

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Dolan Beckel  
Lee Wilcox

**SUBJECT: COVID-19 DELTA VARIANT  
STATUS UPDATE**

**DATE:** August 11, 2021

Approved



Date

**8/11/2021**

## INFORMATION

### INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus that causes COVID-19 has mutated (changed), resulting in different variants of the virus. Variants are categorized as ‘variants of interest’ and ‘variants of concern.’ One of the variants of concern - the “Delta variant” - is more easily transmitted from one person to another and is regarded as the most contagious form of the coronavirus to date. Although Public Health Officers around the globe are still researching the Delta variant and the body of work continues to evolve, research is consistent around an important point: the Delta variant can infect both vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. As of this week, the daily number of new COVID-19 cases in the United States have reached high levels second only to the pandemic peak during the winter of 2020. As such, the response in the United States to the COVID-19 pandemic has changed dramatically in the last three weeks.

This memorandum outlines the City of San José’s initial response to the evolving Delta variant in support of the safety and well-being of residents and employees of the City of San José, and the City’s overall COVID-19 Emergency Response which is far from over.

### BACKGROUND

While there are many COVID-19 variants, the Delta variant is currently recognized as the most contagious and dangerous variant because it is more easily transmitted from one person to another, and it can infect both vaccinated and non-vaccinated individuals. The ease of transmission is primarily driven by the fact that an individual infected with the Delta variant carries up to 1000 times the amount of virus as any previous variants. As stated above, while Public Health Officers around the world are continuing to research the Delta variant, below is a summary of what is currently understood:

- COVID-19 vaccines are the best way to protect oneself and others against severe illness from the Delta strain. Even in breakthrough cases — cases where a vaccinated individual

gets infected — vaccines are highly effective at preventing an individual from becoming seriously ill or resulting in death.

- Unvaccinated people are at a higher risk of getting COVID-19 now than they were before the prominence of the Delta variant.
- More young people are getting sick with the Delta variant compared to earlier variants.<sup>1</sup>
- Delta variant symptoms are the same as other versions of COVID-19, however, Delta is causing people to get sicker much faster.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not currently recommend fully vaccinated people to get a vaccine booster.<sup>2</sup>
- Everyone should continue wearing masks in crowded settings and public indoor spaces — including fully vaccinated people — especially in areas of high transmission.<sup>3</sup>
- Staying physically distanced and avoiding large gatherings lowers the risk of infection and the probability of spreading the Delta variant.

### **Global Response**

The Delta variant originated in India and quickly spread to the United Kingdom and then to the rest of the world. The United Kingdom's upward trajectory of Delta variant cases began in late April 2021, peaked in July 2021, and leveled in August 2021 due to several actions by the United Kingdom's government. These actions included:

- **Countermeasures** – including, but not limited to, closures, certain shelter-in-place orders and social distancing protocols, and additional health orders including mandatory masking;
- **Vaccinations** – including increased education and other communications to increase vaccination rates; and
- **Behavior change** – including requiring proof of vaccination to attend certain activities and events.

Applying the United Kingdom's bell shaped curve to the United States (that is, statistical modeling that helps public health experts understand the spread of disease over time in order to make predictions), one possible scenario and the one currently supported by most healthcare experts shows Delta variant cases and associated deaths peaking this October and returning to June 2021 levels in winter 2022. This is, of course, a projection, and while public health experts control for many variables in their modeling, it is important to note the United Kingdom has several different variables including, among others, differing population size and time of year of the downward curve (spring vs. winter). Further, this projection for the United States assumes the government will act on the level and scale of the United Kingdom before the fall when the shift to indoor activities triggers an increase in the spread of all viruses.

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<sup>1</sup> "Science Brief: COVID-19 Vaccines and Vaccination." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0727-covid19-vaccines.html), July 27, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "Joint CDC and FDA Statement on Vaccine Boosters," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0804-cdc-fda-vaccine-boosters.html), accessed August 4, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> "Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0727-covid19-fully-vaccinated.html), accessed July 27, 2021.

Many other nations have followed the actions of the United Kingdom, most noticeably France, where the French government required proof of vaccination to dine at cafés. Upon announcement of this policy change, the number of vaccinations in France dramatically increased, thus showing the benefit of behavioral change outside of employer/employee policies.

