



Office of the City Manager

ACTION CALENDAR

January 25, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Paul Buddenhagen, Deputy City Manager

Subject: COVID-19 Response 2021 Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an update on the City's COVID-19 pandemic response efforts for the period from October 2020 through October 2021. It builds upon a previous report covering the first nine months of the pandemic.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

To continue to document and communicate the City's response to COVID-19, staff compiled the attached summary report. The attached report contains a detailed update on the City's response to COVID-19 from October 2020 through October 2021. Documenting the City's response supports transparency and helps identify and codify key lessons learned that will help Berkeley remain a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city—a Strategic Plan goal.

BACKGROUND

The *COVID-19 Response 2020 Summary Report*¹ was presented to Council on October 27, 2020 and covered the period from the initial activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in January 2020 through September 2020. As part of the 2020 Summary Report, the City Manager also responded to a Short-term Referral, "Lessons Learned in Organizational Management During Crisis".²

From the beginning of 2020, the City has been working to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts ramped up significantly in March 2020, when the City issued its first Shelter-In-Place Order to address the community spread of COVID-19 and fully activated the EOC. The initial mobilization of staff involved over 550 employees from every department, including the City Auditor's Office, the Library, and the Rent Stabilization Board. Over time, the number of staff directly involved in emergency operations has varied with need, but to date the EOC remains active. Key areas of the

¹ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/10_Oct/City_Council__10-27-2020_-_Regular_Meeting_Agenda.aspx

² https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/06_June/Documents/2020-06-16_Item_24_Lessons_Learned_in_Organizational.aspx

City's response to COVID-19 in the period from October 2020 through October 2021, included:

- COVID-19 testing,
- COVID-19 vaccines,
- Work with vulnerable populations,
- Disease containment,
- Supporting schools and childcare centers,
- Public information and outreach,
- Community support, and
- Cost recovery.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

The *COVID-19 Response 2021 Summary Report* was created and distributed electronically, avoiding waste associated with paper use.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

City Council may direct staff to develop another update on COVID-19 response, as time progresses. It is uncertain how long the COVID-19 pandemic will require an active response from the City. Staff are planning for some response activities continuing through 2022, and eventually being absorbed into daily department operations. The bulk of ongoing pandemic related response, even after the EOC is demobilized, will be led by the new COVID-19 Response Unit in the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services. This unit is discussed further in the attached report.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

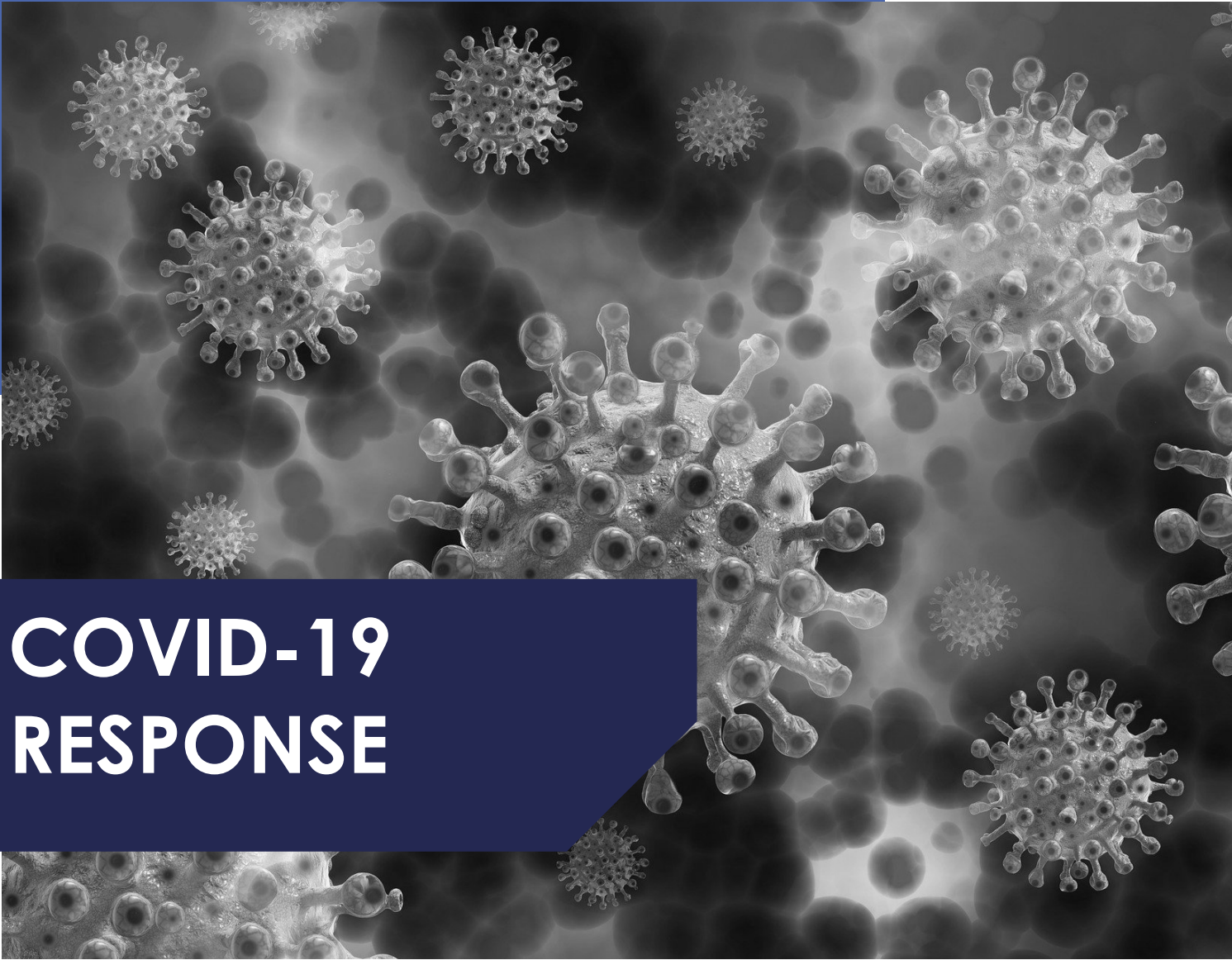
The City would need to identify additional sources of funding if the pandemic requires response activities beyond those covered by the grants funding the new COVID-19 Response Unit.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachments:

1: COVID-19 Response 2021 Summary Report



COVID-19 RESPONSE

2021 Summary Report

January 2022 | Prepared by the Emergency Operations Center



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INTRODUCTION

In October 2020 the City of Berkeley provided a summary report describing its response to COVID-19 from January 2020 through September 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic and the City's response continues to date. This report provides an update on the City's pandemic response from October 2020 through October 2021.

The previous summary report included background and contextual information (e.g., emergency operations, impacts of the pandemic on organization, etc.) This report picks up where the initial report left off, focusing on major themes of the City's response since fall 2020:

- COVID-19 Testing,
- COVID-19 Vaccines,
- Work with Vulnerable Populations,
- Disease Containment,
- Supporting Schools and Childcare Centers,
- Public Information and Outreach,
- Community Support,
- Rental Housing Support, and
- Cost Recovery.

Most of these major themes were initially reported on in 2020 and continue to be important elements of the City's response in 2021. Similar to the initial summary report, this report also explores lessons learned by the organization during our response to this pandemic.

Report Dedication

I would like to extend my gratitude, for early and ongoing support throughout this pandemic, to our City Council -- positions show below from reporting period:

Mayor Jesse Arreguín

Vice Mayor Lori Droste, District 8

Rashi Kesarwani, District 1

Terry Taplin, District 2

Ben Bartlett, District 3

Kate Harrison, District 4

Sophie Hahn, District 5

Susan Wengraf, District 6

Rigel Robinson, District 7

Berkeley's City Council has provided tremendous vision and leadership from the beginning of the emergency, including supporting residential and commercial tenants, amplifying communications to Berkeley residents and providing financial support to struggling local businesses. Additionally, I am grateful for the continued sacrifice, flexibility, and hard work of our City staff. We are all struggling to recover from the collective trauma brought by this extended and extraordinary emergency. Despite our current Omicron surge, our community's high vaccination rate and steadfast commitment to following safety protocols and science bodes well, and I have hope that we will emerge stronger from this crisis before too much longer. Although COVID-19 is likely to be with us going forward, our City has shown its resilience as we learn together how to safely live alongside this virus.

Throughout the past two years, first responders and essential service workers have continued their work, from the beginning of the pandemic when scientists were still working to understand the virus, throughout the shelter-in-place, and when COVID-19 surged in winter of 2020. Police officers and firefighters have continued to respond to calls to keep our community safe. Essential service workers maintained our infrastructure, our facilities, and collected our refuse and recycling. Even more City staff put aside their normal duties to work in new jobs in unfamiliar environments in support of the Emergency Operations Center's pandemic response. Additionally, staff from every corner of the city continued to work to keep moving on council priorities. Lastly, I would like to thank all of the staff, generous volunteers and people of Berkeley who gave their time and resources to keep our community safe by:

- maintaining accessible testing services,
- rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine in Berkeley,
- delivering meals and COVID-19 vaccine to our most vulnerable community members, including seniors in their homes and others living in shelters and encampments,
- slowing COVID-19's spread by contacting individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 and providing them with education and support so they could isolate safely.

Dee Williams-Ridley
City Manager

January 20, 2021

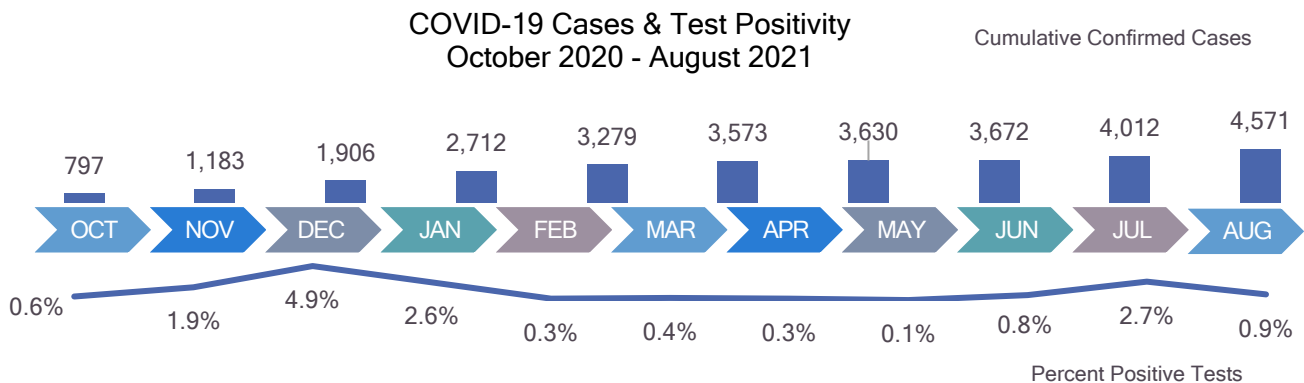
BERKELEY RESPONDS

Overview

The City has been responding to the COVID-19 pandemic for more than two years. This section of the report highlights some of the ongoing work from fall of 2020 through the present day. The below timeline provides data that drove key decisions and milestones described in the following sections. The timeline depicts Berkeley's cumulative confirmed cases for the last day and percent positive tests¹ for the last week of each month.² In other words, the timeline shows:

- how the number of overall cases grew month-by-month (i.e., from 797 in October 2020 to 4,571 in August 2021), and
- how the percentage of positive COVID tests varied each month of the year.

This graphic illustrates the surge in winter 2020, when cases increased significantly and many more COVID tests were positive.



¹ Percent positive helps us understand how widespread COVID is in our community, as well as whether our testing is aligned with the level of transmission.

² Case counts and percent positive test information from <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-data/>; source material <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/CaIREDIE.aspx>, <https://data.cityofberkeley.info/Health/COVID-19-Confirmed-Cases/xn6j-b766>, and <https://data.cityofberkeley.info/Health/COVID-19-All-Tests-Resulted-Weekly/mc9x-5kpz>.

Major Themes of the Response

In October 2020, the City was nearly a full year into its response to the pandemic. As the City's COVID-19 response continued from October 2020 through October 2021, staff from every department, including the City Auditor's Office, the Library and the Rent Stabilization Board, continued their work to address and help mitigate the myriad impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to public health and safety, our small businesses and economy, our schools, and our social well-being. Some particular efforts stand out as major themes of this second year of the response:

- COVID-19 Testing,
- COVID-19 Vaccines,
- Work with Vulnerable Populations,
- Disease Containment,
- School and Childcare Support,
- Public Information and Outreach,
- Community Support,
- and
- Cost Recovery.

The work, of course, goes beyond these major themes. It is ongoing and will continue.

COVID-19 Testing

Overview

As the pandemic entered into its second year, COVID-19 testing continued to be an important tool to constrain disease spread so that schools, businesses and indoor public spaces could remain open. The City continued its work to ensure that reliable COVID-19 testing with fast results was widely available and has worked diligently to maintain equitable testing availability. To further integrate COVID-19 response activities into daily operations, the Department of Health, Housing, and Community Services (HHCS) hired additional staff members to work on COVID-19 testing and vaccine operations full time. These staff started in summer 2021 and will continue to implement these COVID-19 response activities even after the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)³ demobilizes.

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT 2020

- Entering into new agreement with Curative, Inc., testing all essential workers, particularly as schools reopened.
- Transitioning Curative, Inc. testing location from North Berkeley Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to a semi-permanent kiosk at Berkeley Adult School.
- Conducting testing at outdoor encampments, via Lifelong Medical.
- Creating a testing team for schools, consisting of public health officials and Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) nurses, to support return to in-person instruction.

