

# Sebastopol

## Community Vitality Project: Report on Accomplishments, Current Actions

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### Overview of Community Vitality Project

CoMission has engaged with the City of Sebastopol on the "Community Vitality Project" as outlined in the 2019 city plans; however, since the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, CoMission has swiftly shifted their focus and priorities to address the new challenges and face the resiliency demands of the community, not only as they were prior to COVID-19, but especially in the wake of the pandemic.

CoMission will continue to reach out to the Sebastopol community, comprehensively using outreach and engagement tactics ranging from community meetings to public surveys, proactively eliciting participation from our local business, nonprofit, and government stakeholders. CoMission's work is intentionally performed in an inclusive and collaborative way, helping to support and nurture existing and aspiring leaders to organize for a common vision.

The comprehensive community engagement portion of the program began on May 5, 2020, allowing CoMission to rapidly engage with stakeholders and effectively assess and respond to the needs of the community. We are anticipating to be in Shelter in Place in some form through 2021 and are hopeful that a vaccine will speed up this timeline. Clearly our community vitality efforts will continue to be focused on Pandemic survival and recovery efforts.

### Project Success Stories

#### Business Support

CoMission brought Community Vitality and pandemic response efforts to the local Business Council and is actively participating in the council. Here are some of the highlights of what CoMission accomplished:

- Business Council
  - Facilitated regular meetings with local business leaders to help consistent and productive communication, collaboration, and visioning
  - Conducted Sip Shop Savor through the month of July
    - Canvassed numerous businesses in person, one on one, to promote the campaign

- Hosted Business Webinars on COVID safety regulations and improving online presence and sales.
- Holiday Marketing Campaign
  - Created and placed window cards outlining business offerings via a door to door canvass
  - Created handouts for business owners to expand their offerings and online sales
  - Worked to anchor Townsy in the Business Council and with the Chamber of Commerce
- Direct business support
  - Coached numerous businesses in navigating pandemic challenges and strategies
  - Helped with applications and administration of PPP Administration & Local Loan Availability
  - Provided analysis and guidance of local and state health orders for safe operation
- Sebastopol City Loan Program Development at \$150,000
  - Conducted a business survey to determine need
  - Promoted and solicited loan availability to local business owners
  - Designed, promoted and administered the application process
- Worked directly with the Chamber of Commerce to advance and develop their communications and outreach during the pandemic
- Assisted with Chamber of Commerce Newsletter Development
- Provided input to Public Works Department on their banner program
- Conducted direct outreach to local businesses and non profits to identify support needed and offer available resources
- Worked with local press to promote Sebastopol's businesses
- Worked to identify goals for 2021 as a Council, prioritizing our combined efforts

## Community Benefit Organization Support

CoMission has actively and collaboratively worked to strengthen and support Sebastopol community organizations. Here are some of the highlights of what CoMission accomplished:

- CBO Council
  - Developed collaboration of CBO leaders
  - Developed public facing ongoing monthly newsletter highlighting CBO events, fundraisers, and job postings
  - Recruited speakers to help the CBO council with capacity building
- Regular engagement with community groups and residents to support maximum collaboration
- Establishment of healthy, ongoing communications and unification of efforts
- Conducted visioning sessions to explore what the future of our town could look like
- Solicited individuals ready to volunteer for our CBO's and who want more information on their offerings
- Worked to identify goals for 2021 as a Council, prioritizing our combined efforts

## Residential Support

CoMission has conducted a community needs assessment that closed in January, 2021. The resulting report has been submitted to the City Council and demonstrates the common concerns and desires of the residents of Sebastopol with regard to the local economy, pandemic impacts, public access, and emergency preparedness. We also solicited, isolated and aggregated answers to these same questions from residents of 95472 but not city limits residents in order to study shopper's tendencies. Here are some of the highlights of what CoMission accomplished:

- Residential Community Survey
  - The purpose of this survey is to identify impacts of the pandemic on the residential community, the local economy, public access issues, and emergency preparedness
  - Provided a resource guide to those who identified as food-insecure on the survey
- Directed residents looking to help build community vitality to local business campaigns and Community Benefit Organizations
- Mobilized plant starts for those residents in need of assistance growing sustenance

## Community Surveys Conducted

CoMission conducted a series of surveys in order to identify needs of both the business and community at large to understand common challenges and create potential solutions. These surveys were conducted throughout 2020 and continued into 2021. Here are some of the highlights of what CoMission accomplished:

