

# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

## **County, Partners Accept \$7.2M Grant for Emergency Preparedness & Community Resiliency Improvements**

**Redwood City** – A \$7.2 million state grant will help the San Mateo County Event Center serve as an evacuation center and safe zone during earthquakes, fires, flooding and other disasters, state and local officials announced today.

The funding was announced during a news conference at the Event Center, home to the San Mateo County Fair, private shows and conferences and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, drive-through testing and vaccine clinics.

The grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture will improve the center's ability to shelter up to 600 people when needed. Samaritan House, a San Mateo-based nonprofit, is slated to receive a share of the grant to upgrade kitchen and pantry service, pending approval by its board of directors.

“The Event Center and Samaritan House have proven themselves as invaluable partners over and over again during times of crisis that we have faced, as well as in non-emergency times. This grant, coupled with the matching funds allocated by the Board of Supervisors, lets us become even more resilient to keep our community protected. I'd like to thank the CDFA, the local staff who worked so hard to apply, and our representatives who supported our efforts,” said County Executive Mike Callagy.

The state grant, part of \$89 million the CDFA awarded statewide to build resiliency at California fairgrounds, especially in response to climate change, will be matched by \$4 million from the County of San Mateo and \$1 million from the San Mateo County Event Center. The grants are meant to improve existing community facilities and programs, particularly for economically vulnerable and food-insecure residents.

The San Mateo County Event Center is a 48-acre event facility in the city of San Mateo with more than 200,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space located in seven buildings. The facility is a

designated Emergency Operations Center — proving itself invaluable as such during the COVID-19 pandemic, CZU Lightning Fires and other large-scale events — and these state funds will increase its ability to respond to future disasters.

CDFA Michael Flores called the Event Center “an intentional and great example of what a fairground can do to serve their community.”

Specifically, the collective funds will be used at the Event Center to:

- Build 20 new restroom stalls and nine showers;
- Update broadband and back-up Internet;
- Update Fiesta Hall, the primary shelter site for up to 600 people;
- Relocate and update RV sites with solar canopies;
- Potentially expand Samaritan House’s year-round food services by adding a 6,700 square foot commercial kitchen and renovating the 14,000 square foot Redwood Hall into dining space that can serve up to 2,000 meals daily;
- Upgrade to current seismic standards.

Construction is projected to begin in June 2024.

County officials said the grant clearly aligns with the state’s goal of preparing for climate change-related disasters. Over the past three years, the county has experienced wildfire, pandemic, flooding and severe weather. The county is also at risk for earthquakes, landslides and dam failures, according to the San Mateo County Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

“As it becomes clearer and clearer that climate change impacts are more frequent and severe, this resiliency grant is a timely investment in infrastructure, both during times of crisis and in order to sustain our most vulnerable families right now,” said Supervisor Noelia Corzo, whose District Two includes the Event Center.

Event Center CEO Dana Stoehr said the grant illustrates the long-standing partnership between the three co-applicant entities.

“The resiliency grant acknowledges the outstanding work of San Mateo County, the San Mateo County Event Center and Fairgrounds, and Samaritan House. It is also a testament to the collaboration and dedication that signifies the unwavering commitment to making San Mateo County inclusive and safe for all residents,” Stoehr said.

Stoehr also credited Event Center masterplan architect and grantwriting project director Jane Gray for helping bring this resiliency vision to fruition.



Besides serving clients sheltering at the Event Center during a disaster, Samaritan House will also serve meals year-round. Within a year of the project's completion, the nonprofit says it will potentially be able to nearly double its ability to feed families and distribute food. The project will connect to a parking lot, adding the ability to allow drive-up food distribution. CEO Laura Bent said the organization is grateful to be part of this significant grant.

“Samaritan House takes prides in our long partnerships with the County through our role as a lead core agency and the San Mateo County Event Center. We are grateful to be considered for this opportunity to support our community's most vulnerable,” Bent said.