### **National Response (United States)**

The upward trajectory of Delta variant cases in the United States began at the end of June 2021, when the country was averaging 11,000 cases per day. As of this week, the daily number of new COVID-19 cases in the United States has reached levels second only to the winter 2020 peak, and the super majority of these cases are caused by the Delta variant as shown in Figure 1: Daily Trends of COVID-19 Cases. As of Friday, August 6, there were 107,143 cases per day. The seven-day average for daily new deaths has also increased according to data from John Hopkins University. Over the past two weeks deaths increased from 270 deaths per day to nearly 500 deaths per day as of Friday, August 6, 2021.

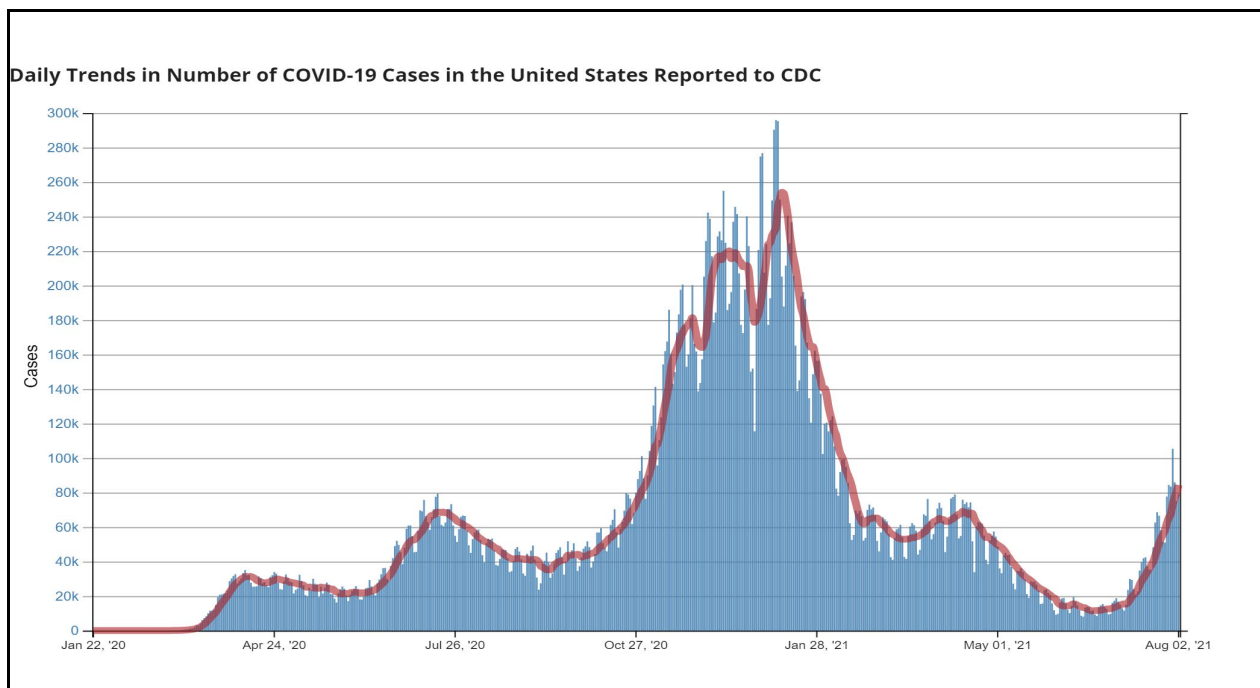


Figure 1: Daily Trends of National COVID-19 Cases

On July 27, the CDC announced Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People including:

- Recommending fully vaccinated people wear masks in public, indoor settings in areas of substantial or high transmission;
- Informing fully vaccinated people that they may want to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission, particularly if they are immunocompromised or at increased risk

for severe disease from COVID-19, or if they have someone in their household who is immunocompromised, at increased risk of severe disease, or not fully vaccinated;

- Recommending fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and to wear a mask in public indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result; and
- Recommending universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status.

Further, on July 29, President Biden announced that all federal employees and on-site contractors will have to be vaccinated against the coronavirus or be required to wear masks and undergo repeated testing, an order that will affect millions of workers and is designed to be a model for other employers.

### **State of California Response**

On July 26, Governor Newsom announced state workers and workers in health care and high-risk congregate settings must either show proof of full vaccination or be tested at least once per week.

