



March 23, 2020

## County parks and trails remain open, with waived fees



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With the shelter at home order nearly five days in and with at least another couple weeks to go, many families are looking for unique ways to get some fresh air and stretch their legs.

As of Friday, March 20, Santa Clara County Parks and Trails are open, though all events, classes, and programs have been canceled through April 7, due to novel coronavirus.

Outdoor areas of the parks are open from dawn to dusk and residents can enjoy the open space, as long as they keep appropriate distance from other users and do not gather in any groups.

Additionally, Field Sports Park, Metcalf Motorcycle Park, Calero, Stevens Creek and Lexington Reservoirs, archery ranges and disk golf courses, dog parks at Vasona, Los Gatos Creek and Ed Levin, all campgrounds, museums, visitor centers, group sites, yurts, golf courses, and playgrounds are all closed at this time.

On Thursday, Santa Clara County Supervisors Joe Simitian and Mike Wasserman announced that any entrance fees for County parks would be waived for the duration of the sheltering order.

“Folks are coping with a lot right now. It just seemed to me that our County should be doing whatever we can, no matter how small, to make people’s lives a little bit easier,” Simitian said.

To see more information about how COVID-19 is impacting County parks, [click here](#).

# MountainView VOICE

March 24, 2020

## **Santa Clara County passes ban on evictions to protect renters hard hit by the coronavirus**

Residential and commercial properties included in moratorium that runs through May 31

by **Kevin Forestieri** / Mountain View Voice

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Apartments above Veggie Grill and AT&T in the Village at San Antonio Center in Mountain View. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously March 24 to halt evictions that would displace families and businesses as a direct result of the novel coronavirus. Photo by Magali Gauthier

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday, March 24, to halt evictions that would displace families and businesses as a direct result of the novel coronavirus, which has ravaged the local economy in a matter of weeks.

The moratorium on evictions, which takes effect immediately and lasts through the end of May, applies to both residential and commercial renters who can prove they've had a substantial loss of income as a result of the coronavirus. All cities within the county are included in the evictions ban.

"Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures, and that's what a moratorium is," said County Supervisor Joe Simitian at the board's teleconference meeting.

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The moratorium is meant to mitigate the economic damage caused by efforts to contain the coronavirus, which causes COVID-19, namely, public health officials' order to temporarily shut down schools and all nonessential businesses, resulting in high unemployment and lost wages.

Home evictions would worsen the health crisis by increasing the county's already significant homeless problem, according to county officials, and the depressed local economy would be exacerbated if a high number of commercial renters are ousted due to failure to pay rent during the temporary shutdown.

In order to stave off an eviction under the county ordinance, tenants have to show proof of a "substantial" loss in income -- which will be determined on a case-by-case basis -- including job loss, reduction in work hours, a business closure or a significant decrease in business income caused by a reduction in open hours or consumer demand. Large medical expenses for immediate family members can also be used to justify nonpayment of rent. Once the moratorium is over, tenants have 120 days to pay all the rent that's due.

"It is important to note that nothing in this urgency ordinance relieves a tenant of the obligation to pay rent or restricts a landlord's ability to recover rent due," according to a county staff report. "The measure does, however, prevent evictions from occurring in the midst of this crisis."

Some residents say the moratorium doesn't go far enough and simply kicks the can down the road, with an inevitable wave of evictions likely once the 120-day grace period expires. Palo Alto resident Kevin Ma told supervisors in an email that the moratorium must be coupled with greater access to renter aid, or else the ordinance would only be a quick Band-Aid fix to the problem.

"We don't know how long the situation would last, and we see, based on the housing crisis, that many were living already close to the edge anyway," Ma said. "It'll be very hard for some to make up for lost time."

Palo Alto resident Angie Evans urged supervisors to give renters as much flexibility as possible, granting them "minimal" requirements to prove economic hardship. Income verification alone does not take into account the high cost of child care, health services and other expenses that vulnerable families have to budget for each month.

Cities, counties and private companies have rallied this week to raise funds for Santa Clara County residents out of work due to the coronavirus, announcing on Monday more than \$11 million in financial support for the homeless and the unemployed. Cities including Mountain View have also launched their own renter relief programs aimed at keeping people housed during the disruption.

Mountain View City Council members discussed last week the possibility of its own moratorium for the city, but shied away from passing an evictions ban. Instead, the council voted to have staff draft a memo with options for a temporary, local ordinance to protect renters falling behind on rent due to the coronavirus.

Mayor Margaret Abe-Koga told the *Voice* that staff are looking at the county's moratorium and

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what can be done to further boost support for residential renters as well as small businesses.

"We want to have a comprehensive package of assistance for all types of residents as is possible, and hope there are some options for council to consider to also help those who have mortgages," Abe-Koga said.

