's Declaration of a Local Emergency and Contra Costa County Order of Shelter in Place, the **El Cerrito Recreation Department has closed all facilities and cancelled all classes, programs, special events, and rentals until further notice.** This includes the Spring Egg Hunt scheduled for April 11, 2020. Essential senior services will still take place, as detailed below.

**Recreation offices will remain closed to the public during the shutdown. Please be patient when waiting for a response to an email or phone call.**

The measures being taken are in the best interest of all participants, staff and public health. It is our hope that this will help reduce the spread of the Coronavirus. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

There are essential senior services provided by the El Cerrito Recreation Department that will continue to take place. These services are detailed below.

**C.C. Café To-Go Lunch Program (ages 60+)** - weekly meals consisting of 7 frozen meals will be available to seniors ages 60+ years old by request and as available.

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

- Orders must be placed no later than 12pm on the Monday prior to delivery.
- Meals will be delivered to the homes of senior participants living in El Cerrito on **Wednesdays (new delivery day per County)** between 11am-12pm. Meals will be left on the doorstep of the home.
- Non-El Cerrito resident senior participants must pick up their meals at the Midtown Activity Center, 10940 San Pablo Ave in El Cerrito between 11 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. on Wednesdays.
- To ensure your safety as well as the safety of the driver, meals will be handed to you directly, they will be dropped on your doorstep.
- To place an order for the meals, call (510) 559-7677 or email [midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us). Leave a message with your name and call back number.
- NOTE: Seniors new to the C.C. Café Lunch Program will need to complete registration paperwork to receive meals. Call (510) 559-7677 or email [midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) for more information.

**Meals on Wheels (ages 60+)** – Home-delivered meals for Seniors 60+ may be available through the Meals on Wheels home delivered meals program (subject to availability). Call (510) 412-0166 for more information about this program.

### **Easy Ride Paratransit Service (Essential Transportation ONLY)**

Easy Ride Paratransit Service is available to El Cerrito Residents ages 65+ and residents with disabilities ages 18+ for essential transportation to medical appointments and grocery store trips within El Cerrito boundaries. Rides are limited to Monday, Wednesday, Friday between the hours of 12:30 p.m - 2:30 p.m.

Senior Grocery Shopping trips during reserved times for vulnerable shoppers will take place on Tuesday mornings from 7:30 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. All trips require advance reservation and registration in the Easy Ride Paratransit program is required. To schedule an Easy Ride Paratransit Essential Transportation Trip, call (510) 559-7677 or email [midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:midtown@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us).

Midtown Activity Center staff will be return voicemails M-F between 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Please leave a detailed message including your name, phone number, requested date and location.

### **Refunds During COVID-19 Closure**

A message went out to all Recreation participants on Wednesday March 25 regarding our refund process:

On behalf of the entire El Cerrito Recreation Department Staff, I hope this message finds you and your family safe and healthy. The City of El Cerrito has created a webpage, [www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19](http://www.el-cerrito.org/COVID19) with updated information on City services and links to other important information that may be helpful to you.

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

As you may be aware, El Cerrito Recreation Department programs are supported by you, our valued patrons, almost entirely through program and rental fees. The City of El Cerrito is doing all that it can to continue supporting essential services as well as being ready to welcome you all back when this crisis is over.

With that in mind, I am hoping that you will consider making the fees that you have paid for programs, services, and rentals that are cancelled, in part or in their entirety, a donation towards this effort. I understand this is a big ask and I do not make it lightly. For those unable to support in this way, fees will be credited to your household account to be used for any future program, rental, service, bill, etc. If this presents a financial hardship, please email us at [recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us) to arrange for a refund.

Moving forward, staff has cancelled all automatic payments for childcare, Gators, and all other programs. Staff are primarily working from their homes so please be patient with us as we process your requests.

The El Cerrito Recreation Department's mission is to build community through people, parks, and programs and while this can only be done virtually at the moment, we know that this pandemic will pass one day and it will be essential for our community to come together again. Until then stay home, practice social distancing, wash your hands, and check out some of our free resources to help you and your family during this difficult time.

In order to offer as much support to you as possible, staff has developed the [Virtual rECsources](#) webpage full of resources and ideas for you and your family to engage in while you are sheltering-in-place! It is our hope to provide community members with fun, educational, and meaningful activities and resources during this uncertain time. Understanding the difficulties that come with social distancing and our current shelter-in-place, the Recreation team wants to make sure we continue to offer the community options to lessen the burdens.

Materials posted so far are 'familiar faces' which include videos and messages from our staff members leading songs, art projects, and so on. Our Childcare sites have also shared newsletters with their staff sharing fun activities and photos. Also posted are other ways to stay both physically and mentally active. All of these materials can be found online now at [el-cerrito.org/1421/rECsources](http://el-cerrito.org/1421/rECsources) Everyone is encouraged to visit the page often for new updates and ideas to stay healthy, entertained and informed.

## CITY MANAGER'S UPDATE (CONT'D)

### Subscribe & Follow

For up-to-date information in the El Cerrito Recreation Department, please subscribe to our email newsletter rECnews at [el-cerrito.org/recreation](http://el-cerrito.org/recreation).

Follow us: Instagram - @ecrecreation | Facebook -@ecrecreation |  
Twitter-@ElCerritoREC

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