- Business and Community Benefits Survey
  - The purpose of this survey is to identify common issues businesses have been experiencing related to the pandemic and offer potential solutions to identified challenges.
  - CoMission designed, distributed, administered, and developed and presented the results of this survey. The report of this survey is available to the public on our website
- Business Community MicroSurvey
  - The purpose of this survey is to identify common needs in the business community and identify who needs micro-loans, backed by the City.
  - CoMission designed, distributed, administered, and developed and presented the results of this survey to the full City Council and public.
- Residential Community Survey
  - The purpose of this survey is to identify impacts of the pandemic on the residential community, the local economy, public access issues, and emergency preparedness
  - CoMission designed, distributed, administered, and followed up with individuals asking for more information on food security, emergency preparedness, and to receive the City's newsletter. The report of this survey has been made available to the public and is linked on our website

# Current Work Plan for 2021

## Continue Current Programming

Our efforts at organizing Community Vitality during a pandemic are paying off. Some of our primary efforts towards bringing people together to collaborate for the greater good are gelling. Thus, per the direction of the City Manager, we are maintaining the following existing work plan:

- **Maintain the work flow** of meetings and actions already in process
- **Take fluid direction from City Manager** to increase community vitality and resiliency as part of the local pandemic response
- **Provide regular reports to the City Council** outlining actions to take to support pandemic response and community vitality
- **Watch for and research local, state, federal and private grants and loans** that are available for local businesses, non profits, and residents to help inform our community of these opportunities and to bring funding to Sebastopol
- **Facilitate monthly Leadership Councils of the following interest groups:**
  - **Business Leadership**
    - Ongoing support: Maintain action list of items to bring to the City Council, such as the loan program and facade improvement efforts. Speed up feedback loops of proposed solutions to identified problems. Work to support a unified town in look and feel.
  - **Community Benefit Organizations (CBO's)**
    - Ongoing support: Lead dialogue between our CBO's. Maintain a monthly e-newsletter aggregating top programs for local CBO's in order that organizations can cross promote each other. Bring a guest speaker to each monthly CBO meeting to support capacity building, fundraising and provide experts on other requested subject matters.
  - **Service Organization Council**
    - Ongoing support (new for 2021): Continue to facilitate our local service clubs' regular dialogue with each other, support efforts to take inventory of needs for local Community Benefits Groups and individual service providers in order to assist in attracting volunteers and funds for the needs. Gear up towards a May 2021 public Summit where we showcase needs and resources, aligning service clubs behind a common public facing campaign.

## Expanded Offerings for 2021

### Service Organization Council, May 2021 Summit

There are three primary expansions of service that CoMission can facilitate for the City through 2021. **The first is in process, and it is to develop a third Community Council, a Service Organizational Council.** As mentioned above, we have a successful Business Council and Community Benefits Organization Council which meets monthly. We have launched a third council composed of service organizations, such as the

Rotary clubs, Kiwanis, the Lions Club, Masons, 20-30 Club, The Sebastopol Grange, Soroptimists, local church representation, and interested individuals who are ready to volunteer and raise money for our local non profits and individuals serving the community. This new Service Organizing Council is being co-led by Councilmember Diana Rich. At the time of the Study Session we will have conducted three organizing meetings and are well on our way to a stable working council, with monthly meetings and a common project.

The Service Organization Council has identified opportunities to collaborate, including how to address local needs and how best to engage with other groups wanting to address local needs. Our expanded Council is currently taking an inventory of assets we have in the community, and needs of the CBO's and individuals who serve the greater community. The goal is that specific projects would be chosen for fulfillment based upon need, available resources, willingness of participants, and an eye towards beginning with projects that are bite sized and capable of being completed in a reasonable amount of time.

Each Service Organization would still fulfill its own unique mission as it sees fit, but as envisioned this collaborative council would allow for a sharing of resources and double checking that the greatest community needs are being met, eliminating potential duplicative efforts. Furthermore, it would serve as a recruitment tool to keep our local service organizations robust and filled with local organizers ready to help our community. The goal of this council is to host a Community Summit in May, leveraging a PR campaign to promote the unified local effort, and help channel the enormous generosity of our entire Sebastopol Zip code to help local groups and individuals that are fulfilling community needs for Sebastopol. The Inventory and Summit is envisioned as an annual event.