Even before the Bay Area's regionwide shelter in place order on March 17 had shut down nonessential business, many storefronts on the Peninsula reported major losses and dwindling foot traffic. While some restaurants remain open for take-out orders -- they are considered essential and permitted to stay open -- others have temporarily shuttered.

Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order on March 16 clearing the way for California cities and counties to enact eviction moratoriums, suspending state laws that would have preempted or restricted such ordinances in the past. Some Bay Area cities moved quickly to enact a temporary ban on evictions, including Palo Alto, while others were less eager to pass renter protections.

The county's moratorium does not supersede stronger renter protections imposed by individual cities. Emily Hislop of Project Sentinel, who works with Mountain View landlords and tenants, said the county should urge cities to consider mediation programs to help renters manage months of unpaid rent.

"Stopping the evictions is one thing, but we would like to encourage jurisdictions to look at dispute resolution programs to negotiate repayment or even reduced rent," Hislop said. "Everything is not going to magically be better after 120 days."

Supervisor Susan Ellenberg said she supported the moratorium, but worried that having all unpaid rent due right after 120 days of the moratorium ending would be "catastrophic." She wondered whether the county could pass some kind of ordinance that could allow renters to pay for past rent over the course of a year.

But going above and beyond what Gov. Newsom prescribed in his executive order last week may be difficult for Santa Clara County to implement without running afoul with state laws. County Counsel James Williams said that his office would look at the available legal options in the event that supervisors want to supplement the moratorium with additional protections in the coming months.

Supervisor Mike Wasserman said he doesn't think it will be a huge problem, and that tenants can and likely will be able to pay back portions of unpaid rent during the roughly four-month grace period between the end of the ordinance and when unpaid rent is due.

Any landlord who attempts to carry out an eviction in violation of the county's ban faces civil fines and penalties. Landlords are also barred from imposing late fees for unpaid rent if the tenant endured economic hardship caused by the virus.

December 16, 2020

## Santa Clara County supervisors to consider cap on food delivery fees

Dec 7, 2020, 3:06pm PST Updated: Dec 22, 2020, 12:17pm PST



VICKI THOMPSON

DoorDash CEO Tony Xu in 2014 as he delivered food from Siam Royal in Palo Alto.

Santa Clara County supervisors are calling for a review of the fees charged by food delivery companies like DoorDash and Uber Eats, with an eye to placing a temporary cap on such fees to provide relief to consumers.

Put forward by Supervisor Joe Simitian with the support of board President Cindy Chavez, the full Board of Supervisors will take up a proposal Tuesday to see what can be done. Among the topics under consideration are to see if they can use emergency orders to apply any break in fees countywide, as opposed to just unincorporated parts of the county.

During a media briefing Monday, Simitian and Chavez argued that with restaurants throughout Silicon Valley and much of the state closed again for both indoor and outdoor dining because of Covid-19, the 30% delivery fee that third-party services typically charge is too much.

“The goal is to protect local restaurants and consumers from price gouging during a pandemic,” said Simitian. “Many of these restaurants don’t have the infrastructure to host their own platforms for takeout and delivery, so they are often forced to accept excessive fees and commissions. They simply have no other option.”

The effort has the backing of several local chambers of commerce, including those from Mountain  
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View and Gilroy, as well as a number of local restaurant owners.

"Restaurateurs are making extreme sacrifices during these times, and they should not be subject to overwhelming outside fees," said Mark Turner, president and CEO of the Gilroy Chamber of Commerce who also is chairman of the Silicon Valley Chamber Coalition. "In this situation, both the restaurant community and the food delivery service providers will need to make sacrifices."

Peter Katz, president and CEO of the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, said one restaurant owner described the fee structure as "an absolute job killer." The delivery fees add 30% to the cost to a business, which can jump to 50%, and at that higher level it "eats away at any profit margin."

"I've seen far too many of our renowned and beloved restaurants go dormant or worse, close their doors for good because of the pandemic," Katz said. "Castro Street, which is normally a thriving dining destination that hosts over 80 restaurants in dozens of different types of cuisines, is experiencing devastating losses. And now, given the latest restrictions, if restaurants are going to survive and for many, that's a big if, they are more reliant than ever on delivery services. The current fee structure is simply not sustainable."

Other parts of the Bay Area have placed similar caps on delivery fees with San Mateo and Alameda counties doing so along with the cities of Santa Clara, San Francisco, Santa Cruz and Oakland.

In a statement, San Francisco-based DoorDash defended its approach: "DoorDash has always supported restaurants. Pricing regulations could cause us to increase costs for customers, which could lead to fewer orders for local restaurants and fewer earning opportunities for Dashers. Pricing regulations can also remove options available to restaurants by limiting their ability to opt-in to additional services to help their business. We remain focused on solutions that better support restaurants, customers, and Dashers."