NOV 2020

- Expanding operations at Optum testing site at Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Services Center/Young Adult Project (YAP) from 165 to 330 tests per day.
- Soliciting the State for a testing bus, in close coordination with Alameda County. This semi-mobile option could be deployed to pre-planned locations and had capacity to test 500+ people daily.

DEC 2020-
JAN 2021

- Supporting Berkeley schools with the establishment of on-campus testing programs by: providing information and resources, sharing lists of

³ The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is a coordination and support structure helping City departments during an emergency by providing a flexible organization structure to adapt to quickly changing needs, supporting decision-making and resource management, and collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information.

recommended testing providers and hosting an introductory workshop for interested schools to explore a testing partnership with Curative.

- Preparing for and then launching mobile testing bus operations, through OptumServ partnership with the State. Initial locations included Allston Way, Harold Way, Meyer Sound, and Berkeley Bowl & Berkeley Bowl West.

FEB-APR
2021

- Averaging 1,000 daily tests conducted in Berkeley.
- Establishing North County/Berkeley testing schedule, which included Safer Ground⁴ sites and a variety of mobile bus testing sites.
- Decreasing Curative site operations from six to five days per week.
- Multicultural Institute, Bay Area Community Services (BACS), Dorothy Day House increasing their testing capacity as independent sites by using self-administered Color Lab tests.

MAY-JUN
2021

- Planning for Optum testing site change from the Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Services Center to the West Berkeley Service Center.

JUL-AUG
2021

- Onboarding new HHCS staff to manage Berkeley's COVID-19 testing efforts through HHCS's COVID-19 Phase II Response Structure.
- Expanding Optum site operating hours to 12 hours per day, five days per week to meet increased demand due to the Delta variant.
- Recruiting and activating additional disaster service workers (DSW) from Parks, Recreation and Waterfront into the Emergency Operations Center to support expanded hours of operation at the Optum test site.
- Coordinating with Alameda County to allocate 10,000 rapid test kits to BUSD.

⁴ Safer Ground is part of Project Roomkey, a statewide program to secure hotel rooms to provide isolation housing for those experiencing homelessness. In Alameda County, Project Roomkey consists of two programs: Operation Comfort (serving those who are homeless and have been exposed to, are experiencing symptoms of, or have COVID-19) and Operation Safer Ground (serving those who are homeless and over 65 years old or otherwise at high risk for COVID-19).

SEPT 2021

- Expanding Optum testing buses' operating hours to 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.
- Working with the State to activate the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) strike team to respond to a COVID-19 outbreak at a shelter. This team has since responded to five shelters.
- Assisting shelters with registration for Color self-testing. Shelters included: Berkeley Food and Housing Project, Building Opportunities for Self-Sufficiency (BOSS) Shelters, and Abode Rodeway Inn.

OCT 2021

- CDPH announced extending contract with LHI/Optum through October 2022. This extends the operations of the LHI/Optum test site at West Berkeley Service Center.
- Renewing contract to continue testing at the Berkeley Adult School through January 2022.

COVID-19 Vaccines

Overview

COVID-19 vaccine rollout began in the fall of 2020. At first, vaccines were difficult to get and supply was limited. Staff in the EOC worked incredibly rapidly to partner with Curative to stand up the first mass vaccination site in the East Bay. Additionally, staff worked hard to make sure that vaccines were equitably available through multiple strategies. Vaccination was tremendously complex—initial vaccines had cold-storage requirements with little flexibility. Vaccines had to be delivered in a two-dose regimen, which required scheduling follow-up shots at precise time intervals that were different for each vaccine. Along with this, vaccines had to be administered per CDPH’s eligibility phases. As a result, the City’s initial vaccine distribution was conducted through closed points of dispensing (i.e., vaccine clinics which are only opened to a target population).

As eligibility for the COVID-19 vaccine has continued to expand, Berkeley’s vaccine rollout continues to be guided by the City’s data-driven equity framework. By late spring 2021, vaccine became widely available. In summer 2021, HHCS hired two additional staff members to continue to manage and coordinate the City’s vaccination rollout, with a key focus on providing vaccine to vulnerable populations, as well as preparing for boosters and pediatric authorization of vaccine.

As of October 31, 2021, Berkeley has a particularly high average vaccination rate, with 89% percent of residents aged 12 and older vaccinated. Vaccination has become one of the most important and effective ways to prevent COVID-19 spread, hospitalization, and death.

10,000+ doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered through mobile clinics.

25 different mobile clinic sites, with some repeat locations

50+ DSWs activated to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT 2020

- Pre-planning to develop equity goals and receive, track, and administer COVID-19 vaccine when available.
- Coordinating with the State on vaccine rollout.
- Purchasing vaccine point of dispensing (POD) supplies.

NOV 2020

- Addressing citywide preparedness for vaccine which includes determining POD location, layout and traffic flow (foot versus car), supplies for PODs, and creating materials to provide just in time training to staff.
- Creating and submitting a Berkeley Vaccination Plan using the required CDPH template.
- Creating an External Partner Taskforce with healthcare partners and other sector stakeholders to coordinate all aspects of the state vaccine rollout including providing logistics and clinical guidance for providers as well as identifying considerations for mass vaccine administration.
- Staffing a COVID-19 Vaccine Management and Cold Chain⁵ Coordinator position to support the vaccine distribution efforts.
- Registering for the State's vaccine management platform (COVIDReadi) and inviting CDPH-approved COVID Vaccine Providers to participate in the vaccine allocation system.
- Finalizing back-up generator location for Ultra Low Temp (ULT) Freezer for COVID-19 vaccine cold chain storage in partnership with the Public Works Department.
- Demonstrating storage capacity and providing plans to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to ensure that Berkeley would receive vaccine from the State.

DEC 2020

- Purchasing COVax ULT Freezer to ensure capacity for vaccine cold chain storage.
- Finalizing plans with First Responder staff for COVID Vaccine Closed POD Site.
- Activating DSWs, and providing just in time training to staff who will be working and administering vaccine at the first COVID-19 vaccination POD at the Center St. Garage.
- Training staff to use the mandatory state vaccine allocation systems for tracking and administering vaccine including COVIDReadi, MyTurn, JotForm, and the California Immunization Registry (CAIR).

⁵ Some vaccines require ultra-cold storage. Per the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "A cold chain is a temperature-controlled supply chain that includes all vaccine-related equipment and procedures." <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/admin/storage/toolkit/storage-handling-toolkit.pdf>

JAN 2021

- Administering Berkeley's first COVID-19 vaccine doses on December 28, 2020, to Berkeley medical providers.
- Administering over 1,000 first doses of Moderna vaccine through appointment-only, closed PODs as part of Phase 1a vaccine rollout (for frontline healthcare workers and those working in clinical settings).
- Deploying first mobile clinic to provide vaccinations onsite at a local dialysis clinic.
- Partnering with Safeway and One Medical to support Phase 1b vaccine rollout (for people age 75 and older).
- Developing a Vaccine FAQ (frequently asked questions) resource.
- Planning vaccine distribution with CalVax-approved community healthcare providers.
- Coordinating with local nonprofit BANANAS to provide vaccine information to family daycare providers.
- Shifting from drive-through closed POD at Center Street Garage to walk-up closed POD clinic at 830 University to provide a more positive clinic experience for patients and staff. Patients who visited the clinic at the end of January were receiving their second doses from first doses in December.
- Coordinating with CDPH regarding the pharmacy partnership program, a CDC-facilitated program to use local Walgreens and CVS pharmacies to provide onsite vaccinations at skilled nursing facilities.
- Worked with skilled nursing facilities to fill any vaccination gaps left by the federal pharmacy partnership program in collaboration with Alameda County. The federal pharmacy partnership program was a CDC-facilitated program in collaboration with Walgreens and CVS to vaccinate skilled nursing facility patients and staff. The City had worked closely with Alameda County to ensure all SNF patients and staff were vaccinated through a mobile vaccine clinic, especially if they didn't sign up for the federal program.
- Pre-planning to operate a mass vaccination site at Golden Gate Fields in Albany, California.

FEB 2021

- Opening and operating Alameda County's first mass vaccination site at Golden Gate Fields with capacity for 1,000+ vaccinations/day. Continuing


logistical work (e.g., volunteer staffing, second dose appointments, and general communication flow).

- Opening the West Berkeley Service Center in partnership with Safeway to provide 300 doses of COVID-19 vaccine per day. This clinic vaccinated 600 community members who were 65+.
- Working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to administer 1,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at the Ed Roberts Campus in South Berkeley. This location was chosen as a partnership between the Center for Independent Living, FEMA, Cal OES, and Alameda County to bring the COVID-19 vaccine directly to more vulnerable community members.
- Piloting a mobile COVID-19 vaccine clinic behind the Ann Chandler Public Health Clinic at 830 University. This pilot would serve as the mobile clinic model for upcoming mobile clinics at shelters and Safer Ground sites.
- Scheduling mobile vaccine clinics at shelters and Safer Ground sites.
- Completing City-facilitated second dose clinics at the Ann Chandler Public Health Clinic (830 University Avenue) for individuals who received their first doses in late January and early February.



MAR 2021

- Pre-planning for Johnson & Johnson vaccine rollout; this vaccine, in contrast to Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, has a longer shelf-life, requires less refrigeration, and is only one dose.
- Pre-planning to provide vaccines at low-income and senior apartment complexes in Berkeley. This included conducting outreach with Meals-On-Wheels recipients as well as staff at senior apartment complexes to gather information about vaccination rates. This information was used to determine the most effective mobile clinic operation, including potential second dose needs.
- Coordinating with and assisting BUSD leadership with booking vaccination appointments for teachers and personnel, which was a key part of the broader initiative to reopen Berkeley schools.

- Administering vaccinations to residents and staff at respite⁶ sites.
 - Focusing mobile clinics on an equity approach, serving unhoused and vulnerable populations at:
 - People’s Park (through Lifelong Medical),
 - Harrison Street,
 - Dorothy Day House,
 - Ann Chandler Public Health Clinic (830 University Avenue),
 - Oregon Park Apartments,
 - Ebenezer Baptist Church,
 - Rodeway Inn,
 - U.S. Renal Care,
 - BOSS,
 - Pathways STAIR Center,
 - 2nd Street and Page Street, and
 - Berkeley Food and Housing Project (Dwight Way).
 - Signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Blue Shield, a third-party administrator, to facilitate vaccine allocation.
 - Maintaining daily/ongoing static vaccination clinics at Bayer Corporation in partnership with Safeway, and Curative at Golden Gate Fields.
 - Facilitating second dose clinics in partnership with Safeway at West Berkeley Service Center as well as the Ed Roberts Campus in partnership with FEMA/Cal OES.
-
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APR 2021

 - Operating equity-focused mobile vaccination clinics at sites including:
 - Meyer Sound (off Ashby Avenue),
 - Mount Zion Baptist Church,
 - Ashby Lumber,
 - Multi-Cultural Institute,
 - Resources for Community Development (RCD) affordable housing, and
 - BOSS/Harrison House.

⁶ A respite site is a place where people needing to isolate or quarantine can go and be in a non-congregate setting. Initially this was explored for first responders as well as those living in congregate settings and the unhoused.

- Identifying equity gaps in vaccine rollout using epidemiological data, such as COVID-19 case rates and vaccination rates in census tracts. Visualizing these data sets in maps helped refine targeted areas for additional vaccine services.

MAY 2021

- Increasing vaccine access to community members by providing drop-in vaccine appointments at Bayer and Golden Gate Fields.
- Facilitating a mobile clinic with McGee Baptist Church.
- Working with the State to get approvals for a new vaccine provider (Carbon Health) to begin administering COVID-19 vaccine at neighborhood locations.
- Beginning mobile clinics through Carbon Health in Berkeley on Tuesday, May 11.
- Conducting in-home vaccinations for homebound community members.
- Coordinating with BUSD to pre-plan vaccine delivery for teenagers. Began to administer vaccine to teenagers once the authorizations from federal and state agencies were finalized. Over the first week of this authorization, over 3,000 12 to 15 year olds received their first dose.
- Temporarily demobilizing the mass vaccination site at Bayer. 2,000+ people were vaccinated at the site. The City of Berkeley, Bayer, and Safeway agreed to reactivate the site if there was enough demand or further vaccine eligibility.

JUN 2021

- 67 percent of Berkeley residents age 16 and older are fully vaccinated.
- Planning to relocate Golden Gate Fields vaccine operations to Berkeley Adult School. Nearly 100,000 doses were delivered through the City's mass vaccination site at Golden Gate fields.
- Presenting to Berkeley Youth Commission on vaccines.
- Providing second dose appointments for middle school students.
- Creating new COVID-19 Unit in Department of Health, Housing, and Community Services (HHCS), to coordinate vaccine and testing efforts.
- Beginning to onboard new HHCS staff to manage COVID-19 vaccine efforts through HHCS's COVID-19 Phase II Response Structure. This response structure will continue to coordinate COVID-19 key response activities even after the EOC activation demobilizes.



JUL-AUG
2021

- 61 percent of participants and 77 percent of staff and volunteers at shelters in Berkeley are fully vaccinated.
- Holding vaccine clinics at Longfellow Middle School, behind City Hall, and at La Peña Cultural Center.
- Working with Berkeley City College to set up vaccine clinic. First vaccine clinic taking place at Berkeley City College on August 24.
- Curative concludes its vaccine operations at the Berkeley Adult School. From June 27-July 31, Curative administered 677 doses of COVID-19 vaccine.
- Pre-planning for administration of boosters.
- Pre-planning for vaccination of children age 5-11.
- Ann Chandler Public Health Clinic begins administering COVID-19 vaccine as a part of the broader HHCS Immunization Program.



