



October 29, 2020

Barbara Ferrer, PhD, MPH, Med,  
County of Los Angeles Public Health Director  
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health  
312 N. Figueroa St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Director Ferrer:

The City of Lancaster and the City of Palmdale would like to convey our collective gratitude for your continued leadership amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The City of Lancaster and the City of Palmdale request that restaurants be allowed to open indoors at 25% capacity with modifications for the upcoming winter.

From the earliest days of the pandemic, the two cities have remained committed to the health and economic well-being of our residents. From the City of Lancaster's Stand Strong programs to the City of Palmdale's Renaissance Plan, we have strived to balance the health and safety of our residents while keeping our local economy moving forward during this uncertain time.

As you are aware, the restaurant industry has been devastated by COVID-19. Nearly seven months after California's lockdown was first announced, employment figures for restaurants in Los Angeles County remain down 26% from their September 2019 figures<sup>1</sup> and it is estimated that between 30% - 60% of restaurants will permanently close by the end of 2020.<sup>2</sup> Under these figures, Los Angeles County can expect between

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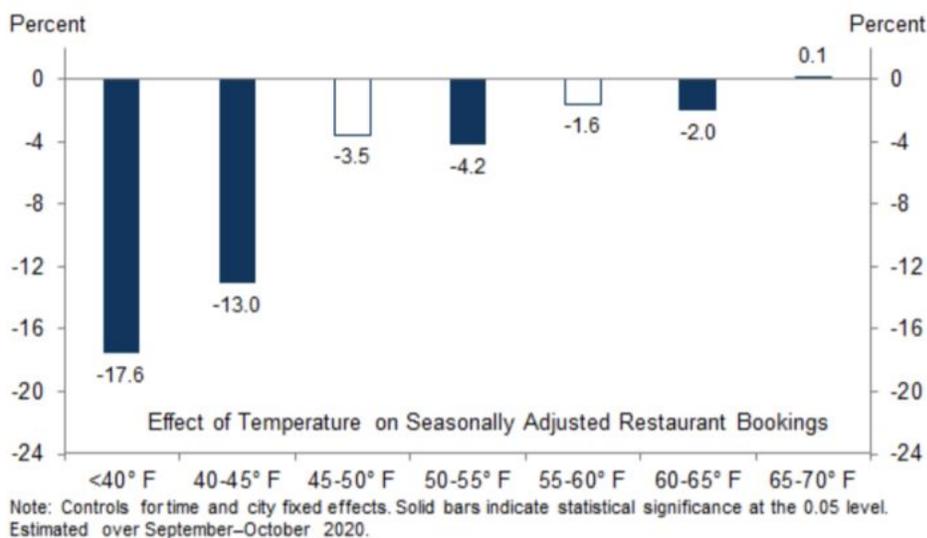
<sup>1</sup> Comparing September 2019 figures with September 2020. See, Employment Development Department, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale Metropolitan Division (Los Angeles County) Press Release, [https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/la\\$pd\\$pdf](https://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/file/lfmonth/la$pd$pdf) (October 16, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Yelp recently reported that 61% of restaurant closures will be permanent. See, Yelp: Local Economic Impact Report, <https://www.yelpeconomicaverage.com/business-closures-update-sep-2020.html> (September 2020). The California Restaurant Association estimates this number at 30%. See, Thousands of California Restaurants Close Permanently, California Restaurant Association, <https://www.calrest.org/news/thousands-california-restaurants-close-permanently> (August 28, 2020).