## Leveraging Existing Contacts To Do More Faster

**The second expanded offering is to continue utilizing the data collected from our recently completed Residential Survey and put it to good use.** We have begun this effort in the following ways:

- *Help people get the food security they require.* From the Survey: **“If you would like to receive information on food assistance programs please provide an email address here”** to which 51 respondents left their email address.
  - CoMission put together a one page local food resources guide and sent it to all recipients who indicated a need for greater food security.
- *Provide Business Council leadership with the open ended survey answers on how to help consumers more easily choose to frequent Sebastopol businesses. Study the data with them.* From the Survey: In a direct approach, we posed the open-ended question, **“What could local businesses do to make supporting the local economy a better option for you?”** There are 568 individual and unique responses providing important insights into consumer attitudes toward our local business community.
- *Expand and silo the recipients list of our CoMission newsletter to provide more specific information to the reader.* For example, from the Survey: Additionally, the question was asked, **“If you would like to receive periodic information on local nonprofits as well as volunteer opportunities, please list your email here:”** to which 245 respondents provided their email address.
- *Help expand the City’s outreach efforts of their official city E-Newsletter by expanding the recipient’s list.* From the Survey: Additionally the question was asked, **“If you would like to receive the City’s weekly**

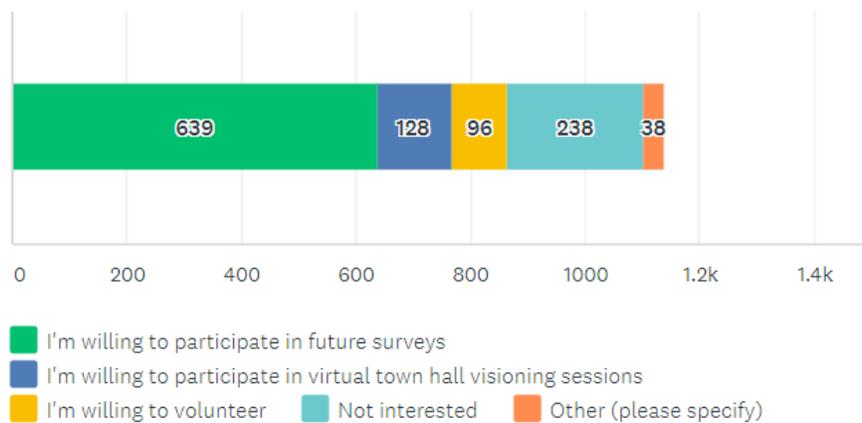
**email of upcoming meetings and resources please provide an email address here**” to which 270 respondents provided their email address.

- *Help willing individuals better receive emergency preparedness information and organize their neighbors for emergencies.* From the Survey: **“If you would like more information on the Cities Emergency Response planning or if you're willing to organize neighbors and our community for emergency preparedness please provide your email here:”** As a result, 91 individuals responded listing their email and hope to receive emergency preparedness information.

## Future Community Surveys As Needed and Directed

**The third expanded offering is to survey quarterly, asking some of the same questions and new questions at the guidance of the City Manager.**

Surveys provide us with valuable information on consumer trends, community needs, and real time answers to some of the pandemics most difficult questions. In our Residential Survey we included a question on how and whether respondents would like to participate in future surveys. The responses were quite impressive. Of those who responded to the question, “How would you like to participate in the Sebastopol Community Vitality Project” nearly 70 percent indicated that they would be willing to participate in future surveys. 14 percent indicated that they would like to participate in virtual town hall visioning sessions, and another 10 percent indicated their willingness to volunteer with the project.



- As requested, we can drill into this number with the City Manager and target city residents versus 95472 non-city residents. Both data sets are very important to understand consumer trends and needs. We can also target for food security, emergency preparedness, or volunteer opportunities.
- Should the City Council and City Manager request surveys more less/frequently we will have to adjust the budget accordingly.

## Conclusion

Today's Study Session is to review what work has been effective, and that we wish to continue through this leg of the contract. It is also to explore how the City Council wishes us to continue our work in the next leg.

