

# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Local COVID-19 Relief Tops \$200 Million; County Budget Outlook Positive As Economy Shows Signs of Improvement**

### **Board of Supervisors Gets First Look at 2021-23 Children's Budget**

**Redwood City** – The County of San Mateo has channeled more than \$218 million to local relief efforts since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

The funds have put food on the table for individuals and families struggling with job losses or illness, linked students with their schools during distance learning and kept people in their homes.

“An unprecedented crisis calls for an unprecedented response,” said Don Horsley, president of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. “Taken together, the relief funds from local, state and federal sources as well as the outpouring of donations is a staggering reflection of our commitment that no one should get left behind in this pandemic.”

The scope of the [relief effort](#) is outlined in the County's [Mid-Year Budget Update](#), which provides a snapshot of the County's budget outlook for the current 2021-22 fiscal year. Relief efforts include:

- With recovery funds, over 284 additional [public WiFi](#) sites were set up to which more than 82,000 people have connected, an average of 13,234 a month.
- Extensive outreach leading to nearly 9,500 applications for the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program.
- Nearly 1,000 low-income seniors have had five meals a week delivered to their homes since July 2021.

“Our residents and businesses have faced financial hardships, loss of loved ones and tremendous uncertainty and stress in their lives,” County Manager Mike Callagy said. “While we continue to endure more uncertainty, we must take a moment to acknowledge the way this county, and more importantly, this community, has come together to respond to the most critical needs of those most impacted.”

The update provides a gaze into the challenges faced by the County as the pandemic escalated. At the same time, the report offers reassurance the County, as the primary provider of local safety-net services, remains on solid financial footing.

The County, according to the Mid-Year Budget Update, expects to end the current fiscal year on June 30, 2022, with \$153 million in fund balance, or funds budgeted but not spent. This is due in large part to the deferral of planned capital improvement projects, staffing vacancies and unanticipated state funds. Significantly, the projections do not include changes in negotiated labor agreements, which will impact the year-end budget.

Callagy characterized the County as in “good financial standing” thanks to planning and sound decisions by the Board of Supervisors, which voted at its meeting today to accept the Mid-Year Budget Update.

The state of the County budget reflects in many ways the state of the local economy and its impact on residents. The report notes:

- Sales tax revenue is expected to fall by \$35 million this year from the previous year. Travel and trade at San Francisco International Airport, which generate a significant portion of the County’s sales tax revenue, plunged in the early stages of the pandemic but is slowly recovering.
- Property tax revenues are expected to rise by 4.7 percent this year as the sale of homes has increased during the pandemic. San Mateo County, however, remains “the most unaffordable area in the Bay Area,” according to the First-Time Buyer Housing Affordability Index.
- Rental costs in San Mateo County have continued to increase significantly over the past seven years. From 2015 to 2021, the fair market rent of a one-bedroom apartment has increased from \$1,635 to \$2,631. Nearly 25,000 renters in San Mateo County – 8.9 percent – do not have access to an affordable home costing less than half their monthly income.

Separately, at the same meeting the Board of Supervisors accepted the 2021-23 [Children, Youth and Families Budget](#), a 67-page dive into programs and services and the impact of those on the county’s 205,000 children and youth.



“We know the earlier we invest in our children, the better,” Callagy said. “Evidence from the National Bureau of Economic Research shows that a dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs, especially in our most vulnerable communities, results in \$7.30 in benefits.”

The Fiscal Year 2021-22 Adopted Budget allocates \$375.1 million for programs that directly benefit children, youth, and families. Following approval of the County’s budget, staff from the Office of Budget and Performance analyze all programs and services that benefit these populations in an attempt to quantify the investments in and the outcomes of those investments.

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