SEPT 2021

- Continuing planning for school-based clinics ahead of the Pfizer vaccine authorization for children ages 5-11.
- Managing logistics for neighborhood-based clinics, including behind City Hall and a clinic on Adeline Street.



OCT 2021

- Reporting City of Berkeley's vaccination rate for residents 12 years or older is 95%, or 103,766 individuals fully vaccinated. Engaging with community-based partners to reach unvaccinated residents through education and outreach efforts.
- Restarting the drive-up clinic at Bayer Corporation, in partnership with Safeway, to provide community vaccinations. Safeway administered 176 doses.
- Preparing for pediatric vaccine rollout once the vaccine is authorized for 5-11 year old residents.

Work with Vulnerable Populations

Overview

With many unknowns about COVID-19, the public health response continued to focus on strategies to limit COVID-19 transmission, particularly in our most vulnerable populations. Our most vulnerable populations included people who are unhoused and/or who live in “congregate” settings, such as long-term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, or shelters. Our goal was to prevent and mitigate the spread of disease using a multi-layered approach.

The City created accessible COVID-19 vaccination opportunities through Berkeley, Alameda County, and Federal partners, including mobile clinics targeted to vulnerable populations. Additionally, the City continued to:

- Provide protective supplies such as sanitizer and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Provide education around Health Officer orders and public health guidelines.
- Make COVID-19 testing available.
- Respond to outbreaks in congregate settings during the 2020 winter surge and beyond.

Outreach Team Supply Distribution

Since October 2020, Berkeley outreach teams have distributed:

- 13,042 masks
- 10,660 meals via Double Helping Hands
- 7,403 pairs of gloves
- 2,923 hand sanitizer bottles
- 512 packages of disinfectant wipes

Support to vulnerable populations also has included providing respite spaces for individuals who are at risk of contracting severe illness through City and County programs. This work happened through regular coordination meetings with multiple partners including Berkeley shelter providers, transitional program operators, and Alameda County.

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT 2020

- Collaborating with Dorothy Day House to open a clean air emergency shelter at Old City Hall with appropriate COVID-19 procedures during a sustained poor air quality index (AQI) event.
- Holding flu shot clinics at Berkeley shelters and a drive-through flu shot clinic for Berkeley seniors. Flu prevention is especially important during the

COVID-19 pandemic, as it reduces impacts on healthcare systems during traditional flu season (October through April).

- Shelters: Maintaining 24/7 operations and COVID-19 protocols at Berkeley shelters (continued through June 2021). 24/7 operations helped to provide safe spaces for unhoused people during the day, as many public spaces were closed due to the pandemic. 24/7 operations also reduced COVID spread by eliminating concentrated mixing of people typically seen in a nighttime-only shelter operation.
- Providing 450 meals to encampments each week (continued through May 2021).



NOV 2020

- Safer Ground: Transitioning COVID-vulnerable residents of Safer Ground hotels to permanent housing resources, as County-committed funding ended at the end of calendar year 2020.
- Shelters: Opened winter shelter operations at Old City Hall, expanding operating hours to 24/7. Winter shelter operations shifted from an inclement weather shelter model (approximately 45 nights/year) to 24/7 operations for 137 full days through April 15, 2021.
- Managing outbreak in large congregate setting with approximately 300 positive cases. Coordinating closely with CDPH and Alameda County.



DEC 2020

- Safer Ground: The Safer Ground site at the Quality Inn closes at the end of December 2020. Safer Ground participants who were not housed by this point were transferred from the Quality Inn to the Rodeway Inn to continue in the program.
- Respite Sites: Moving two recreational vehicles (RVs) from 1281 University Avenue to 701 Harrison Street to decompress the University Avenue site's small lot. This shift resulted in 6 RVs at 1281 University Avenue and 12 at 701 Harrison Street.



JAN 2021

- Safer Ground: Continuing to work with Rodeway Inn participants to find permanent housing.
- Respite Sites: Supporting additional electricity installation at 701 Harrison Street site.

- Strategizing approach for vaccines with the unhoused population.

FEB 2021

- Safer Ground: County Rodeway Inn contract is extended until June 2021, allowing for continued operations.
- Distributing blankets, beanies, and gloves.

MAR-APR
2021

- Respite Sites: Connecting 5 trailers to power source at 701 Harrison Street; increasing water accessibility at both sites; working on new referrals to fill vacancies at 701 Harrison Street.
- Developing and piloting plan to vaccinate people who are homebound.
- Completing encampment vaccinations, through Lifelong Medical.
- From October 2020 to April 2021, outreach teams distributed 10,660 Double Helping Hands meals.

MAY 2021

- Safer Ground: Continuing to move Rodeway Inn participants into permanent housing before County contract ends on June 30, 2021.

JUN 2021

- Safer Ground: Exiting last person from use of Rodeway Inn under County program in partnership with Berkeley Food and Housing Project; preparing for new program at Rodeway Inn to be operated by Abode Services.
- Respite Sites: Occupancy levels remain at or near program capacity; since October 1, 2020, 12 additional people have participated in the program.

JUL 2021

- Safer Ground: Safer Ground at the Rodeway Inn reopens on July 9 with operations managed by Abode Services. Participants referred by Operation Dignity and Lifelong Medical Street Health Teams.
- Shelters: Making determination to continue 24/7 operations at shelters via BOSS, Berkeley Food and Housing Project, Dorothy Day House, and YEAH! through September 30 2021; participating in a training with Berkeley shelters informing them of COVID-19 Delta variant and the need to maintain COVID-19 protocols.
- Distributing PPE, supplies, and water to unhoused Berkeley residents.

AUG 2021

- Safer Ground: Reaching capacity at Rodeway Inn, with 40 households (a total of 45 people).
- Continuing to provide PPE and supplies to unhoused Berkeley residents.

SEP 2021

- Safer Ground: Holding a weekly self-swab (i.e., COVID-19 testing) clinic at Rodeway Inn.
- Safer Ground: Since the program's reopening on July 9, Abode has served 47 residents at the Rodeway Inn. To date, all Safer Ground programs have served a total of 181 participants since beginning in July 2020.
- Respite Sites: Continuing to process referrals from homeless outreach teams and City partners to fill vacancies. To date, all respite site programs have served 39 vulnerable people from 35 households.
- Shelters: Making determination to continue 24/7 operations at shelters through June 30, 2022.

Disease Containment

Overview

Disease containment through contact tracing and case investigation continues to be an integral part of the COVID-19 response. When people test positive for COVID-19, it is called a case. Case investigation begins with members of the disease containment team reaching out and asking a series of questions to learn more about how they may have contracted the disease, to provide isolation instructions and to check whether the person needs assistance with food or other resources during their isolation time. Interviews range from 30-60 minutes and require a high level of emotional intelligence to provide comfort to anxious individuals.

Additionally, disease containment staff provide guidance to schools and businesses when a COVID-19 case is identified at a worksite. The team also responds to outbreaks, or multiple cases reported from an exposure. This response involves interviewing additional “contacts” of the case, and ensuring that additional resources (i.e. testing, vaccine, or isolation) can be provided to affected individuals.

Disease Containment by the Numbers

2,800 covid positive people interviewed since October 2020

81 food deliveries arranged

19 referrals to the Alameda County Responsibility to Community Health (ARCH) program

15 State employees supported Berkeley’s response to the 2020 winter surge

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT- NOV
2020

- Providing consultation to cases and contacts; screening for additional resource needs.
- Responding to a large outbreak of 344 cases in a congregate setting by providing extensive guidance and working with Alameda County and CDPH counterparts.
- Onboarding six new redirected State employee contact tracers and case investigators to support Berkeley’s response.
- Training 10+ UC Berkeley contact tracers and case investigators to use the State’s COVID-19 case tracking software.

DEC 2020-
JAN 2021

- Identifying and interviewing cases, including at skilled nursing facilities. Some facilities had 50+ cases.

- Coordinating COVID-19 vaccination at congregate settings with recent cases.



FEB-MAR
2021

- Responding to multiple cases in congregate settings in South Berkeley.
- Providing COVID-19 vaccine resources through targeted outreach to affected populations, including monolingual Spanish speakers.
- Referring eligible patients to the Alameda County Responsibility to Community Health (ARCH) program, which provided financial assistance to self-isolating county residents.



APR-JULY
2021

- Using State software to streamline processes for school and worksite exposures.
- Updating the COVID-19 Liaison Toolkit with current COVID-19 safety protocols.



AUG-SEPT
2021

- Responding to a surge in cases from the COVID-19 Delta variant: 51 total worksite and school exposures, including eight outbreaks, generating over 1,100 records requiring follow-up.
- Providing over 100 consultations to schools, UC Berkeley, acute care facilities, and skilled nursing facilities.
- Refining procedures to respond to COVID-19 outbreaks in shelters.
- Refining response procedures and policies to begin pre-planning for a 2021-2022 winter surge.



OCT 2021

- Responded to 157 worksite/school exposures and 12 outbreaks. These exposures and outbreaks generated over 5,000 records requiring follow up.

Supporting Schools and Childcare Centers

Overview

The City of Berkeley's Schools Team works closely with public and private schools and the childcare and youth provider communities to promote safety in youth settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the leadership of Berkeley's Deputy Health Officer, the Schools Team includes a School/Childcare Liaison and a specialized group within the EOC's Disease Containment Unit. The Schools Team provides technical assistance and policy guidance to child- and youth-serving programs. From October 2020 through October 2021, this work included helping schools address the challenges associated with reopening, and preventing and managing COVID-19 once they resumed in-person learning. The Schools Team also supports Berkeley's childcare, extracurricular, and camp programs.

City of Berkeley's COVID-19 Liaison Toolkit

The Schools Team developed the City of Berkeley's COVID-19 Liaison Toolkit, available [online](#), as a resource to support child- and youth-serving programs. The Toolkit includes a written guide which walks school, childcare, and youth activity providers through their role in COVID-19 response, along with a number of supportive tools and templates developed by the Schools Teams and others to help streamline this work.

Technical Assistance

The Schools Team offered multiple 90-minute virtual learning sessions for Berkeley childcare, schools and youth providers. Participation peaked in January 2021 when CDPH made major updates to its guidance. In early 2021, the Schools Team held a special session specifically for BUSD principals and BUSD COVID-19 Liaisons. In addition, the Schools Team continued providing individualized technical assistance to schools, childcare, and youth providers via phone calls and email, and issued regular policy updates, including information clarifying the requirements of local and State guidance.

Case Response

Cases in youth settings require additional response from childcare facilities as well as City disease containment staff. Cases in these settings frequently involve prolonged exposures to large numbers of contacts and present a high risk for outbreaks without mitigation measures, early identification, and intervention. City staff have been specifically trained to understand

additional responses and complex regulations in youth settings, and have provided additional support and guidance to families and facilities when cases and outbreaks have occurred in youth settings. There have been 99 youth setting exposure events since August 16, 2021. Due to their congregate nature, cases in youth settings have many more contacts than community cases, ranging from 38 to 110 contacts that must be interviewed.

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT 2020

- City of Berkeley Health Officer Order issued October 2, 2020, allowing elementary schools in Berkeley to reopen for the first time since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reviewing public and private school safety plans per CDPH mandate.

Support to Schools

14 reopening plans reviewed, including plans covering all BUSD sites

29 in-person site visits performed to Berkeley K-12 schools

31 Zoom learning sessions for childcare, schools and youth providers with 61-134 attendees at each

NOV 2020

- Health Officer Order issued November 5, 2020 permits middle and high schools to reopen.
- Performing in-person site visits to Berkeley private schools to guide and promote adherence to COVID-19 policies and ensure all safety measures are correctly implemented.

DEC 2020

- Reaching out to 114 childcare providers about availability of COVID-19 related supplies in response to Berkeley City Council approval of the *Proposed Lifeline for Family Child Care Providers, Amendment: FY 2021 Annual Appropriations Ordinance*.⁷
- 67 of childcare providers (59%) express interest in receiving supplies; the City purchases and distributes air purifiers, child and adult masks, hand sanitizer, disinfectant cleaner, all-purpose cleaner, personal disinfectant, non-latex gloves, diapers, baby wipes, and site-specific requests such as tents for outdoor activities.

⁷ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/12_Dec/Documents/2020-12-15_Supp_2_Reports_Item_43_Supp_Hahn_pdf.aspx



JAN -FEB
2021

- Facilitating Zoom learning sessions for childcare, schools, and youth providers.
- Providing technical assistance to schools that have reopened.



MAR-APR
2021

- BUSD begins phased reopening; Schools Team visits 16 BUSD schools (11 elementary, 3 middle, and two high schools) to support implementation of COVID-19 safety protocols.
- Hosting meeting at Washington Elementary for all BUSD principals to answer their questions regarding COVID-19 safety protocols in schools.



MAY 2021

- Partnering with schools and COVID-19 vaccine providers to host school-based clinics at Longfellow Middle School.
- Recruiting Berkeley Public Schools Fund volunteers to support the vaccine rollout for 12-15 year olds.
- Continuing to host Zoom learning sessions.



JUN-AUG
2021

- Completing full revision of COVID-19 Liaison Guide for schools, including an updated testing protocol, symptom checks, and template messages for schools to send staff, faculty, and parents regarding COVID-19 exposures.
- Hosting Zoom learning sessions regarding the updated COVID-19 Liaison Guide, to answer questions prior to school starting.