### Here are some questions to help prompt the Study Session:

1. What is working well now that you would like to see continue regarding:
  - a. The Business, CBO, and Service Organizations Councils? Is there a fourth council that should be formed? A fifth to consider?
2. Is there interest in a councilmember or two joining on the monthly Business Council or new one?
3. How would you like us to utilize surveys/questionnaires moving forward regarding:
  - a. Collecting email addresses by interest/need?
  - b. 95472 in the City vs the expanded zip code?
  - c. frequency?
4. Do you have any new ideas to add to the running list of items to find organizers for?
  - a. Examples; filling business vacancies after the pandemic; garden box programs installed for city-residents in need; community volunteer coordinator or website with real-time opportunities; helping parklets continue, etc.
5. At the direction of the City Manager we are preparing a subsequent Scope of work to continue our work. What are your priorities for this proposal?
  - a. What new things would like to add to our work plan moving forward?
  - b. Are there items you would like to take off of our work plan or adjust?
  - c. What are essential items?

We at CoMission appreciate the collaborative partnership with the City of Sebastopol to achieve greater community vitality. Despite all of the hurdles and difficulties the pandemic creates, we are making marked improvements to our local quality of life. The City is installing parklets and launching loan programs, like minded people are organizing for the greater good, and we are modernizing communications. Even so, there is significant suffering. Many businesses may not make it, and much of our contract has been a practice in triage.

Community Vitality is always at the core of what this contract effort is about. What this means is that in the times of plenty we can celebrate and save, and in the times of need we must look out for the less fortunate. We will make it through this difficult time. Utilizing tried and true organizing practices, we will work to establish foundational councils that last well into the future and strengthen all of Sebastopol. Survey results will always inform further positive actions we can take to help Sebastopol towards increased community vitality and pandemic recovery. With an eye towards the next PPP type program, and other federal and state funding opportunities, we will do our best to bring home financial resources as we have done over the last year, and to provide those who can give a chance to help those in need faster.

# Report from the City of Sebastopol

The subsequent report lists actions the City Manager identified with each City department to follow up on the last CoMission survey.

- The City Council and City Manager want to make it easier for people to have access to the public process and make sure that all voices are heard
- The City Manager conducted three meetings with staff to identify a list of actions to accomplish this goal
- Included are:
  - Actions that have taken place, such as follow up communications to interest groups identified in the survey
  - Actions that will take place, such as continuing to highlight grant opportunities for landlords, tenants, and businesses

For Discussion at Meeting with CoMission  
Department information/comments from Survey Results:

City Administration:

Civic engagement/constant contact subscription for items of interest from public  
Review of Conversion of Web site for Latino population  
Review of Conversion of Documents for Latino population  
Translation services for meetings  
Ask the Slow Cat – Public Interaction  
Review of ways to increase diversity on Commission, Boards and Committees  
Researching engagement of young adults, renters, lower-income residents and people from ethnic communities in public meetings  
Return to snail mail as well as social media

Fire Department:

Skip Jirrels, our Public Safety Outreach Coordinator, and myself are working with Craig Litwin and Andrew Longman of CoMission regarding Emergency Preparedness. There were 91 individuals that responded to the survey with their email addresses in hopes to receive emergency preparedness information. We will be receiving the email list from Andrew and reaching out to those that expressed interest. We will also be adding their names and email addresses to our Map Your Neighborhood (MYN) Program mailing list.

There was a request from some of the participants of the survey to receive instructions on how to open an electric garage door during a power outage and needing to evacuate. Our recommendation will be for those interested in learning how to open their garage door is to contact a local garage door company for proper instructions. These garage door company's are also offering to install a battery backup system to provide sufficient power to open their door during a power shutoff. The City of Sebastopol should not be offering advice as this can become a liability issue. All new electric garage doors being installed today will come with a battery backup system. We would rather show how to turn off gas and electric to their homes as instructed and taught during the MYN classes and training.

Lastly, I am working with the County DEM and GIS Departments to finalize our first pass of an Evacuation Map for the City of Sebastopol. We will be using our two State Highways, 12 and 116, as our 4 dividing sections of the City (Zone 1 thru 4). Within each grid or zone, sub-grids will be developed to help assist in an orderly evacuation of our City (Zone 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, etc).