### **Santa Clara County Response**

While Santa Clara County (County) has achieved 78.5% vaccination among County residents age 12 and over, the County is experiencing sharp rises in cases similar to the national level. The County's upward trend is shown in Figure 2: County Cases by Collection Date.

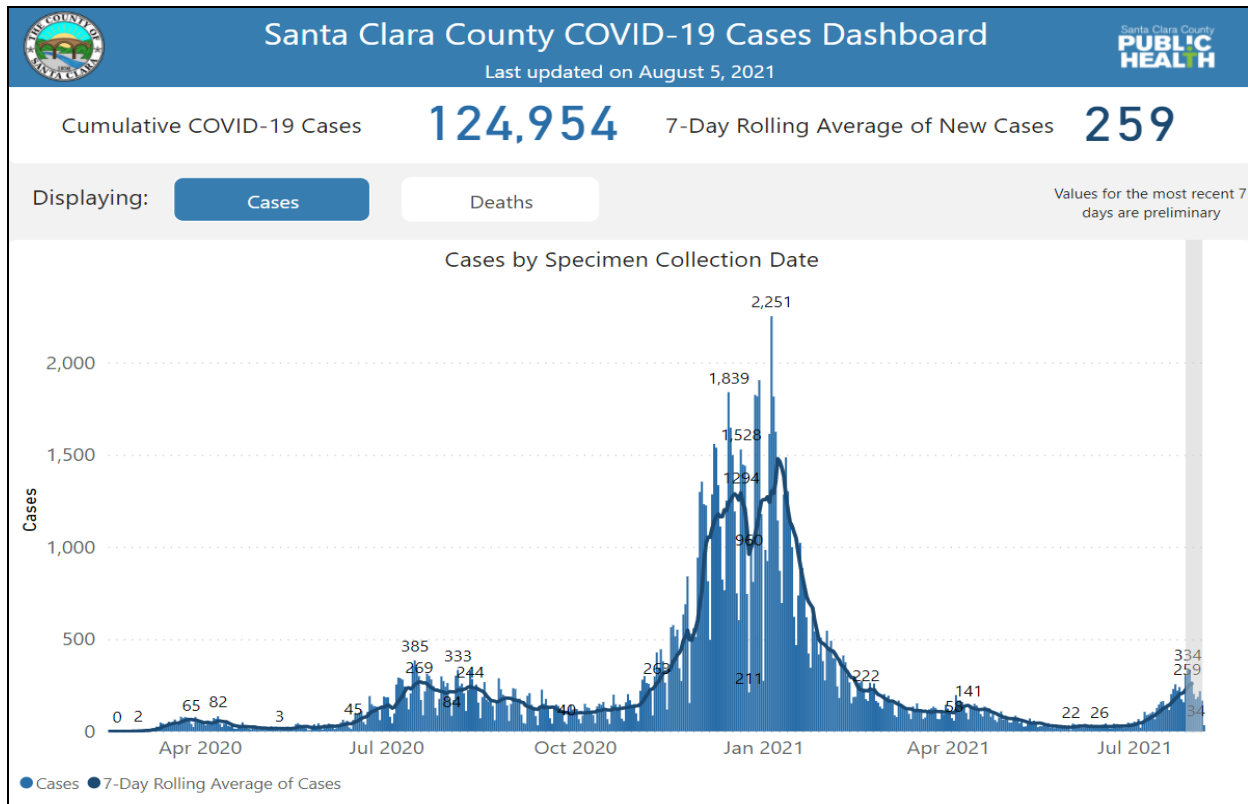


Figure 2: Santa Clara County COVID-19 Cases by Collection Date.