SEP-OCT
2021

- Pre-planning for authorization of COVID-19 vaccine for 5-11 year olds, in collaboration with new HHCS staff in the COVID-19 Response Unit.
- Continuing to provide technical assistance to schools and to respond to cases.

Public Information and Outreach

Overview

The EOC's Joint Information Center consisted of the City's two communications staff, an OSII, the 311 manager and one temporarily assigned Library staff member. In 2021, the primary focus of the EOC's Joint Information Center (JIC)⁸ was to get Berkeley vaccinated. The JIC sought to create clear, simple messaging and instructions that the public could use to find and sign up for first and second vaccine doses. In doing so, the JIC's communications covered virtually every customer-facing aspect of vaccine delivery.

Vaccine Messaging

JIC staff worked with public health and other government agencies around the region to coordinate and focus regional messaging around vaccination.

Vaccine Notification Strategy

The JIC created and designed a sign-up form, vaccine notification emails and a messaging plan that emphasized transparency to build trust. The City widely promoted and used a single email notification list to alert people about available vaccine. The City used this list weeks, and sometimes months, before other jurisdictions were able to direct their communities to available vaccine. By June 2021, this vaccine communication strategy generated nearly 4 million points of contact with community members. The team repeatedly got emails from members of the public expressing confidence that they would be alerted to available vaccine when it was their turn.

Vaccine Second-Dose Customer Support

The five-person Joint Information Center team created an onsite and offsite workflow to address customer needs for every aspect of second dose delivery, including:

- A dedicated second dose webpage with clear guidance that became one of the City's most popular web pages of all time.

⁸ The Joint Information Center (JIC) is responsible for coordinating communications, information gathering and dissemination, and direct response to queries.

- Professional, HIPAA⁹-secure emails that were custom coded to individually reach thousands of people for second dose appointments.
- Answering thousands of customer support emails.
- Working with Curative to create dedicated second dose website links (a first for the company) and onsite signup for second doses.
- Onsite signage about how to get second doses and business cards that provided links and instructions for any who missed appointments.

Through this communication effort, the City of Berkeley helped vaccinate the region.

Key Activities & Decisions

OCT 2020

- Providing community messaging on playground reopening, safely celebrating Halloween, and school reopening.
- Publishing a Spanish-language testing webpage and community messages about safely celebrating Halloween and Día de los Muertos.

NOV 2020

- Coordinating with U.C. Berkeley regarding Cal Football messaging in relation to health orders and contact tracing.
- Providing community messaging on celebrating the holidays safely, including canceling or altering Thanksgiving plans.
- Publishing a Spanish-language holiday safety message.
- Recruiting property owners to work with Alameda County to help provide housing to homeless residents.
- Posting Mayor Arreguín’s “Mask On to Move On” campaign items (i.e., posters at groceries and on city buildings, banners at parks and on street poles).

DEC 2020

- Revamping City’s COVID-19 website, creating webpage for school COVID-19 toolkit, receiving approximately 13 thousand “hits” per day on the main COVID-19 page.

⁹ Per the CDC, “The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient’s consent or knowledge.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/hipaa.html#:~:text=The%20Health%20Insurance%20Portability%20and,the%20patient's%20consent%20or%20knowledge.>

- Publishing COVID Risk Reduction Order, a regional order that aligns with the State.



JAN -FEB
2021

- Publishing vaccine webpage.
- Creating and managing a community vaccination notification list.
- Responding to 1,000+ questions and queries about vaccines.
- Helping people schedule second doses (i.e., emails to 3,000 people) and refining second dose communications with partner organizations.



MAR-APR
2021

- Expanding the website to include additional vaccine information, a Back-to-School page for parents, and a resource about “What’s Open, What’s Closed.”
- Working with regional Public Information Officers on a joint message about spring break safety.
- Developing procedures and providing significant communications and coordination support to facilitate onsite signup for vaccine second doses; connecting with people who were previously not signed up for a second dose.
- Deploying weekly messages about vaccine opportunities.
- Sending a community message about the city’s move to the “orange tier”. The State’s tier system used colors to correspond to different levels of restrictions and ability to reopen various spaces, businesses, and activities.



MAY 2021

- Developing a webpage with information about safe events and gatherings.
- Creating messaging about “Beyond the Blueprint,” the State’s June 15 reopening plan.



JUN-AUG
2021

- Providing internal and external messaging around the June 15 reopening.
- Sending a community message about the city’s move to the yellow tier.
- Continuing to deploy weekly messages about vaccine availability.
- Posting signage in City buildings explaining safety protocols.
- Publishing a joint regional statement encouraging full in-person instruction for all schools in the fall.



- Reinstating Mayor Arreguín's COVID-19 Town Halls. While a regular feature throughout much of the pandemic, town halls at this time had shifted away from a COVID-specific focus.
- Issuing a Community Message about metrics for lifting the mask mandate.
- Creating a booster information section on the vaccine webpage and issuing a Community Message regarding boosters.
- Coordinating with EOC regarding anticipated pediatric vaccine rollout.

Community Support

Overview

As the pandemic continues, the City of Berkeley has redoubled its efforts to support the community. From providing a “path to permanence” for businesses to continue the outdoor arrangements they piloted early in the pandemic, to innovative programs like Berkeley Bucks (a shop local e-gift card program), and aiding in additional grants opportunities for both small businesses and arts organizations, the City and its partners are working hard to ensure the community remains vibrant and recovers successfully.

Besides supporting business and the arts, the City also worked to support tenants and landlords. Throughout the pandemic, some households have lost employment and/or experienced reduced employment. In some cases, this has impacted households’ ability to pay rent. The City of Berkeley’s Rent Board Housing Counselors have been providing tenants and landlords with COVID-related assistance, including in relation to local and State eviction moratoria and referrals to rent relief programs. The Rent Board hosted [online seminars](#) on specific legal changes related to COVID-19, and maintains information on a [COVID-19 webpage](#).

Key Activities & Decisions



- Working with businesses in the outdoor commerce program to develop strategies to winterize outdoor spaces.
- Launching a holiday shopping campaign focused on safe shopping (e.g., order online, curbside pickup), including a gift guide and a website listing businesses.
- Planning for launch of the Resilience Loan Program (RLP), funded by the CARES Act (the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act), with 0 percent interest loans, up to \$25,000 to Berkeley businesses. Applications opened online in November and closed in December. This program works in tandem with the City’s existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF).
- Updating the Commerce Guide with information about winterizing outdoor space for COVID-safe commerce.
- Planning launch of COVID-19 Business Damage Mitigation Fund with the Downtown Berkeley Association.

DEC 2020

- Holding a meeting with 90+ participants representing merchants, Downtown Berkeley Association, and City leadership to provide guidance regarding the stay-at-home order, City resources, and additional COVID-19 related topics.
- Working with clients to complete outdoor commerce applications and to transition legacy permits.
- Launching Berkeley Holidays Campaign.
- Designing Outdoor Commerce Grant Support program.

JAN 2021

- Launching a program to complete outdoor commerce grant applications and working through related policy questions.
- Working with businesses in relation to Berkeley's shift into the purple tier. The State tier system indicated levels of restriction and ability to reopen.

FEB 2021

- Reviewing 50 applicants for outdoor commerce grants.
- Working with businesses regarding a potential shift from the purple tier to the red tier.
- Providing updated vaccine clinic information to Berkeley businesses including grocery stores, manufacturing, and other high-risk environments.

MAR-APR
2021

- Sharing information through the Office of Economic Development newsletter on how to respond to the easing of restrictions.
- Hosting peer-to-peer sharing sessions focused on various environments (e.g., office-based businesses, arts sector organizations, etc.) on how to safely return to work and reopen.

MAY-JUN
2021

- Working with the North Shattuck Association to do outreach about outdoor commerce grants.
- Hosting a "special events" focused peer-to-peer sharing session.
- Creating a "Path to Permanence" for outdoor commerce, including waiving fees as long as there is a local emergency. City Council approved the Path to Permanence.



JUL-SEPT
2021

- Working with the JIC team to create and disseminate supporting materials for the new Health Order focused on helping impacted food and drink businesses to comply with new vaccine verification requirements (i.e., showing proof of vaccination for indoor consumption).
- Continuing to work with the North Shattuck Association on outdoor grant applications.



OCT 2021

- Developing criteria and an application process for Berkeley Arts Recovery Grants for Organizations and Festivals, funded through a one-time allocation by City Council of American Rescue Plan Act dollars. Grant awards will range from \$3,000-\$33,000 and will be based upon scoring criteria that centers cultural equity.

Cost Recovery

Overview

In the October 2020 COVID-19 Response Summary Report, “cost recovery” referred to the City’s work to seek reimbursement for its COVID response costs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Public Assistance Program (FEMA PA). Since that time, the financial landscape around COVID response has evolved significantly for Berkeley and the nation.

Funding the COVID Response with Federal Dollars

Considerable funding has been made available to Berkeley through the CARES Act, the American Rescue Plan Act, and other federal programs. The Cost Recovery team has supported City leaders to strategically apply COVID costs to various funding streams as they become available. Understanding the costs that are eligible under each program helps the City to maximize each allocation, reduce additional drawdowns on the General Fund, and replenish City reserves.

Reimbursing Response Costs

FEMA’s rules for reimbursement have been in constant flux throughout the COVID disaster.¹⁰ In September 2021, nearly two years into the pandemic, FEMA published its most recent rules for COVID response reimbursement. This policy drastically reduces the types of COVID response work and costs that the agency will reimburse. Although it is labeled as “interim” it is believed to be final.

For Berkeley, the most critical change to FEMA’s rules involves reimbursement of staff time. In prior disasters, FEMA reimbursed straight time¹¹ labor costs for staff who were reassigned away from their normal duties to work on the disaster response. After over 20 months without clarity, the September 2021 FEMA policy confirms that the agency will only reimburse overtime worked by existing staff. This policy change renders more than \$1 million of the City’s diligently tracked and recorded COVID personnel response costs ineligible for FEMA reimbursement.

¹⁰ FEMA support becomes available when the federal government declares a disaster.
<https://www.fema.gov/disaster>

¹¹ Straight time refers to the hours an employee works in a typical day.


FEMA's choice to drastically narrow reimbursable costs is disappointing, but having final rules enables staff to work more efficiently to prepare documentation for reimbursement requests. Staff continues to submit reimbursement requests, the earliest in February 2021. As of November 2021, FEMA has not provided feedback, approval, or denial for any of Berkeley's reimbursement request. Due to FEMA's understaffing and massive backlogs, staff expects COVID reimbursement efforts to last for at least a year, if not more, after FEMA considers the pandemic's emergency period to be over.


FEMA PA: Using COVID to Prepare for Berkeley's Next Disaster

As opportunities for COVID cost reimbursement decline, the Cost Recovery team is pivoting its focus to assessing and improving City policies and procedures for disaster cost recovery. So far, the City has received ongoing guidance and support from its cost recovery contractor as it updated policies for tracking expenses and personnel time, disaster purchasing, and document retention. Moving forward, staff aims to develop a disaster recovery "playbook" to help guide departments' actions in future disasters.

The City continues to amass experience and expertise in navigating the FEMA PA program. During the August 2021 Caldor Fire in El Dorado County that affected Echo Lake Camp, City staff were able to quickly convene and prepare for necessary cost recovery using knowledge and experience from past disasters.

Key Activities & Decisions

- 
- Continuing development of applications for FEMA reimbursement. This includes identifying what is reimbursable, developing arguments for reimbursement, and developing a strategy for collecting documentation.
 - Identifying department-level COVID-19 purchases and collecting related data to establish eligibility for reimbursement.
 - Completing Citywide Benefit Rate Worksheet for use in Public Assistance Applications for personnel time reimbursement.
 - Transitioning personnel time tracking away from legacy (older) software to a new software system.



FEB-MAR
2021

- Submitting first FEMA PA reimbursement application for communications costs.
- Strategizing about the best way to leverage American Rescue Plan funding.



APR 2021

- Submitting FEMA PA reimbursement application for shower program.
- Coordinating with HHCS to identify staffing costs to apply to Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control of Emerging Infectious Diseases (ELC) grant.
- Developing a strategy to allocate CARES Act - Coronavirus Relief Fund allocation to expenses not eligible for reimbursement under FEMA, in order to maximize the City's reimbursement potential.



MAY-SEP
2021

- Submitting largest FEMA grant request (by the City) to date.

Organizational Impacts

Mobilizing any emergency response is a daunting endeavor that requires employees to come together and set aside their fears in order to protect the health and welfare of the community. For the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the early days, employees—and the world at large – had to navigate many uncertainties and unknowns: How pervasive is the virus? How does it spread? What happens if I get the virus? Will I get members of my family sick? How do I balance the demands of being a disaster service worker with the responsibilities in my personal life? For more than two years, City employees and community members have grappled with these concerns and challenges. Even as scientists have answered many of our initial questions, much uncertainty remains about COVID-19's long-term impacts on our health, our economy, and our future.

Employees in every department have experienced challenges as they maintain high quality services for the community while also responding to the pandemic and following Health Officer Order protocols. They have juggled job duties, remote schooling for their children, and caring for ill family members. Many have struggled without sufficient internet bandwidth or access to ergonomics when working from home.

In the face of these pandemic challenges, the City organization can be proud of many accomplishments. Starting in early 2020, every department deployed employees to support the COVID-19 response as Disaster Service Workers (DSWs), whether in the EOC or in another function within their department. This staffing situation created difficult and complex questions. Departments had to prioritize their own operations to maintain their most essential functions with fewer staff. At the same time, departments had to reenvision program delivery under COVID-19, quickly pivoting their operations to continue services while keeping employees and community members safe.