Planning Department:

concepts and projects implemented in Planning in relation to CoMission survey results:

- Review Planning Commission composition for public participation (to Council Feb 2, 2021)
- Highlight Tenant resources on City Website (both Covid page and Planning Dept's housing resources link page, completed: <https://ci.sebastopol.ca.us/City-Government/Departments-Services/Planning/Housing-Resources>)
- Work with CDC to understand resources available (in CTAC, City and Town Advisory Committee, capacity) and continue to post
- Continue to highlight grants and other Covid relief available to both residential and commercial tenants, landlords, and businesses (much of this info comes from Sonoma County Econ Dev Board weekly calls Planning Director attends)

Administrative Services:

staff has been trying to work with citizens regarding payment for their utility or BL if there are any financial hardship came about. We offer payment plans and work with citizens to spread out their payments as a way to help with financial hardship.

Police Department:

1. Increase social media presence through Facebook, Instagram, etc. promoting programs in the department (once we are out of the pandemic) such as citizen police academy, lunch/coffee with a cop, midnight sports, community forum opportunities.
2. Revise and enhance current web page containing more pertinent information, direct contact numbers for all staff, statistical information, etc., to the department and issues in our community
3. Working with developers on two different application programs which will provide direct feedback to both the department and community. I anticipate both of the programs to be discussed during Mr. Threet’s presentation and FY 21/22budget meetings
  - a. Openpolicing.org – a platform based developed program helping law enforcement agencies better engage their communities, build trust and obtain real-time public feedback as to how we are doing as a police department.
  - b. RIMS Software enhancement – Adding citizen RIMS to our record management system software. Today, communities demand access to law enforcement information and public records. Agency transparency is integral to positive community relationships. This platform program provides immediate information and make selected crime data available to the community via our agency web page with an easy to use, attractive website.

Public Works Department:

listed the CIP projects that indicated strong support for facilities for bicycles, hiking/walking, and parks. Listed below are related projects contained in the CIP:

CIP Number	Cost	Description
0113-16.00	\$409,275	Bike path, Bodega/Ragle to City line
0125-20.01	\$8,300,00	Ragle Road west side bicycle & pedestrian access; joint City-County project
0411-73.00	\$253,897	Americorps Trail extension Laguna Park
0423-20.10	\$5,000	Tomodachi Park trail connection
0121-74.11	\$45,000	Libby Park connection at Washington Ave

Civic Engagement

Public Works has the Adopt-A-Landscape Program which encouraged local businesses and residents to adopt, maintain and enhance city owned landscape area throughout the city. I did discuss the idea of docent led nature classes provided by the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center with their Board Member Chris Andregg who was interested in bring the idea up with the whole board. Commerce Although, the timing was early. The newly installed street banners were designed to give the downtown a fresh “Grand Opening “ look.

City Administration Continued:

## COMMISSION SURVEY ACTION ITEMS

Prepared by Holly Hansen, Community Outreach Coordinator  
February 10, 2021

### DONE

- Collaborated with CoMission to reach out to the 270 survey respondents who indicated that they would like to subscribe to newsletter. CoMission sent email to potential subscribers asking them to sign up directly in order to protect good standing status with our direct email provider (Constant Contact). Approximately 200 people signed up!
- Updated Constant Contact sign-up lists to allow people subscribe to specific information/resources: Housing, Emergency Preparedness, City Council Meeting Agendas, Planning/Design Review Board Info & Meeting Agendas, Newsletters. Consolidated old "Raise the Roof" list into wider "Housing" List.
- Suggested adding existing short link to subscribe ([bit.ly/SebNews](https://bit.ly/SebNews)) to City Staff email signatures and other City communications.
- Created [infographic](#) on how to participate in City Council meetings that are held virtually. Gives instructions on how to participate/comment even without a smart phone or computer. This is a more visual representation of the [document](#) that we created and distributed at the beginning of the pandemic. Note: The original document has been on the website since April 2020, distributed directly via print and digital version of bi-monthly newsletter in May/June, is on the weekly digital newsletter and is linked to from the City Meetings page.

Connect With the City of Sebastopol!

\* Email Address

First Name

Last Name

Email Lists

City Council Meeting Agendas (approx. twice monthly)

Emergency Preparedness (Sebastopol Fire Dept. list for preparedness only. Will not be used during an actual emergency.)

Housing

Newsletters (Regular general interest edition every other month. Special edition during pandemic weekly.)

Phone

**New Sign-up Form**

By submitting this form, you agree to receive emails at any time by using the EZ-Safe (subscriber) link, found at the bottom of every email. Emails are serviced by Constant Contact.