The increase in COVID-19 positive cases prompted the County to announce on August 2 new Public Health Orders in coordination with other Bay Area counties, including:

- Requirements to Wear Face Coverings Indoors:
  - Regardless of vaccination status, all persons must wear face coverings at all times when indoors except
    - In their own residence or working in a closed room or office alone or with members of their household;
    - When they are actively performing an activity that cannot be done while wearing a face covering (e.g., actively eating or drinking, swimming or showering in a fitness facility, or obtaining a medical or cosmetic service requiring removal of a face covering); or,
    - As specifically exempted from use of face coverings under the guidance of the California Department of Public Health.
- Recommendations urging all businesses and governmental entities to follow the recommendations set forth below:
  - Businesses and governmental entities should implement mandatory vaccination requirements for all personnel, subject only to the limited exemptions required by law;

- Businesses and governmental entities should move operations and activities outdoors where possible, where there is significantly less risk of COVID-19 transmission and where this is not possible, ventilation should be maximized;
- Businesses and governmental entities should prohibit all personnel who are not fully vaccinated from engaging in any work-related travel to places with elevated rates of COVID-19, with widespread circulation of variants of concern, or where community vaccination rates are below the average in the Bay Area region; and
- Businesses and governmental entities should require all personnel not fully vaccinated to obtain frequent testing for COVID-19 consistent with current local, state, and federal recommendations and any person vaccinated or unvaccinated, who has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be tested immediately.

The complete health order may be found here:

<https://covid19.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb766/files/documents/Health-Officer-Order-August-2-2021.pdf>

## **ANALYSIS**

### **City of San José Resident Education, Communication, and Vaccination Support Response**

As of August 6, the City's vaccination rate is over 85% for residents 12 and older. Unfortunately, this high cumulative number does not represent equal success across all San José communities. Indeed, due to the variances in vaccination rates across San José, the City continues to collaborate with the County to engage residents in low vaccination areas. In winter 2020 the City's Emergency Operations Center developed a Vaccination Task Force (Task Force) to help support the County and healthcare providers in community vaccination efforts. The Task Force's past work and focus for the next 90 days is highlighted in Attachment A.

With the recent uptick in cases due to the Delta variant, the Vaccination Task Force will continue its response to the ongoing global pandemic. The Task Force will support County efforts to minimize COVID-19-related illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths by assisting with vaccination event coordination and communications and outreach methods and strategies. The associated initiatives to achieve this are again highlighted in Attachment A.

Further, the Task Force will continue to partner with the County by keeping the focus on the thirteen priority census tracts that continue to experience less than 70% vaccination rate, as shown below using data as of August 1, 2021 (Figure 3).

| <u>Tract Name</u> | <u>Approximate Neighborhood</u> | <u>Zip Code</u> | <u>Council District</u> | <u>Total Population</u> | <u>Vaccinated Population</u> | <u>Vaccinated %</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| 5046.02           | Alviso                          | 95002           | D4                      | 1,919                   | 771                          | 40                  |
| 5016              | SUN                             | 95112           | D3                      | 6,798                   | 3,939                        | 58                  |
| 5041.01           | Clareview (Alum Rock)           | 95127           | D5                      | 4,598                   | 2,728                        | 59                  |
| 5020.02           | Buena Vista                     | 95126           | D6                      | 5,018                   | 3,118                        | 62                  |
| 5036.02           | Thunderbird                     | 95116           | D5                      | 4,701                   | 2,951                        | 63                  |
| 5037.13           | Alexander                       | 95116           | D5                      | 2,965                   | 1,907                        | 64                  |
| 5031.23           | Evans                           | 95126           | D6                      | 3,386                   | 2,220                        | 66                  |
| 5014.01           | Roosevelt + Wooster             | 95116           | D3                      | 2,542                   | 1,706                        | 67                  |
| 5031.1            | Santee + Ferrari-Pinoche        | 95122           | D7                      | 3,938                   | 2,657                        | 67                  |
| 5021.02           | Sherman Oaks                    | 95128           | D6                      | 6,603                   | 4,502                        | 68                  |
| 5032.18           | Senter/Capitol/Monterey area    | 95111           | D7                      | 3,982                   | 2,716                        | 68                  |
| 5037.11           | Mayfair                         | 95116           | D5                      | 4,139                   | 2,808                        | 68                  |
| 5012              | 13th St + Julian-St James       | 95112           | D3                      | 3,644                   | 2,505                        | 69                  |

Figure 3 – Vaccination Priority Census Tracts in the City of San José.

In addition, the City/County partnership will identify community events and activities, such as the San José Jazz Festival, Viva CalleSJ, and the various neighborhood events and work with the event organizers in setting up mobile vaccination clinics with the potential of including additional partners to offer wrap-around services such as rental assistance from the Housing Department.