The cost of this ongoing reorganization and uncertainty has been extreme. Two years of consistent overtime and weekend work under this pandemic have created an environment of physical and emotional burnout for many of our employees. As we move into a “new normal,” in which COVID is a part of our daily lives, the City will need to integrate the COVID response into its daily work. This necessarily means that the City will need to set aside other efforts and priorities.

On the next page there is a brief description of some of the many lessons learned by the City organization during the second year of the pandemic. These lessons learned are followed by sections briefly describing some of the organizational impacts experienced by different departments.

Lessons Learned in Year Two of Pandemic Response

As the pandemic stretched into its second year, the introduction of vaccines and discovery of new variants changed the landscape of fighting COVID-19. Similarly, the City began its transition into the “new normal,” in which COVID-19 is a part of its everyday work, and our day-to-day existence as a community. This has been an extraordinarily long period of active emergency response with near-constant uncertainty for City staff, our community, and our world. In this ongoing—and yet incomplete—period of transition, the City has come to recognize key lessons that inform its service to the community now and in the future:

The City can mobilize effectively across departments. The pandemic required departments to work together to quickly address big problems. Working in the EOC structure helped staff from different departments to better connect with one another, breaking down barriers even when most collaborations were conducted remotely. While the EOC structure is the best way to manage a complex emergency, it is not built for long-term use. However, the cross-department collaborations built in the EOC will be a strong base for improved connections moving forward.

Partner communications are critical. During the COVID-19 response, working closely with our partner agencies—other health jurisdictions around the region and local partners like U.C. Berkeley and BUSD and community-based organizations—was critical to providing our community with consistent information and instructions. It helped reinforce the City’s focus on equity by ensuring that traditionally hard-to-reach members of our community received critical information. Especially in times of great uncertainty, continuing to work closely with our partner agencies will ensure clear and reliable communication and strengthen community trust.

The City has an agile workforce—and employee stamina is wearing thin. City staff flexed to meet the needs of this pandemic. For two years, staff worked long hours and weekends, performing as Disaster Service Workers while also trying to maintain normal job functions. Typically, disaster service work lasts days or weeks. The extraordinary length of this response has had a tremendous impact on the organization.

The City can achieve amazing results when activities are focused. When COVID-19 emerged, the City had to suspend many day-to-day operations, programs, and projects to focus on saving lives and protecting our community from this virus. The City had to reevaluate its daily operations to prioritize the most essential services—those critical operations that save lives and are legally required. Moving forward, the City will bring this focused approach to daily operations. This means continuing to think big, take risks, and try new things while being willing to abandon efforts that aren’t working.

The City now has extensive disaster experience it can apply to future disasters. COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to test the City’s staff, emergency plans, and practices over a very long, dynamic, and ongoing emergency. Some COVID-19 efforts can even be used as models for future disasters. For example, the City’s vaccine distribution strategy mirrors the work that will be necessary to distribute water, food, or cleanup supplies after an earthquake. Also, when the Caldor Fire ripped through El Dorado County in fall 2021, threatening Berkeley’s Echo Lake Camp, the City was already prepared to document damages to facilitate FEMA cost reimbursement.

COVID-19 is here to stay. As our community enters year three of the pandemic, new variants continue to demonstrate the interconnectedness of our world. COVID-19 has made permanent changes to the way that everyone works and lives. For the City organization, this means integrating COVID-19 response into daily operations. Even when there is a formal end to the City’s Proclamation of Local Emergency for COVID-19, some COVID-19 work will continue: vaccinations and boosters; testing, tracing, isolation and quarantine; new and updated Health Officer orders, along with ongoing communications and education.

City Attorney

Over the past year, the City Attorney's Office continued to provide a wide range of high caliber legal services, from defending cases and claims to addressing redistricting. Additionally, during this time, the City Attorney's Office has developed practices to maintain and enhance productivity and office cohesion.

The contributions of the City Attorney's Office from October 2020 through October 2021 are summarized in the following table:

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COVID-19 RESPONSE

HEALTH OFFICER ORDERS

- Continuing to develop and review various Health Officer Orders, including orders requiring face coverings in indoor settings and vaccination verification for entry into certain businesses. Where necessary, the City Attorney's Office has coordinated with other Bay Area jurisdictions on developing Health Officer orders.
- Continuing to advise staff and members of the public regarding implementation and enforcement of Health Officer Orders.

ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS

- Assisting in the drafting and revision of the City's vaccination mandate for City employees and advising and participating in related negotiations and discussions with employee bargaining units.
- Developing and drafting City ordinances for the protection of tenants as part of COVID-19 response.
- Developing and drafting grocery worker hazard pay ordinance.
- Providing ongoing legal support to the Office of Economic Development regarding business impacts and local initiatives, such as outdoor commerce and Health Officer Orders.
- Continuing to advise staff regarding the COVID-19 Emergency Response Ordinance, including related issues of lease termination or renegotiation for small businesses.
- Continuing to advise the EOC Joint Information Center (JIC) regarding public communications about the COVID-19 Emergency Response Ordinance.

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COVID-19 RESPONSE

FINANCIAL COST AND RECOVERY

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Continuing to review, revise, and draft various contracts and memorandums of understanding related to COVID-19 Case Investigation and Contact Tracing, COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and providing guidance regarding implementation of other sources of COVID-19 related funding.
- Continuing to review and verify 214 FEMA forms for cost recovery.

GENERAL

- Continuing to advise staff regarding:
 - Contracting, privacy, and other legal issues,
 - Implementation of the Healthy Streets Program,
 - The Respites Sites Program,
 - Best practices for compliance with the Brown Act and Public Records Act during COVID-related City office closures, and
 - Response to Public Records Act requests related to the City's COVID-19 response.
- Continuing to advise the Health Officer regarding:
 - The publication of COVID-19 demographic data,
 - City Health Officer scope of powers in responding to COVID-19, and
 - Genomic tracing of City test specimens.
- Continuing to research emergency proclamation legal authority and requirements and continuing to draft the COVID-19 emergency proclamation and subsequent reauthorization Council resolutions.
- Researching and drafting a resolution authorizing continued use of teleconferencing for City Council and commission meetings following passage of Assembly Bill 361.
- Monitoring and providing advice regarding State legislation and the Governor's executive orders affecting open meetings and the City's response to COVID-19.
- Researching protections for small business owners who personally guaranteed the business' rent obligation.

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

- The City Attorney's Office has successfully developed office practices and policies to maintain and improve productivity and office cohesion. Particularly successful practices include:
 - Successful utilization of teleconferencing technologies,

CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CONTRIBUTIONS TO COVID-19 RESPONSE

- Regular and recurring check-in teleconference calls, either officewide or between staff with related work assignments, and
 - Regular sharing of daily work plans and workflow updates.
- The City Attorney's Office has found that telework practices during COVID-19 have largely preserved office productivity and, in some cases, have led to greater efficiency and productivity by staff. Decreased commute times have enabled attorneys to quickly respond to urgent matters and, where needed, effectively work outside of regular business hours. The City Attorney's Office is exploring ways to continue to incorporate telework while ensuring that all in-person office needs are met.
- While COVID-19 has presented challenges, teleconferencing of public meetings has allowed the City Attorney's Office significant flexibility by enabling the office to easily make multiple staff members available, and allow staff to quickly transition between consecutive or concurrent public meetings.

City Auditor

The City Auditor's Office, which includes both performance and payroll audit, has worked alongside the EOC to assist with payroll-related data and analysis. This work with EOC included creating reports and participating in cost recovery activities. Payroll Audit staff provided the data necessary to substantiate personnel costs associated with COVID-related efforts to recover federal dollars for the funding of these efforts.

City Clerk

The City Clerk Department adjusted a variety of operations and programs to ensure better safety and effectiveness given the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some specific efforts included implementing vote-by-mail for the November 2020 general election, launching an Independent Redistricting Commission, preparing for a return to in-person work and Council meetings, and participating in ongoing cost recovery work.

November 2020 Election

The City Clerk Department coordinated with the Alameda County Registrar of Voters and other City departments to identify locations for the Voting Assistance Centers and the Ballot Drop Boxes that were implemented for the vote-by-mail general election. Staff assisted voters by providing information on where and how to vote, as well as providing assistance to candidates and campaign committees regarding compliance issues and required filings for the election.

Independent Redistricting Commission

The Commission was launched in January of 2021 with a random selection process for the district commissioners that was broadcast and streamed to the public. City Clerk staff is providing administrative support to the Commission for the duration of the process. To date, the Commission has held 20 meetings and engaged in a robust public outreach campaign to educate the public about the process and encourage community participation.



Return to In-Person Work

City Clerk staff have been reporting to work at the Civic Center Building since the start of the pandemic. Following City protocols, the department used a work from home rotation to increase social distancing in the office. With the November 2022 election, continuing support for City Council meetings, and in-person public service by appointment, the City Clerk Department maintained a high level of customer service. The department currently allows one

day per week of work from home for eligible employees and is ready for a full return to work status.

Return to In-Person Council Meetings

The City Clerk Department has refined and adjusted the virtual meeting processes throughout the pandemic. With the passage of new State laws regarding virtual meetings for legislative bodies, the Department is working with internal and external partners to plan for the return to in-person meetings under a hybrid (in-person and virtual) platform.

Ongoing Cost Recovery

The City Clerk Department has one employee, from its staff of ten, who has provided integral support to the EOC's Cost Recovery team. This employee is dedicated part-time to gathering critical data and documentation to support FEMA reimbursement requests.

City Manager's Office

In addition to providing policy and strategic direction to City departments, the City Manager's Office contains a variety of units, including Animal Services, the Budget Office, Neighborhood Services, Code Enforcement, Berkeley's 2020 Vision, and the Office of Economic Development. It also leads the City's work on the 2020 U.S. Census.

Budget Office

A small but important unit, the Budget Office has continued to fully deploy one of its most senior staff to the EOC while also acting as the Budget Manager and maintaining all normal operational work. In addition to last year's work, which remains ongoing, this staff person has served as a key member of the City's Cost Recovery Team, supporting development of reimbursement applications for FEMA.

Since fall 2020, the Budget Office prepared initially for a two-year budget but then quickly pivoted to a one-year budget in order to more flexibly respond to the changing economic recovery landscape. This pivot required complex and swift revisions to a variety of calculations, analyses, and processes. At the same time, the longtime Budget Manager retired. However, the Budget Office, under the leadership of one of its most senior staff, acting in the role of Budget Manager, was able to guide the organization through the budget process within a tight time frame with economic uncertainties. This process resulted in a fiscal year 2022 Proposed Budget and accompanying book that was well received by the City Council and the public. The process used for the one-year budget allowed the City to fully incorporate changes when it learned it would be receiving American Rescue Plan Act funds. These funds helped the City to address pandemic-related revenue losses and to fund programs to help with pandemic-related recovery. Shortly after Council's adoption of the fiscal year 2022 budget, the Budget Office began work on the next two-year budget, which will be the first one built in the City's new financial system.

During COVID-19, the majority of Budget Office employees have continued to work from home, maintaining efficiency and productivity gains stemming from the elimination of commute time.

Neighborhood Services

In addition to its work in Code Enforcement, Special Events, and Animal Services, the Neighborhood Services Division was reorganized over the past year to place a greater emphasis on responding to street and encampment homelessness.

- *Homeless Response Team*

Neighborhood Services will lead the Council's new Homeless Response Team, created by a Measure P allocation in the fiscal year 2022 budget. For the first nearly year and a half of the pandemic, the City adhered to CDC guidance to avoid closing encampments, even those that had become very dangerous and unhealthy, as much as possible, to mitigate the spread of the virus. As the City's vaccination rates rose and case rates fell through the summer, the City Manager felt it was appropriate to begin balancing the health threat posed by the virus against multiple other public health and safety risks, and resumed enforcement action in August 2021.

The Homeless Response Team was launched concurrently and now serves as the City's primary point of contact for assessing and responding to street and vehicular homelessness, prioritizing health and safety impacts and avoiding criminal citation or arrest wherever possible.

The division now includes the City's Homeless Outreach Team (formerly the HOTT within Berkeley Mental Health), which serves as the HRT's initial point of response to encampment homelessness across the City. In an effort to better align with existing homeless programming in the Health, Housing and Community Services (HHCS) department, the City's Homelessness Services Coordinator was also moved from HHCS to Neighborhood Services. This move will help develop systems of care and support for those living on the streets, thereby preventing the need for enforcement action at dangerous and impactful encampments wherever possible. Neighborhood Services, in partnership with multiple City departments and Dorothy Day House, recently opened both the Horizon Transitional Village Shelter Program and the Safe Parking and Respite Kickstart (SPARK) program, which provide 50 beds and 40 parking spots for recreational vehicles (RVs) at 742 Grayson Street. In addition, Neighborhood Services has already partnered with several departments to perform several successful encampment resolutions at some of the city's most unsafe and unhealthy encampments. During these encampment resolutions, encampments are closed after all encampment residents are offered shelter, transportation, and other resources. Neighborhood Services also partners

with the Public Works Department to provide twice-weekly garbage service to encampments and areas near encampments that are frequent targets for illegal dumping.

- *Animal Services*

The opening of businesses and the resumption of normal activities in June and July 2021 had a major impact on the operations of Animal Services. The robust foster program that existed during ‘shelter in place’ very quickly diminished as fosters and potential fosters returned to work and school. With the opening of the Animal Shelter to the public during this same time period, the number of incoming animals began to increase and is now at pre-COVID levels.