7,800 and 15,600 restaurants to close leaving our County's economy devastated.<sup>3</sup>

And with winter fast approaching, struggling restaurant owners in Lancaster and Palmdale face further uncertainty – how to operate outside in the cold, wind, and snow. For reference, temperatures in the Antelope Valley in November and December can fluctuate between 30°F and 58°F with an average of one inch of snow and 1.15 inches of rain.<sup>4</sup> Today alone, Palmdale's temperature is 10 degrees colder than Los Angeles. Under these weather conditions, restaurants operating outdoors can be expected to lose between 13% and 17.6% of their seasonally adjusted restaurant bookings.<sup>5</sup>

**Exhibit 2: Cold Weather During the Pandemic Has Had a Non-Linear Negative Effect on Dining in Excess of Normal Seasonal Patterns**



Source: Department of Commerce, OpenTable, Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research

To prevent this downturn, our cities believe a variance to allow limited indoor dining at 25% capacity with modifications is justified. Recent

<sup>3</sup> Los Angeles County is home to more than 26,000 restaurants. See, County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Retail Food Inspection, <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/DSE/RetailFoodInsection/desfood.htm>. It is estimated that every dollar spent in California restaurants contributes \$1.75 - \$2.03 to our state economy. See, National Restaurant Association, California Restaurant Industry At A Glance, <https://restaurant.org/downloads/pdfs/state-statistics/california.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Climate Data, City of Lancaster, <https://www.usclimatedata.com/climate/lancaster/california/united-states/usca0591>.

<sup>5</sup> Kate Krader, How Chefs Are Adapting Their Menus for Chilly Outdoor Dining, Bloomberg, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-10-21/how-chefs-are-adapting-their-menus-for-chilly-outdoor-dining> (October 20, 2020).

COVID-19 case data shows that Lancaster and Palmdale have adjusted case rates between 2.64% and 3.24% and an Adjusted Persons Positive Rate between 2.66% and 3.29%.<sup>6</sup>

- City of Lancaster (161,570)  
Cases – 4,277  
Adjusted Case Rate – 2.64% (2,693)  
Adjusted Persons Positive Rate – 2.66% (2,664)
- City of Palmdale (158,968)  
Cases – 5,090  
Adjusted Case Rate – 3.24% (3,240)  
Adjusted Persons Positive Rate – 3.29% (3,297)

Based on this data, two of the largest cities in Los Angeles County continue to partner to flatten the curve and slow the spread. Through adherence to a revised Appendix I Protocol for Restaurants, the risks associated with COVID-19 and indoor dining can be minimized to provide these businesses with an equitable opportunity<sup>7</sup> to remain in operation during the winter months without spending an additional \$5,000 - \$30,000 to winterize their operations.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, the data shows that restaurants face a very uncertain future. The loss of nearly 20% of their business because of inclement weather will cause more restaurants to close, further jeopardizing the livelihood of individuals and families during the winter season. While we recognize that achieving equity in our County during this crisis is multi-faceted, allowing our restaurants to operate indoors in a limited capacity would be a significant step in the right direction.

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<sup>6</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health, LA County COVID-19 Surveillance Dashboard, [http://dashboard.publichealth.lacounty.gov/covid19\\_surveillance\\_dashboard/](http://dashboard.publichealth.lacounty.gov/covid19_surveillance_dashboard/) (October 28, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> 60% of California restaurants are owned by people of color, and 50% of California restaurants are owned or partly-owned by women. See, Thousands of California Restaurants Close Permanently, California Restaurant Association, <https://www.calrest.org/news/thousands-california-restaurants-close-permanently> (August 28, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that restaurants will spend between \$5,000 and \$30,000 to obtain the necessary materials to operate outdoors during the upcoming winter months. See, Dianne de Guzman, Restaurants Are Facing Their Next Big Challenge Under COVID-19: Winter Weather, <https://www.sfgate.com/food/article/Restaurants-outdoor-dining-winter-bay-area-15638228.ph> (October 12, 2020).

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Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Jason Caudle  
City Manager, City of Lancaster

Sincerely,



J.J. Murphy, ICMA-CM  
City Manager, City of Palmdale

CC: Los Angeles County Supervisor, Kathryn Barger, Fifth District  
Palmdale Mayor and City Council  
Lancaster Mayor and City Council