While the City anticipated being fully transitioned from pandemic response to the recovery process, the emergence of the Delta variant requires the City of San José’s continued support the County’s vaccination operations, communications, and outreach efforts. Throughout the past 18 months, the collaborations and connections that were developed, maintained, and strengthened between the City of San José and its partners are what have kept the community as safe and healthy as possible. The difficulty of this work has grown over time. Although vaccine supply is no longer a limiting factor, an enormous lift is required to change opinions on vaccinations for those who remain vaccine hesitant.

**City of San José Resident and Employee Safety Response**

The City continues to monitor County and State Public Health Orders, Cal/OSHA requirements, and CDC recommendations to adjust City policies and procedures accordingly. Below is a brief summary of the City’s current policies and requirements.

Effective August 2, 2021:

- All employees are required to wear cloth face coverings while indoors or in vehicles with others. The cloth face covering requirement has been in place since May 2020 and has continually been revised in accordance with changes to County and State Public Orders and Cal/OSHA requirements.

- All members of the public are required to wear cloth face coverings while indoors at City facilities.
- All employees, contractors, vendors and volunteers are required to check-in daily by completing a self-screening survey. Health screenings have been in place since July 2020 but were previously conducted in-person.

By August 23, 2021:

- All employees are required to provide proof of vaccination or submit to weekly testing.

In addition, the City is exploring the potential of requiring all employees be vaccinated by September 30, 2021 absent documented exemptions.

Additional information can be found in City Policy Manual [1.3.9 COVID-19 Guidance Resuming Onsite Work](#) and [1.3.11 COVID-19 Prevention Program](#).

## **NEXT STEPS**

The City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic will not be fully over until the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus is being treated in a similar approach and scale as that of measles or smallpox. Leading healthcare experts do not expect this to be realized for at least 12 more months. The Administration will continue to monitor the Delta variant and other variants of concern along with the County and other partners and adjust City policies and City services as appropriate with a focus on continued efforts to increase vaccination rates in the 13 least vaccinated areas of the City.

The Administration will also be evaluating the Community and Economic Recovery Enterprise Priority scope and budget to determine if additional recovery funding should be shifted into the 'contingency' fund, allowing greater flexibility to respond to COVID-19 over the next 12 months. Unfortunately, while the City is trying to shift with the community towards a more equitable recovery, it is simultaneously responding to new threats from COVID-19 variants of concern. This parallel effort places a strain on budget and staffing.

The City has been implementing a two phased approach for employees to return to onsite work, with phase one beginning July through September, and phase two beginning in October. Considering the Delta variant, the Administration is evaluating the return to onsite work scope, approach, and timing. Given masking and vaccination mandates and social distancing recommendations, a pause in the return to onsite work is warranted until the Delta variant (and other variants of concerns) trajectories are better understood and the City has completed employee vaccination and testing policy compliance by September 30. The goal will be to maintain in person City services that were available or re-opened August 2<sup>nd</sup> while being compliant with health orders and protecting the safety of the public and our employees that serve them. The Vaccine Champions, described in Attachment A, will also continue to provide service in support of the County's vaccination efforts until they are no longer needed.



While social distancing is not required at this time, it is strongly recommended by the CDC and healthcare organizations in certain situations. The City will evaluate indoor gatherings, meetings, and other gathering places at City facilities and update any protocols and signage if and where appropriate.

City Council Open Session will continue to be conducted in the “hybrid” mode. It is recommended that Closed Session, all other Boards, Commissions, and Committees, remain 100% virtual until further notice.

The Administration will continue to keep the Mayor and Council, employees, and the public updated with Information Memorandums as the situation evolves and we learn more.

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For questions, please contact Lee Wilcox, Deputy City Manager at [lee.wilcox@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:lee.wilcox@sanjoseca.gov).

**Attachment A** – San Jose Emergency Operations Center Vaccination Task Force Background

## **Attachment A**

### **San Jose Emergency Operations Center Vaccination Task Force Background**

For context, vaccines were first made available in December 2020 to medical personnel and first responders. When eligibility expanded, the City of San José mobilized quickly to ensure that the most vulnerable residents received equitable access to vaccinations. Considering that the City did not have the resources nor authority to deliver vaccinations directly to its residents, a Vaccination Task Force (Task Force) was assembled within the Emergency Operations Center to support County and healthcare providers vaccinating San José residents. The Task Force attended Community Stakeholder Working Group meetings that were organized by the County, and became members of the Community Ambassador Program, which was led by Santa Clara County Supervisor Cindy Chavez. As the City continued its role in supporting the County, the Task Force created a goal: starting with the most vulnerable, ensure 85% of San José residents were vaccinated by August 1, 2021. This goal included objectives and initiatives that involved connecting the community to vaccines; advocating for equity, speed, and scale; and connecting City employees to vaccines. Following an initial lag in vaccine supply, the Task Force completed nearly all of its initiatives by April 2021.