Also beginning in June and July of 2021, requests for field services began to increase and are now at pre-COVID levels. With one Animal Control Officer position frozen, response times are slower than pre-COVID.

Since reopening the shelter to the public, Animal Services has had about 200 active volunteers, down from between 400-500 active volunteers pre-COVID. New volunteer orientations have started again, limited to 15 people per orientation with two orientations per month. The vaccination mandate was announced in mid-September. To date, over 130 volunteers have submitted proof of vaccination. Beginning November 15th, only vaccinated volunteers will be permitted to continue volunteering.

- *Code Enforcement*

The Neighborhood Services Code Enforcement Unit’s (NSCEU) Supervisor has been coordinating closely with the EOC to enforce all non-food related COVID-19 Health Order Violations in the City of Berkeley. In 2020 (through 2021), NSCEU Officers were also asked to respond to, investigate, and enforce the City Health Order violations per the EOC and City Leadership. Enforcement of the City Health Order created significant challenges as staff struggled to balance both baseline work and emergency response activities. This new area of responsibility significantly increased the NSCEU’s workload, initially in development of this new citywide response effort and then in response to added calls for service for an array of Health Officer Order violations. Although NSCEU partnered with the Planning Department’s Code Enforcement Officer to help with enforcement, early estimates are that COVID-19 enforcement has created more than one full-time equivalent

(FTE) of work. Further, NSCEU continues to operate without administrative office services support, which challenges the unit's efficiency.

At the pandemic's height, NSCEU workload doubled: an estimated five to seven new COVID-19 related cases were generated per week, in addition to the five to seven new regular NSCEU cases generated per week. Prior to the introduction and distribution of the vaccine, COVID-19-related open cases grew to 100+ cases for NSCEU. Consequently, the unit's response time increased for all other NSCEU work. NSCEU's goal of addressing all complaints within 10 days of receiving them has not been met. Although time to address incoming complaints has decreased as the pandemic has worn on, NSCEU is still addressing complaints that are two months old. Additionally, NSCEU assists the City's Building and Safety inspectors, HHCS inspectors, and Public Works with investigation and enforcement of reported violations.

- *Special Events*

During 2020, Special Events created Outdoor Commerce permits as a mechanism to support businesses and schools that wanted to move outdoors. The team also permitted the expansions of existing outdoor uses to accommodate social distancing requirements for schools, businesses, and farmers markets. The special events team consists of one full-time employee assigned from Neighborhood Services and 8-10 staff from other departments. Staffing was challenging in some areas as a few team members had been reassigned to other duties and others were not yet back to work, balancing their children's distance learning needs from home. So far in calendar year 2021, Special Events has permitted 60 events, with an estimated 10-20 more events by year's end. Staff anticipated a surge in businesses, schools, and brick-and-mortar businesses requesting outdoor space for canceled indoor events; staff expect to see that trend continue through calendar year 2022. If pandemic restrictions continue to decrease, the team expects a return to pre-pandemic levels in event season 2022 (approximately 125-150 events annually), including with the return of all events that had been canceled or postponed during 2020-21. Staffing should return to pre-pandemic levels, prepared to support all special event organizers as they continue to host events throughout Berkeley. Special Events staff recognizes the many efforts by businesses and organizers to rethink outdoor programming and support their innovation moving forward.

Public Information Officer

The work of the Public Information Officer was primarily to support the City's COVID-19 response as well as other urgent citywide communication needs. The cost of providing this kind of support was extreme. This effort required everyone putting in long daily and weekend hours. It required putting all other City work on the margin, affecting all other operations, including delaying high-profile projects such as the launch of the City's new website. This effort also created an environment of physical and emotional burnout.

Office of Economic Development

Staff in the Office of Economic Development (OED) have continued to be fully engaged in supporting local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides their active involvement in the EOC described elsewhere in this report, much of OED's activities relate to direct financial assistance, business communications, economic impact assessments, marketing/promotion, and regulatory relief:

- Implementation of the "Business & Arts Continuity Grants" program, an emergency relief grant program to help mitigate COVID-19 related financial losses. This program, made possible by funds from City Council and private donations, resulted in the award of 763 grants totaling over \$2.6 million to help stabilize the local economy. OED led creation and administration of the program, as well as distribution of funds from the Berkeley Relief Fund.
- Development and implementation of the business damage mitigation fund and the outdoor commerce grant support program, providing direct financial assistance through \$800-\$2,000 individual grants.
- Continuation of increased frequency of citywide business communications to ensure businesses were aware of the latest COVID-19 response and recovery information and resources. This included continuation of well-attended sector-specific outreach and forums such as "Listening Sessions" with business leaders to inform development of



reopening protocols and facilitate peer-to-peer sharing of information and experiences.

- Convened, with Berkeley Chamber of Commerce (Berkeley Chamber), regular “Business Forums on Outbreak Responses.”
- Convened, through the Civic Arts Program, regular meetings with Berkeley arts organizations to share information and resources relating to COVID-19, such as federal aid opportunities and Health Orders.
- Developed, with Berkeley Chamber, an online [COVID-19 Resource Hub¹²](#) with information on topics spanning from Financial Resources, to Working from Home, to Reopening Your Business.
- Issued multiple industry-specific [surveys¹³](#) to better understand how businesses are coping with the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, what kinds of support businesses need, and potential trends to anticipate.
- Deployed a #BerkeleyHolidays campaign in December 2020 to promote safe, citywide holiday-themed events and local online shopping opportunities.
- Created a “path to permanence” for outdoor dining and commerce to allow expanded outdoor commercial activity (e.g., sidewalk seating, parklets, street closures for outdoor commerce), resulting in over 3 dozen permitted businesses, an expanded range of allowable outdoor activities, and a streamlined permit process, as well as a variety of related [educational materials¹⁴](#) for interested businesses.



Moving forward, OED anticipates continuing and expanding this work through:

- Applying over \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds towards supporting sustainable recovery of Berkeley’s deeply-impacted sectors (e.g., arts, tourism, small businesses), and

¹² <https://www.berkeleychamber.com/covid19resources.html>

¹³

https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Manager/Economic_Development/2020_Q4Dashboard_OED%20presentation%20for%20council%20FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ <https://www.cityofberkeley.info/covid19-outdoor-commerce/#permanence>

- Providing grants through the [Berkeley Art Works Projects](#)¹⁵ to artists, performers, and community members to create temporary public art projects throughout Berkeley that bolster collective resilience and recovery from the effects of COVID-19.

¹⁵ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/City_Manager/Civic_Arts/Berkeley_Art_Works_Projects.aspx

Finance

Throughout the pandemic, the Finance Department has successfully maintained continuity of its operations and provision of the best information on the City's current and long-term fiscal condition. All divisions in the department, General Services, Treasury, and Financial Systems, have worked together and innovated to keep staff safe while managing the revenues and procurement that enable the services the City provides the community. The Fiscal Analysis Working Group, established to closely monitor the pandemic's impact on City revenues, continues its work monitoring remittances to the City, other jurisdictions' revenue reports, and County and State agency forecasts. The Working Group has helped the City better understand the changing economic environment and maintain accurate revenue projections.

General Services

General Services is still prioritizing purchases, solicitations, and contract processing related to the COVID response. The volume of urgent requests has subsided dramatically, however, some expediting is still needed. Staff attended purchasing related webinars, including FEMA training, throughout the pandemic, and assisted departments with posting bids and requests for proposals (RFPs) as expeditiously as possible.

Bid openings continue to be held outside in order to allow for public access while maintaining social distancing requirements. RFPs are submitted electronically. General Services Staff are all able to work remotely, or in the office on alternating days.

Treasury

During the pandemic, the Treasury Division was able to maintain its daily operations while modifying processes to minimize staff interaction and promote physical distancing. This involved developing a scheduling system which eliminated queuing and minimized wait times. Throughout the organization, the Treasury Division has continued to help a variety of departments and work units to set up remote payments, expedite phone-in credit card payment processing, and deploy online and automatic payment solutions. These innovations now offer supportive alternatives alongside the increasing number of in-person options becoming available again.

Financial Systems

The Financial Systems Group has continued its work ensuring that Finance operations run efficiently while maintaining employee safety. Staff in this group continue to work remotely and support a variety of initiatives responding to the effects of the pandemic, including the Finance Customer Service Counter (CSC) customer triage phone line; working to enable more Business License taxes to be paid through an online portal; and working to allow more types of online payments to minimize in-person payment activities and increase customer convenience.

Revenue Collection

The Revenue Collection Division enhanced its operations to best serve its customers when City offices were closed to the general public. As much as possible, in-person traffic was diverted to communicating via web, email, and phone, as described below:

- **Web:** Revenue Collection encouraged customers to take advantage of existing online portals to conduct business, e.g., applying for and renewing Residential Preferential Parking (RPP) program permits, paying for or contesting parking citations, and renewing their business license for Rental of Real Property.
- **Email:** Some documents, like change of business information, could be submitted electronically where they once needed to be mailed in with a wet signature. Additional emails were created to better address customer needs, i.e., a dedicated mail box to accept property tax tips.
- **Phone:** Finance Customer Service Counter (CSC) staff manned a customer triage phone line which directed customers to the correct staff for assistance and to accept payments. In-person appointments were available on a limited case-by-case basis.
- **In-Person:** New payment drop boxes were introduced on the outside of 1947 Center Street building, allowing customers to drop off documents and payments free of contact 24/7. As City offices reopened, the CSC had a soft opening with limited hours. Masks are provided to customers that do not have them, minimal seating is available to maximize social distancing, and no forms are left in the lobby—rather, they are given to customers as needed. Slowly, the CSC expanded its office hours to pre-COVID hours and is able to assist customers that walk in. Staff continues to adhere to COVID-19 guidelines: masks on at all times, 6-feet of social distancing, as well as sanitizing hands and the office. Phone calls have declined, but the CSC staff continues to process payments over the phone when needed.

The Division continues to enhance its operations by expanding its online business license portal to allow the majority of license types to renew online; this will allow over 80% of Berkeley businesses to renew online and receive a copy of their business license and receipt immediately. Additionally, the Customer Service Counter will be implementing a new queuing software in December 2021 which will allow customers to make appointments online and see estimated wait times at the Counter to maximize social distancing practices.

Accounting

The Accounting Division worked with external financial auditors to enable the FY 2021 audit to be performed remotely as much as possible. While accommodations needed to be made for in-person review of certain sensitive documentation, the division has provided other documentation electronically, and arranged for staff interviews and other meetings to occur online. This resulted in a timely delivery of the City's financial statements.

Fire

The Fire Department continues to respond and provide emergency medical service and transport to members of the community with symptoms of COVID-19. Meeting this challenge has required a redoubling of efforts to maintain a supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to reduce workplace exposures, which has been especially challenging given the supply chain issues that have manifested during the pandemic.



To maintain operational continuity, the Department has been performing weekly serial testing of all members to catch infections early, with rapid contact tracing to reduce staffing impacts that result from large clusters of quarantined employees. This additional work has been performed by our diligent and committed Designated Infection Control Officers (DICO). Our DICOs remain a critical link in the response to each employee exposure both in terms of providing support to the employee and ensuring the employee can return to work in as timely a fashion as is safe and allowable under Health Officer guidance.

Some highlights of the Department's pandemic-related activities include:

- Mass Vaccination Site:** The Fire Department, in partnership with the EOC and private partners, planned, built and ran the Bay Area's first and only continuously operated mass vaccination site. This was a public-private partnership between the City of Berkeley, the County of Alameda, Curative, Inc., and Golden Gate Fields. The Department worked with the City's Public Health Officer and other EOC staff and the Alameda County EOC to develop and maintain a consistent flow of vaccine, building from an initial offering of 350 vaccines daily to nearly 2,000 vaccines per day. The site provided 100,000 doses of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines to the jurisdictions of the City of Berkeley, Alameda County, and when availability permitted, the San Francisco Bay Region.



- Measure FF Wildland-Urban Interface Implementation:** Berkeley voters approved Measure FF, which will bring sweeping improvements to the service delivered by the Department over the coming years. At the same time FF passed, the Department moved all staff officers (i.e., personnel working 40-hour, Monday-Friday shifts) to fire stations to help reduce forced overtime and keep stations open. This left a very few in Fire Administration to maintain the Department's normal operations, to contribute to the ongoing COVID response, and to begin planning and implementation FF programs and projects.

Council directed the Department during the FY22 budget process to think creatively to begin FF work, with a focus around wildland urban interface (WUI) planning and vegetation management. To that end, the Department hired eight retired annuitants of various ranks to begin to tackle this monumental project. They are building the

vegetation management program, working on community education modules, drafting the scope of work for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), re-starting the Safe Passages program, performing vegetation management inspections, and helping the



Department research and document best work practices that will be transitioned to permanent FTEs when staffing allows. The annuitants' presence and commitment to this work has been invaluable.

Health, Housing and Community Services

Throughout the pandemic, the Health, Housing and Community Services (HHCS) Department has played a significant role in COVID-19 response, both within the EOC and as part of its departmental operations. Over 2021, HHCS has designed and implemented a strategy for addressing COVID-19 as response needs change, managed a significant influx of new funding, and hired and trained a variety of new staff to perform pandemic-related work.

As the EOC moves closer to demobilization, more of these ongoing COVID response efforts have and will continue to shift to HHCS. To that end, since July 2021, the bulk of COVID-19 response work has shifted from the EOC to a team of HHCS staff in liaison with the EOC Coordinator. This shift, called “Phase II”, included:

- Formalizing COVID-19 Response Principles and Strategies,
- Developing a new departmental organizational structure,
- Creating new operational roles, and
- Structuring a process for management of this work.