How to Participate in Sebastopol City Council Meetings During the Pandemic

City Council Meetings are held virtually on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 6pm.

On the City's website

On the City Council Meeting

Once you have joined the Zoom

**Simplified How-To Infographic**

Public Comment Using a Computer or Smart Phone: Click on the "Raise Hand" feature in the webinar controls. This will notify the Meeting Host that you have raised your hand. Meeting Host will announce your microphone when it is your turn to provide public comment. A prompt will appear to confirm you would like to be unmuted and then you will have three minutes to provide public comment. Once your public comment has ended, you will be muted again.

Public Comment Using a Regular Phone: Dial \*9 (star 9), this will notify the Meeting Host that you have "raised your hand" for public comment. Meeting Host will announce your microphone when it is your turn to provide public comment. You will hear "you are unmuted" and then you will have three minutes to provide public comment. Once your public comment has ended, you will be muted again.

I don't want to provide public comment live; can I provide my public comment for the record another way?  
Of course! Please submit all public comments via email to [mgoulet@cityofsebastopol.org](mailto:mgoulet@cityofsebastopol.org) or call (707) 823-1153 to leave your comments via voicemail or with City staff. Comments should be received by 4:00 pm of the meeting date.

I don't have a computer or smart phone; can I still use Zoom?  
No problem! Call City Hall at (707) 823-1153 no later than 5:00pm the day of the meeting and request the Meeting ID and Passcode for the upcoming meeting. You may then participate by calling 1(800) 900-6833 and entering the Meeting ID and Passcode and following the verbal prompts.

I am having difficulties preparing for the meeting and learning Zoom, do you have any resources to help me?  
Yes, please visit Zoom's website support page on helpful tips to prepare for the meeting: <https://support.zoom.us>

- Made list of suggested priorities from CoMission’s List of Potential Actions
  - Distribute info on local hardship resources
  - Develop community support resources for poverty-related anxiety and shame
  - Develop/support delivery/pickup infrastructure for local businesses
  - Educate on the impact of local spending
  - Evaluate current emergency education program
  - Share emergency garage opening info ASAP
  - Consider “light touch” emergency prep webinars or materials
  - Staff to evaluate open ended feedback on communications, COVID-19 info, etc.
  
- Made list of important issues to consider
  - Food Insecurity
  - Housing Assistance Resources
  - Emergency Prep Education/Resources
  - Delivery/Curbside Services
  - Racism/Equity/Policing/Transparency
  
- Suggestions for solutions/exposure
  - More outreach via snail mail (English & Spanish)
    - Resources
    - Emergency education
  - More direct specific outreach on available resources on Social Media (boost more posts)
  - Direct Calls to Action from Citizens in Newsletter, on Social Media
  - More outreach/materials in Spanish

#### **IN PROGRESS ITEMS AND PRIORITIZED ACTION ITEMS FOR FURTHER COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

- Website Improvements
  - We’re working with our Web company (Planeteria) to implement a system whereby citizens can opt in to receive information of interest to them in real time whenever topics that they’ve indicated are added to the City website.
  - We’re reviewing the Covid-19 Resource page to ensure that information is as current as possible. We’ve been given direction that whenever feasible, links should go directly to [socoemergency.org](http://socoemergency.org)
  
- Improve communications for those without access to the internet.
  - We’re working with Department Heads to update the “Community Partners” list. This is a list of people that have agreed to post printed information and/or share digital information from the City on upcoming items of importance. Starting with this list, we’ll broaden the scope (Senior Center, Burbank Housing, Burbank Gardens, apartment complexes and others) and secure their commitment to printing and posting agendas, etc. for those without digital access.

- Emergency Preparedness
  - We're working at the direction of the Fire Chief and Map Your Neighborhood to streamline and promote the MYN program. We're setting up a YouTube channel for the Fire Department to house preparedness videos.
  - Note: Opening of electric garage doors has been previously discussed and promoted as "find out from your manufacturer how to open if there is no electricity." There may be a liability issue (and false sense of security) if the City puts out specific information on how to do this.
- Spanish language: We do not currently have budget for translation of all materials. When we share information from the County, we share both English and Spanish versions.
  - Suggestion: Find a Community Partner from an organization with strong Latinx ties (perhaps Graton Day Labor Center) that can translate and share information that they think is important to their network.