

# Memorandum



DATE August 6, 2020

CITY OF DALLAS

TO Honorable Members of the Ad Hoc Committee on COVID-19 Recovery and Assistance

SUBJECT **Update on City of Dallas Ongoing Efforts to Address COVID-19 Health Access Disparities**

On Thursday May 28, 2020, Chair Thomas requested a special-called meeting as a follow-up from the Monday, May 11, 2020, Workforce, Education, and Equity Committee briefing where the Office of Equity and Office of Resilience addressed COVID-19 critical needs and equitable health access. During this meeting, it was requested that a monthly briefing memo with updates on the City of Dallas's continuous efforts be provided. The following information highlights the ongoing efforts to address COVID-19 health access disparities:

- **Testing:** In an effort to offer expanded testing capacity, PCCI identified COVID-19 “hotspots” and the City of Dallas, Dallas County, and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) have opened an additional drive through testing site at Mountain View College, located in 75211. Planning is underway to open additional sites in hotspots, specifically in 75216 and the surrounding areas. TDEM also assisted in bringing a “testing blitz” to Paul Quinn College from July 25<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, during which 2,321 individuals were tested. Testing operations at the University of Dallas ceased on July 31<sup>st</sup> and were resumed on August 3<sup>rd</sup> at Eastfield College. Parkland supported walkup and drive through test sites continue to operate, with plans to open an additional test site at Los Barrios Unidos (Singleton). The City and County expect to enter a contract with Project Unity to begin supporting five additional testing sites. When these additional sites are brought online, our total weekly testing capability will increase from 15,420 to 17,870.
- **Eviction Support:** The Office of Fair Housing and Human Rights is developing COVID Evictions Legal Support to continue mitigation of evictions in the City of Dallas. The Eviction Assistance Initiative (EAI) is being established to provide legal support to prevent evictions and assist in preventing homelessness. The initiative will assist vulnerable Dallas tenants who are facing evictions and possible homelessness due to financial hardships brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing a Request for Applications (RFA), the City is seeking non-profit legal service organizations, law firms, or law school legal clinics to provide legal support and representation to residential tenants who may face loss of housing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The successful proposal will contain the elements of direct legal representation, counseling, training and education. The training and education component will include community wide webinars on Texas Landlord and Tenant laws and protections, as well as City of Dallas and federal eviction protections. The Counseling component will include mediation services to resolve issues with landlords including the assisting with the development of payment plans. CARES Act funding in the amount of \$500,000 will be utilized for this purpose.

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- **Face Covering Distribution:** The Office of Resilience has prepared a second round of face covering distributions that includes touchless thermometers. The face covering packets include five single use face coverings and the information cards previously used. The touchless thermometers were a donation from the State of Texas to cities for distribution into the community. In collaboration with the Office of Emergency Management, it was decided that this round of distribution will focus on small businesses, Minority/Women Business Enterprises (M/WBE), religious organizations, and childcare facilities. A form was distributed with the assistance of Office of Community Care and Office of Business Diversity specific to childcare facilities and M/WBE, respectively.
- **Community Outreach:** Communications, Outreach, and Marketing (COM) created a bilingual COVID-19 resources utility bill insert for printed Dallas Water Utilities' August statements expected to reach more than 200,000 households and added the COVID-19 resource phone number and website to all print and digital statements this month. The COVID-19 Outreach Toolkit was updated with new bilingual messages and graphics promoting the new Eastfield testing site. COM also increased the frequency of bilingual messaging and graphics via social media.
- **Food Security:** The Office of Innovation and the Food Equity Working Group are involved in a number of initiatives surrounding food equity:
  - **"Safer at Home" Fresh Food Kits:** The Office of Innovation is currently working with other City departments to develop and deploy fresh food kits that serve as resource boxes containing healthy food options. In the future, we are looking to include other items such as masks and hand sanitizer. These kits will be targeted toward highly impacted zip codes and high-risk individuals to help them avoid exposure to COVID-19 while seeking essential resources, as well as providing critical wellness supplies in a time of crisis.
  - **COVID-19 Symptom Tracker North Texas Food Bank Fundraiser:** The Office of Innovation recently launched a partnership with Citi to add a fundraising component to the COVID-19 Symptom Tracker. The Symptom Tracker is a survey tool that helps gather data about COVID-19 in Dallas over time and helps researchers to anticipate where critical resources might be needed. Citi is providing a matching donation for each completed survey response to provide meals through the North Texas Food Bank – up to 15,000 meals total.
  - **Food Insecurity Relief Request for Applications:** The Office of Community Care, with input from the Office of Innovation, is in the process of releasing an RFA to seek proposals for contactless food delivery for COVID positive and vulnerable populations in Dallas using CARES Act funding.
- **Digital Divide:**
  - **Short-Term:**
    - **Cisco Donation/Demonstration Projects:** The equipment is en route, and staff are currently working on finalizing the circuits for installation. Staff expects that the signal extenders to go live on August 21<sup>st</sup>. The Webex DX80 monitors that were donated to assist in facilitating telehealth will be

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available for use once the libraries are opened to the public. There is no cost to the City for this project.