With these principles, strategies, roles, structures, and process in place, HHCS successfully:

- Planned and implemented vaccine booster rollout,
- Increased testing and vaccinations at shelters and for the unhoused,
- Planned and implemented pediatric vaccination rollout,
- Supported the schools in COVID-management overall and addressing outbreaks,
- Provided low-income individuals and families with rental and basic needs assistance to keep them in their homes,
- Developed a vaccine incentive program for the unhoused population, and
- Much more, as detailed in the thematic section of this report.

Additionally, the Housing & Community Services Division of HHCS is managing approximately \$13 million in new COVID-relief funds. These funds are primarily distributed to community agencies, along with HOME¹⁶ COVID funds.

¹⁶ HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). HOME COVID funds are supplemental federal HOME program funds for housing development.

Human Resources

In response to COVID-19 last year, the Human Resources Department (HR) pivoted to quickly integrate evolving Health Officer Orders, public health regulations, and new laws into City operations, providing supportive citywide policies, trainings, and procedures. These include:

- Administrative Regulation 2.24 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave (new);
- COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Employee Guidance FAQs (new);
- Administrative Regulation 2.25 Mandatory COVID-19 Employee Vaccination Policy (new);
- COVID-19 Vaccination Policy & Face Covering FAQs (new);
- Safe Reopening Plan for Departments “Welcoming Back the Public” (new);
- Confidential Employee Vaccination Verification Data Collection;
- COVID-19 Prevention Program (revision pending);
- Guidance on Domestic/International Travel;
- Guidance on Post-Exposure;
- Guidance on Safety Protocols While at Work;
- Worker Engagement Trainings; and
- COVID-19 Trainings.

This work required several meet-and-confers¹⁷ with labor groups regarding safety and alternate work schedules to reduce potential COVID-19 exposure. The Department incurred increased costs to address the legal issues surrounding employees and COVID-19, including a review of policies, new laws, meet-and-confers regarding Disaster Service Worker work, and alternate work schedules. HR also implemented a citywide hiring freeze.

HR focused on ensuring clear communication of these new policies and procedures to staff by:

- Engaging in 34 vaccine policy meet-and-confers with labor groups since August 2021;
- Meeting with labor groups to provide bimonthly updates;

¹⁷ For employees covered by a labor agreement, whenever there is a change proposed that would affect that agreement, both parties meet and discuss the proposed change. This is known as “meet-and-confer”.

- Updating the COVID-19 Employee Information webpage with new policies and procedures;
- Developing scripts for managers and supervisors to share information regarding the safety and efficacy of vaccines with employees;
- Coordinating the citywide “Welcoming Back the Public” committee to support the creation of departmental Safe Reopening Plans;
- Conducting a citywide COVID-19 Vaccine Safety and Efficacy Townhall webinar with the Public Health Officer;
- Sharing regular updates via the internal email listserv (“Everyone Emails”), employee newsletter (“Berkeley Matters”), intranet (“iCoBweb”), and the HR Department’s digital signage/kiosk;
- Providing citywide communication around COVID-19 positive cases, exceeding Cal/OSHA¹⁸ requirements for such reporting; and
- Delivering onsite vaccination policy outreach/education efforts for field-based staff.

While striving to meet the human resources needs of the COVID-19 response, HR continued with its baseline work and support to City departments. From February to July 2021 HR engaged with and successfully concluded labor negotiations with all eight labor groups. HR continues to meet and confer with Labor on negotiation-related issues. Additionally, HR is staffing projects to move HR and payroll operations to a modern software solution, with rollout expected in the first part of 2022.

¹⁸ California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health.

Information Technology

The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) continues to support City of Berkeley remote and in office employees during the COVID-19 emergency order. The Help Desk is open 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, with walk-in appointments available to book through the Service Now Help Desk portal (SNOW), by phone and employees are encouraged to use the SNOW service portal for routing service requests.

DoIT Enterprise and Business Application employees continue to work fulltime from home to comply with COVID-19 safety protocols due to cramped cubicles spaced less than five feet apart.

311 Customer Service Services and COVID-19 Information Services continues to support the Public Health division answering COVID-19 inquiries and concerns from the community and businesses. The 311 Customer Service Call Center is open 8:00 a.m. -5:00 p.m. Monday-Friday serving the community, businesses, students and visitor through multiple service channels.

Telecommuting

DoIT supports over 700 employees to securely work from home. In addition to continuing previously reported support activities, in the past reporting period, DoIT worked on:

- Rolling out enhanced MS Teams features (e.g., channels) City-wide to replace Skype.
- Purchasing an enterprise license for Zoom and piloting its use with the City Manager's Office - Office of Economic Development.
- Monitoring network access performance and stability.
- Configuring and deploying 559 laptops for remote work.
- Setting up and distributing 450 iPhones and iPads for remote work.
- Publishing over 30 knowledge base (i.e., user guide) articles relating to remote work.

Cyber Security

The cyber security environment continues to evolve as to type and complexity of attacks, and with respect in volume of attacks. Already a growing threat, ransomware exploded, with attacks becoming more frequent and costlier. The volume of ransomware attacks rose

another 185 percent over 2020 in the first half of 2021. Given the continued and increased cyber security risks, particularly with many employees working remotely, DoIT continues to employ a variety of strategies to mitigate those risks. However, many DoIT cyber security initiatives have been slowed or are temporarily on hold due to staffing shortages and partial funding pushed to fiscal year 2023. Security projects during the report period include:

- Launch of the Data Safety program, and
- Migration of City iPhones and iPads to InTune to support access to MS Team by personal devices and enhanced security.

Technical Support

The Help Desk call volume and ticket volume continue to increase with employees working from home having intensified network, set-up, and password questions. Processing at-home service calls can often take longer to trouble-shoot, factoring in home-networks and the inability for IT to remote into the laptops. Service requests for laptops, iPhones and iPads continue to increase with staff working from home. Help Desk walk-in appointments are available to book through the SNOW service portal Monday through Friday. DoIT Help Desk is currently staffed at 50%, due to a variety of factors, including resignations and medical leave. Recruitment for Help Desk staff is in process.

DoIT is currently strategizing and planning technical and Help Desk needs to support the return of City employees to the office in 2022.

DoIT continues to work on software solutions to assist with documenting COVID-19. Some examples include:

- Forms and survey solutions for the EOC, the Health, Housing, and Community Services Department, and the Human Resources Department for COVID-19.
- Updates to COVID-19 Statistics Report on City's website.
- Built vaccination status form in the Jot-Form platform.
- Train HR on Jot-Form vaccination data retrieval.
- Assisted staff on how to fill out jot-form and provided support for technical issues on Jot-form platform.

311 Customer Service

311 Customer Service Call Center is open Monday-Friday, serving as an essential service 311 remained open during COVID-19 shelter in place. Community and businesses requests for services and information remain on par with non-COVID years. In FY2021, 311 processed 119,971 incoming interactions. To maintain proper Cal/OSHA distancing and safety protocols 311 is working with five staff in the office answering phones and five staff working from home processing cases, inquiries, and messages. Service levels have declined for incoming phone traffic: the answer rate reduced from 85% to 75-80%, with hold times increasing from 24 to 30-minute wait time. Yet, non-phone related requests for service have had a positive upsurge with same day response times to inquiries and concerns.

The public has significantly responded to the COVID19@cityofberkeley.info email box stood up May 1, 2020 to respond to COVID-19 inquires, concerns, enforcement complaints and rerouted email from Public Health division and the Public Health Officer. With the assistance from a public grant, 311 hired a staff person to focus primarily on COVID-19 email and COVID-19 Vaccine information, working closely with City of Berkeley Communications division. To date COVID-19 Information services has handled the following number of email communications:

- May 2020 - December 2020, correspondence processed: 7,247
- January 2021 - October 2021, correspondence processed: 14,602

311 continues to work as an essential service during COVID-19 with EOC and EOC/JIC and supports the EOC with weather-related EOC incidents.

Library

Throughout the course of the pandemic, the Berkeley Public Library (Library) has experienced operational impacts, launched innovative new programs and services, and prepared for reopening and beyond.

Operational Impacts

One significant operational impact related to the pandemic is staffing. At the end of 2019, the Library was in the process of recruiting a significant number of positions but plans had to change with the Shelter-in-Place order and subsequent hiring freeze. Despite having approximately 25 vacancies, the Library deployed almost 40% of all its staff positions to the City's EOC at the start of the pandemic.

The Library lost additional staff at the end of 2020 and into 2021, sometimes due to changes brought about by the pandemic, other times relating to regular retirements or unrelated conditions. These staffing limitations informed the speed and the extent to which the Library has been able to reopen for indoor service to the community. The Library is continuing its recruitment efforts, but given the substantial level of need coupled with a fixed capacity to recruit, this will take time.

Innovative New Programs and Services

Staff not actively involved in the EOC successfully innovated throughout the pandemic:

- Expanding the e-Library collections, e-resources and online user experience;
- Working on creating pandemic-specific policies, procedures and communications for our staff and patrons;
- Offering Outdoor Pickup of Library items, just 3 months after the pandemic and shelter-in-place began for 8 hours a day, 6 days a week (much longer service hours than other neighboring library systems), and
- Pivoting to offer virtual services such as:
 - An extremely well-utilized reference call hotline,
 - A program for personalized reading recommendations an expanded books-by-mail program, and
 - Virtual programming.

The Library continued to offer extensive online programs into 2021, which were very well-received. Online access enabled the Library to expand its reach and facilitated rich participation of guests and panelists in varied events, including:

- Rainbow Sign Panel Discussion, exploring the history and significance of Berkeley's iconic Black Cultural Center;
- Teen Author Events, supporting the community's commitment to diverse subjects and genres;
- Children's Storytimes;
- Book clubs; and
- Educational Programs, ranging from ESL, to tech support, to Business Bootcamp.

Despite the popularity of online programs, feedback from the public suggested that people were excited for a return of in-person programs. Children's Librarian Michael Kwende pioneered the beginning of children's storytimes in Bateman Mall park near the Claremont branch, with other library locations soon following suit. Tarea Hall Pittman South launched a series of popular how-to programs outside in front of the Tool Lending Library, covering topics like bike repair, cooking, and gardening, and also hosted some outdoor vaccine clinics. Libraries have hosted outdoor dance performances, supporting the safe celebration of events like Latinx/Hispanic Heritage month.



Reopening and Beyond

Two staff teams worked to plan for reopening buildings to the public, with the extensive help and support of City partners. These teams used guiding values to inform how the Library reopened buildings, by focusing on:

- Centering of staff and patron safety,
- Ensuring sustainability with current staffing levels,

- Offering a variety of valued services across locations,
- Supporting equity by providing access to services needed by marginalized communities, and
- Emphasizing access by maintaining the ability to serve people outside if they cannot come into the building.



While preparing for full reopening, in spring 2021, the Library launched a pilot program to lend laptop computers and mobile Wi-Fi hotspots to Library patrons for home use. This project enabled those without access to computers to connect to the internet to access resources. Through a grant from the Library Foundation, the Library purchased 50 Chromebook laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots to loan to patrons in sets that enabled them to access the kinds of tools they otherwise would have needed to come to the Library to access.

Part of the team's work applied the principle of equity and involved outreach to those in the community most in need of these resources, such as seniors, students, parents, lower-income households, and people experiencing housing insecurity. The team created a list of users that would be guaranteed access to these resources before they became available to the general public. The pilot has been extremely successful and the Library is working with the Foundation to expand the program.

The Library phased and staggered the reopening of its buildings to the public for additional services, starting with indoor express services at the North Library location in May. By August, all locations had some indoor services available.

A critical question facing the Library now is when to introduce indoor, in-person programming, given the approach of winter and the reality that the pandemic will continue for the foreseeable future. Patrons continually express the desire for a return to indoor programming and the Library is centering this feedback, while also considering staff bandwidth and capacity limits, staffing levels and service hours.

Parks, Recreation and Waterfront

The Parks, Recreation and Waterfront (PRW) Department has continued to both directly mobilize employees and adapt much of its operational work in response to the pandemic. The below sections describe the operational impacts on each of PRW's divisions.

Administrative Division

The Administrative Division continues to contribute to the COVID-19 response in a variety of ways, including:

- Implementing department policies and procedures for remote work.
- Continuing to support
 - Department staff with purchases relating to COVID-19 (e.g., sanitizer, disinfectant, masks, plastic screens, caution tape, signage, handwashing stations, portable toilets, laptops for remote work).
 - The EOC with time tracking and cost recovery efforts.
- Processing COVID cases and exposures.

Capital Projects Division

The Capital Projects Division has been processing projects and completing projects as scheduled. The Division has hosted multiple ribbon cuttings and groundbreakings in a COVID-safe manner, and continued to implement and enforce Health Officer standards related to construction.

Parks Division

The Parks Division has been focusing on making public spaces safe and clean during the pandemic, including continuing practices initiated in the first year of the pandemic, such as:

- Changing assigned cleanup routes to focus on areas with an increased number of people sleeping and living in parks.
- More frequently checking and emptying garbage cans which were filling more quickly with increased usage of parks and the waterfront.¹⁹

¹⁹ Garbage cans in Aquatic Park and the Waterfront are not serviced by Zero Waste.