Beginning in April 2021, the County requested that the City provide more bilingual employees to support vaccination clinics in the County. These Vaccine Champions were hired as temporary employees of the City of San José and were then assigned to various locations throughout the County, to perform non-clinical duties such as registration, line management, and clinic setup and takedown. The Vaccine Champions also help translate vaccination information in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin. The Vaccine Champions are currently assisting the County's vaccination efforts at two permanent locations, the Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Exposition Hall and Emmanuel Baptist Church, and throughout the County at Mobile Vaccination Clinics designed to reach vulnerable populations. At its peak, the City provided over 160 Vaccine Champions to the County to provide these services. The City will continue to provide logistical support to the Vaccine Champions and the County.

By April 2021, the vaccine supply was starting to increase, but the City's vaccination rate was not yet at 85%. To address this gap, the Task Force updated its objectives and initiatives to build vaccination capacity and maximize information, education, and engagement. The San José Fire Department complemented the County's vaccination efforts by providing personnel to support the in-home vaccination program as well as mobile vaccination (pop-up) clinics. The Task Force also collaborated with over 45 community-based organizations to provide vaccinations and wrap-around services to the most vulnerable, including the unhoused as well as the access and functional needs community. The communications and outreach team developed strategies on how to best reach the Latino/a/x, Black/African American, and Asian/Pacific Islander populations on getting the word out about vaccines and vaccinations. This was done through various channels including print, radio, TV, and social media. Finally, the City used the emergency text message alert technology system to promote vaccination events in the Alviso and Buena Vista Neighborhoods. As a result, between 150 – 250 participants attended each clinic, making them the most attended since the peak of vaccinations during the spring.

With the recent uptick in cases due to the Delta variant, the Administration has directed the Vaccination Task Force continue supporting County efforts to minimize COVID-19-related illnesses, hospitalizations, and deaths by assisting with vaccination event coordination and

communications and outreach methods and strategies as outlined in Figure 4. The Vaccination Task Force is coordinating with the County to better understand their direction and focus given the new reality.

| Updated Vaccination Task Force Roadmap   August – October 2021              |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Objectives  | Initiatives   |   |  |
| Continue Vaccination Event Coordination + Logistics Support With the County | Identify Priority Census Tracts for a Continued Focus of County-led Vaccination Events in Underserved Areas | Provide City Facilities and Park Spaces for County-led Vaccination Events | Utilize Fire Department Support for County-led Vaccination Events                                  |
| Complement Communications and Outreach Methods + Strategies With the County | Collaborate With Community Development Block Grant Recipients   | Participate in Ongoing Community Stakeholder’s Working Group Meetings     | Create a Youth/Parent Communications Strategy to Prepare for Expansion of Eligibility to Youth <12 |

Figure 4 – Updated Vaccination Task Force Roadmap.

While still in development, some of the associated initiatives to achieve this are highlighted below:

- Collaborate with the County in providing and sharing **census tract information** and hyper-focusing vaccination efforts on the most vulnerable and underserved areas and neighborhoods that continue to experience lower rates of vaccinations;
- Partner with the Library, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Public Works, and other City departments to make **facilities and parks** as readily available to the County for mobile vaccination events;
- Strategize with the County on the continued utilization of **San José Fire Department** personnel at future mobile vaccination events;
- Delegate Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) recipients to support **communication, outreach, and education** operations through flyering and knock and talk activities in the most vulnerable and underserved areas and neighborhoods;
- Participate in the monthly **Community Stakeholder Working Group** meetings to remain informed about the current and planned vaccination communications and outreach strategies of the County and other community partners; and
- Develop a communications strategy that will focus on youth and parents, as vaccinations become available for **youth under 12 years of age** (Emergency Use Authorization estimated by September 2021).