○ **Medium-Term**

- **Request for Application for Digital Navigators:** The Office of Resilience is finalizing an RFA for Digital Navigators for non-profits to serve as subrecipients for the purpose of administering a Digital Navigators Program within the Dallas city limits to residents who have been impacted by COVID-19 and who are low income. Digital navigators provide individualized or small group assistance to the community who need affordable home internet service, affordable internet-capable devices, and/or coaching in introductory digital skills in order to become effective home internet users. Funding for this program is from the Coronavirus Relief Fund and must be expended by December 31, 2020.
- **Chromebooks and Hotspots:** The Office of Resilience, Dallas Public Library, Information Technology Services, and Dallas Park and Recreation are currently developing a plan to purchase Chromebooks to circulate through the library system and pair with hotspots with the intent to have them in circulation no later than end of September 2020. Funding for this purchase is from the Coronavirus Relief Fund and must be expended by December 31, 2020.
- **Demonstration Projects Workshop:** Staff conducted an internal workshop that included Resilience, Innovation, Transportation, and Public Works to ideate potential projects to bridge the digital divide with the criteria listed below. The list of projects is currently being developed by staff and will be finalized in the next two weeks; all of the items listed on this update have been included in the overall list.
  - Implementation Timeline
  - Project Cost
  - Funding Sources
  - Household Impact
  - Equity Locations

○ **Long-Term**

- **Telecommunications Consultant:** In conjunction with the Internet for All Coalition, staff is finalizing a contract to engage an independent telecommunications consultant to support the City and School District partners to conduct a technical feasibility study for developing a point-to-multipoint private cellular network to connect students in their homes. All viable solutions and options will be considered based on costs, performance, and sustainability to meet the needs of the City's residents and the District's students as each continue transitioning to remote working and distance learning. Staff anticipates bringing this item for City Council consideration during the August 26 City Council voting agenda. Initial funding for the consultant is from the Coronavirus Relief Fund and must be expended by December 31, 2020.
- **Request for Developer Interest for Fiber Optic or Wireless Broadband Network:** The City of Dallas is issuing a Request for Developer Interest (RDI) to attract highly qualified firms interested in entering into an Agreement to design and install fiber optic or wireless broadband network infrastructure at minimal and/or no cost to the City of Dallas by utilizing the

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City's existing facilities (i.e. storm sewer, traffic signals, light poles, parks, buildings, public right-of way, and other city owned facilities) for internal City operations, with the possibility of allowing public access. The focus of the RDI will be to seek a design and implementation solution to utilize state of the art technology needed to meet the current and future technological needs allowing for the City of Dallas to utilize enhanced market opportunities. A fiber optic network or wireless broadband network distribution base stations need to be geographically designed to leverage existing City Assets as needed to circumference the City of Dallas' 386 square miles and having capabilities to achieve redundant coverage to end user nodes.

- **Transportation Access:** To enhance mobility options within the Inland port area, the North Central Texas Council of Governments has applied for the BUILD Grant to improve multimodal access and connectivity issues in and around the port. The Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development, or BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant program, provides an opportunity for the U.S. Department of Transportation to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives. Previously known as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grants, Congress has dedicated nearly \$7.9 billion for eleven rounds of National Infrastructure Investments to fund projects that have a significant local or regional impact.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have any questions about these efforts.



M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira  
Chief of Equity and Inclusion

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|----|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| c: | Honorable Mayor and City Council Members                   | Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager                                          |
|    | T.C. Broadnax, City Manager                                | Nadia Chandler Hardy, Assistant City Manager                                 |
|    | Chris Caso, City Attorney                                  | Dr. Eric A. Johnson, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services |
|    | Mark Swann, City Auditor                                   | M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer                                  |
|    | Biliera Johnson, City Secretary                            | Laila Alequresh, Chief Innovation Officer                                    |
|    | Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge                     | Directors and Assistant Directors                                            |
|    | Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager |                                                                              |
|    | Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager                 |                                                                              |
|    | Jon Fortune, Assistant City Manager                        |                                                                              |