Recreation Division

In the Recreation Division, COVID-related operational impacts included, adjusting and continuing operational responses from the initial year of the pandemic such as:

- Providing building supervision staff for COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination Sites.
- Implementing Summer Childcare/Camp/Afterschool Program from June 2020 through the present, following all Health Officer Orders with all operations exclusively outdoors. This also involved developing a COVID-19 Summer Camp/Afterschool Program staff manual and training program.
- Working with BUSD staff to provide priority scholarships to Berkeley's Excellent Academic Road to Success (BEARS) afterschool program participants.
- Implementing COVID-19 protocols for the Summer Lunch Program that was available at multiple locations throughout the City, such as grab-and-go lunches.
- Implementing Aquatics Programming in compliance with Health Officer Order restrictions.
- Providing information to the public about Health Officer Orders. Park monitors have been providing public health information, handing out face coverings, monitoring activity in parks, and tracking face covering usage.
- Making sure groups with field permits are complying with Health Officer Orders.
- Running modified special events such as "Movies in the Park", the Harvest Festival, Mother's Day celebration, and Halloween events.

Waterfront Division

During the past year, in response to COVID-19, the Waterfront Division has:

- Implemented a payment deferral policy for slipholders and live-aboards experiencing financial hardship due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- Added security cameras throughout berth parking lots to address increased crime since the initial Shelter-in-Place Order was issued.

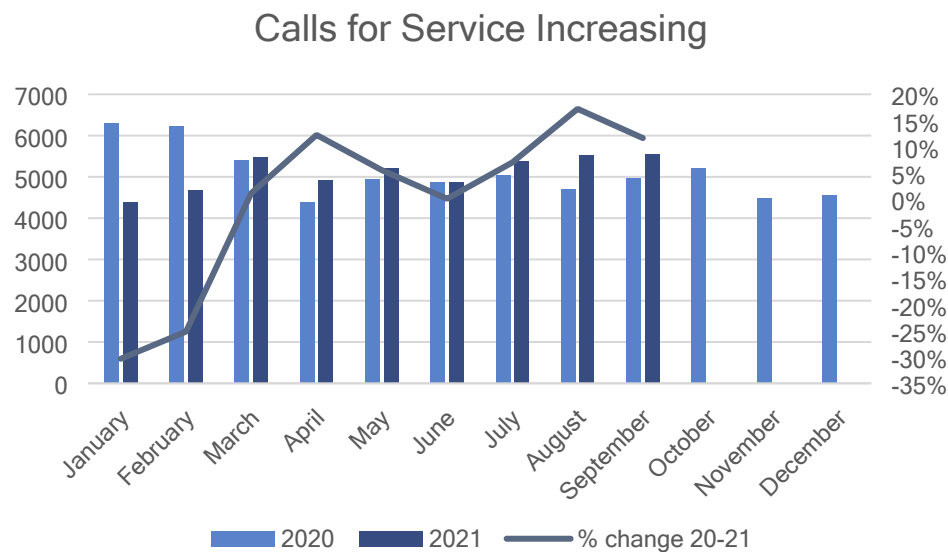
Planning and Development

Since October 2020, the Planning and Development Department has continued to pivot its operations to comply with the pandemic's social distancing requirements. Chiefly, the Department has made all permitting services available online and has reopened City offices for in-person visits. The Planning Department continues to maintain a hybrid system, providing both in-person and online services to a range of customers. Additionally, Planning Department staff worked closely with Finance and Information Technology Departments, in conjunction with a technology consultant and third-party vendors, to further expand online services to include:

- Submitting new building permit applications,
- Paying all building permit fees online (expanding to all zoning permit fees in 2022),
- Scheduling specific appointments at the Permit Service Center (PSC) online, avoiding lines and wait times,
- Using appointment scheduling software to provide advance appointments for in-person services and to manage walk-in customers by assigning a specified time to meet with a PSC staff member, minimizing wait times inside the PSC, and
- Accepting new Land Use project applications and offering other services online, many of which previously required in-office visits.

Police

As described in the previous report, the COVID-19 lockdown period changed the way the Police Department responded to calls, the way it handled arrests and how other essential functions were performed by department staff, some of whom worked remotely. A reduction in call volume²⁰ during the lockdown provided the opportunity to implement hybrid schedules to ensure safety protocols could be met while maintaining adequate resources to address public safety needs. The Police Department also explored utilizing technology to work remotely as well as to increase customer service delivery in a low- to no-contact manner. The Police Department was able to maintain continuity of service throughout the pandemic. Calls for service have continued to rise, as shown in the figure below, as conditions return to a new “normal”.



²⁰ Calls for service in calendar year 2020 were 60,799, down 20% from 2019. See https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2021/10_Oct/Documents/2021-10-19_Item_01_BPD_Annual_Report_pdf.aspx

Public Works

The Public Works Department's work on the COVID-19 response activities continues to include both Disaster Service Worker (DSW) deployments to the EOC, as well as many operations within the Department.

Within the EOC, Public Works DSWs had roles in the Plans, Management, Logistics, and Operations Support Sections. The Public Works Traffic Maintenance Unit arranged traffic controls for many testing site operations and vaccination clinics.

Additional Public Works COVID-19 related activities included:

- Facilitating in-depth cleaning and disinfectant after employee COVID-19 exposure;
- Upgrading 224 building air filters at 28 separate City buildings to MERV 13²¹. These 28 City buildings include all fire stations, Civic Center and neighboring City buildings such as 1947 Center St and the Public Safety Building, as well as other field locations such as Animal Control, Corporation Yard, and the Mental Health Clinic, among others;
- Working closely with Neighborhood Services to stand up the Horizon Transitional Village Shelter Program and the Safe Parking and Respite Kickstart (SPARK) Program, which provide 50 beds and 40 parking spots for recreational vehicles (RVs), respectively, at 742 Grayson Street; and
- Working closely with both Neighborhood Services and the Police Department on encampment and recreational vehicle (RV) cleanups.

²¹ Minimum Efficiency Reporting Values (MERV) is a rating system that indicates the ability of a filter to capture particles. See <https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/what-merv-rating-1>. Per the CDC's website, "CDC recommends using the highest efficiency ventilation filters possible, without having detrimental effects on overall HVAC system performance. ASHRAE has similar guidance; however, they recommend a minimum filtration efficiency target of MERV 13, provided there are not substantial negative impacts on the HVAC system performance and occupant comfort." See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html>.

Rent Stabilization Board

During the entire COVID-19 State of Emergency period, demand for Rent Stabilization Board (RSB) services increased significantly. As the legal landscape on eviction restrictions continued to shift in 2021, numerous community members and stakeholders contacted the RSB with more questions than usual due to the increasingly complex intersection between rental housing law and the ever-changing public health crisis. The RSB's Public Information Unit remains the exclusive unit in the City that has handled all inquiries regarding anti-displacement measures—most notably, the COVID-19 Emergency Response Ordinance (B.M.C. 13.110) –to provide tenants with COVID-related eviction protections.

From October 2020 through September 2021, the RSB refined its service delivery to better harmonize onsite and remote work activities. In order to more nimbly respond to the needs of the public, most RSB staff have maintained a hybrid onsite/remote work schedule. The RSB has met the challenges and uncertainty of this period by prioritizing transparency, clarity and fluidity in all aspects of the Department's work.

In response to COVID-19, the RSB continued to work closely with other departments on a variety of activities, including:

- Collaborating with the City Attorney's Office regarding anti-displacement laws over which the RSB has traditionally had exclusive domain,
- Communicating with Council regarding proposed changes that serve to strengthen various anti-displacement proposals,
- Continuing to update and maintain current information regarding various State laws that affect rental housing, particularly related to eviction protections; and laws that allow for continued teleconferencing during a time when in-person meetings remain a risk, and
- Consulting with the IT Department to best utilize the City's network infrastructure in conjunction with a virtual phone system (Grasshopper) to maximize functionality while protecting staff's personal devices that were also used for remote work.

The RSB pivoted and innovated to address the many operational impacts stemming from the pandemic, including:

- Maintaining and regularly updating COVID-related information online, including a COVID-19 Fact Sheet and a centralized list of resources for Berkeley landlords and tenants,
- Conducting multiple webinars to educate and update the public on rental housing issues with an emphasis on COVID-related impacts,
- Installing an access control system at the RSB's public entrance to better regulate and comply with the maximum occupancy levels recommended by Cal/OSHA,
- Implementing a virtual phone system (Grasshopper) to allow staff to more effectively provide services remotely,
- Expanding contactless payment options by installing a secure drop box to enable drop off of check payments at any time,
- Continuing to provide remote hearings to allow greater flexibility to parties and enable staff to more effectively present exhibits in video format, and
- Conducting all public meetings remotely.

Other fiscal and personnel impacts include:

- Increased expenditures for hardware purchases needed to accommodate the hybrid work environment (14 laptops and 13 multimedia monitors), and ongoing subscription fees for online platforms (Zoom and Grasshopper).
- Four full-time employees have resigned during this period, which necessitated ongoing redistribution of work and management structure.
- Due to supply chain issues, multiple staff are still waiting on hardware (laptops, multimedia monitors) needed to effectively perform remote work.

BERKELEY MOVES FORWARD

When the full EOC was mobilized in March 2020, the City's COVID work was an emergency response. The City worked across departments and together with partner agencies under the EOC structure. The structure ensured our ability to effectively monitor new information about the virus and its impacts to help City leaders make difficult decisions. The EOC structure also enabled the City to quickly ramp up new services to the community, such as providing COVID testing and vaccines, and setting up and maintaining respite sites for the unhoused. The EOC structure also helped the City to communicate consistent and accurate information with the community about the virus and how to stay safe.

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, the City's pandemic response has evolved. Departments are integrating COVID-19 norms into their day-to-day practices, structures, and policies. Many of our initial questions about COVID - *How does it spread? Who is at greatest risk?* - have been answered. Problems that were once emergencies, requiring new connections, contracts, and support from all levels of government, are now day-to-day practice. Working together, the City as a whole has used its experience to develop tools, processes, and connections that will help to manage the ongoing demands of this virus.

The City's response must continue to evolve: at this juncture, evolution means shifting the organization's work out of the EOC structure and into a sustainable, department-led effort. The City must be ready to continue service to our community in an equitable fashion, even after the emergency response demobilizes.

The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (HHCS), oversees public health in Berkeley and has provided expert guidance and leadership to help the City navigate the pandemic. HHCS is also the natural home to lead and coordinate ongoing activities to respond to COVID-19 in the community. To that end, HHCS has created a new COVID-19 Response Unit within the Office of the Director. This included hiring additional staff using COVID-19 grant funding as well as integrating COVID-19 policies into health inspections going forward. HHCS will continue to support other City departments in managing COVID-19 for public-facing programs.

All departments, including HHCS, continue to normalize safety measures and precautions which support community and employee safety. Safety measures include continued staff and public masking in City facilities, the City's employee vaccination mandate, and ensuring the ongoing availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) and sanitization supplies. Community members see these measures in action when they come to City buildings to receive services, such as from the Permit Service Center, or when they work with City staff in the field, whether its receiving emergency services or participating in a recreation or childcare program.

As the City moves into this new phase of the pandemic, it must continue to respond to and mitigate health inequities that have been further illuminated by COVID-19. To address this, HHCS is implementing an equity-focused campaign to reduce disease spread and address additional health disparities in Berkeley. The approach will focus on providing targeted education and outreach materials, as well as access to treatment and prevention for Berkeley's most vulnerable populations including people of color, the elderly, and community members with disabilities.

As Berkeley transitions into this new phase, it is well-positioned to shift out of the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue to build a healthy city. Our recovery from COVID-19 involves the full City team and all community members. The integration of COVID-19 into the City's daily work not only keeps all of us safe, but also provides a solid foundation to continue to improve community health and safety as we move into the future.

APPENDIX: POEMS OF THE EOC

Throughout the pandemic, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Director, Deputy City Manager Paul Buddenhagen, would close the briefing meeting at the end of an operational period by reading a poem. These poems often reflected the mood of the EOC, providing solace, empathy, and sometimes, hope. The list of poems is included below.

- *What Have I Learned* by Gary Snyder
- *To Be of Use* by Marge Piercy
- *The Real Prayers Are No the Words, But the Attention that Comes First* by Mary Oliver
- *Perhaps the World Ends Here* by Joy Harjo
- *Opera Singer* by Ross Gay
- *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou
- *The Writer* by Richard Wilbur
- *A Center* by Ha Jin
- *This Is Just to Say* by William Carlos Williams
- *Hummingbirds* by Mary Oliver
- *Mr. Grumpedump's Song* by Shel Silverstein
- *A Poet and His Baby Son* James Weldon Johnson
- *Mother to Son* by Langston Hughes
- *Using Black to Paint Light: Walking Through a Matisse Exhibit Thinking About the Arctic and Matthew Henderson* by Robin Coste Lewis
- *The Gift* by Li-Yong Lee
- *The Pandemic Halo* by Jim Moore
- *One Hundred Love Sonnets: XVII* by Pablo Neruda
- *Insomnia and the Seven Steps to Grace* by Joy Harjo
- *October* by Louise Glück
- *Kindness* by Naomi Shihab Nye
- *Those Winter Sundays* by Robert Hayden
- *Bear in Mind* by John Martin
- *Fire and Ice* by Robert Frost
- *Whatif* by Shel Silverstein
- *Happiness* by Raymond Carver
- *Faith is a Fine Invention* and *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* by Emily Dickinson
- *I Too* by Langston Hughes

- *From Blossoms* by Li-Young Lee
- *Ode to Herb Kent* by Jamila Woods
- *Poem in Praise of Menstruation* by Lucille Clifton
- *Invitation* by Mary Oliver
- *March* by James Wright
- *Bent to the Earth* by Blas Manuel De Luna
- *The Greatest Thing Since Sliced Bread is Unsliced Bread* by Paul Gillie