

# NEWS

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For Immediate Release

## Supervisors Award Nearly \$1 Million to Help Local Businesses Through Construction Project

**Redwood City** – The County will soon start taking applications for a grant fund for small businesses along Middlefield Road in North Fair Oaks that are struggling financially due to a road improvement project delayed by record winter rains and other challenges.

San Mateo County Supervisors on Tuesday voted to direct nearly \$1 million to the [Middlefield Road Small Business Assistance Program](#).

Eligible businesses may apply for grants totaling up to \$10,000 to help make payroll, pay rent and keep the doors open during a [project](#) that promises [significant benefits](#) but has taken longer than expected.

“The pandemic, the change in the workforce, and the ongoing construction has created the perfect storm. Our businesses need help now,” said Supervisor Warren Slocum, who proposed the relief grants in his district.

“When the project is complete, families will enjoy wider sidewalks, new streetlights, free public WiFi, small businesses to frequent, and so much more,” Slocum said. “Many of these businesses just need a short-term financial boost so they can stay afloat long enough to see the benefits.”

At Cuco’s Burritos, “This grant would be very helpful to keep us afloat through the construction,” said Mariela Peralta, who estimated businesses is down up to 60 percent due to access issues. “Every week we are struggling.”

With business down at Shawarma Palace, co-owner George Saman closed the restaurant to walk-in traffic temporarily to focus on catering until the street and parking situation improve. Saman said he hopes the funds would help his business stay open long enough “to enjoy the fruits when the street is complete.... It’s going to be beautiful.”

The project involves a transforming a busy stretch of Middlefield Road through North Fair Oaks into a destination with a downtown feel. In addition to road work, the project includes placing utilities underground and installing modern infrastructure that includes technology upgrades and more.

The complex project involves partnerships with a large number of private and public entities. Record winter rains contributed to delays that are causing the longer-than-expected impacts.

To qualify for grants, small businesses must meet a number of specific criteria that includes:

- Physically located and operating on Middlefield Road between Douglas Avenue and Fifth Avenue with a customer-serving storefront in the project limits.
- Fewer than 25 employees.
- Suffered proven economic losses due to construction work.

Other criteria include being independently owned and operated or, if a franchise, half of the franchise ownership by county residents.

Outreach and application assistance will be provided by the [Office of Community Affairs](#), which is already working with eligible business. First distributions are expected by the end of this month.

Establishments ineligible to receive a grant include cannabis businesses or businesses that support cannabis businesses, liquor stores and tobacconists, smoke or vape shops.

The Board voted 4-0 to approve the grant program. Supervisor Ray Mueller was not present for the vote.

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