



Cheryl Davila
Councilmember
District 2

ACTION CALENDAR

October 13, 2020

(Continued from September 22, 2020)

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Cheryl Davila

Subject: Support Community Refrigerators

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt a Resolution to create an allocation of the homeless budget towards the purchasing of community refrigerators to be distributed in Council districts to provide access to food for those who have no refrigeration or may be food insecure.
2. Allocate \$8,000 of the budget for the purchasing of the refrigerators.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The City of Berkeley spent \$6.5 million of the general fund to combat homelessness in 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic, the raging fires and smoke in the state of California, the unhoused community is being hit even harder. The economic challenges of businesses closing, financial strains and health concerns increasing leads to increased disparities. It is necessary to support our communities who cannot buy basic necessities for survival such as food. A district fridge would bring together our communities to aid the homeless. Moreover, this is a part of a larger goal to bridge financial inequities in the City of Berkeley.

BACKGROUND

The City of Berkeley spent close to \$20 million on providing homeless services. About \$6.5 million came from its general fund, about \$9.5 million came from regional, state, and federal funds and \$3.9 million were one-time funds from the state's Homeless Emergency Aid Program.

COVID-19 has strained access to money and resources such as food for our homeless communities. The fires and dangerous air quality have also created a need for cooled water. Health disparities increase in times of distress and hit our at-risk communities the hardest.

Implementing an accessible refrigerator program, run by each district and its neighborhoods is a step in the right direction. Several cities across the country such as Los Angeles, Oakland, and New York have already created community fridges. Businesses, organizations, and individuals work together to keep the fridges stocked with prepackaged meals, leftovers, fresh fruits and vegetables, water, and other drinks. Anyone who feels the need to can take anything they need, at any time of day.

This is essential now. Food insecurity is an issue that ravages homeless communities. Yet, in some cities, we dump more than one million tons of food into landfills . Many community fridges are located in areas with high levels of food insecurity, either in “food deserts” (neighborhoods that lack access to fresh, affordable food) or “food swamps” (neighborhoods where there is an overabundance of fast food).

In the City of Oakland, the community group “Town Fridge” has set up refrigerators in publicly accessible locations throughout Oakland. The purpose is to create a mutual aid to address food insecurities in the community. These community refrigerators have donation guidelines posted at their locations, where they accept produce, pantry staples, bottled water, prepared meals but forbid raw meat. They also require: label and dates of all perishables on food containers; placing non-perishables on the shelving outside the fridge; If a fridge is full, they ask donors to not leave the food outside the fridge, but donate the food to a nearby encampment. Many locations have outside shelving for placement of non perishable items.

Residents can also apply to be a “fridge host”, hosting a community refrigerator on their block. Since this program has been established, it is a model for other cities to implement.

Community fridges will allow 24/7 access to fresh foods to the public, while empowering people of our community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated price of a low-cost fridge is approximately \$800. Purchasing one for each district of Berkeley amounts to approximately \$8,000 allocated from the budget.

This program can be at no cost to the City as residents replace their refrigerators with newer technology refrigerators, and can donate their old refrigerators to be used as Community Refrigerators.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Protecting our communities during this climate and health crisis is an act of environmental sustainability.

CONTACT PERSONS

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ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. Four Pictures from Deputy City Manager Paul Buddenhagen of Community Fridge at 59th and Marshall

REFERENCES:

1. Oakland Town Fridge <https://linktr.ee/townfridge>









RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA,
PROVIDING OUR HOUSELESSNESS COMMUNITY WITH DISTRICT REFRIGERATORS

WHEREAS, The City of Berkeley spent close to \$20 million on providing homeless services. About \$6.5 million came from its general fund, about \$9.5 million came from regional, state, and federal funds and \$3.9 million were one-time funds from the state's Homeless Emergency Aid Program; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has strained access to money and resources such as food for our homeless communities. The fires and dangerous air quality have also created a need for cooled water. Health disparities increase in times of distress and hit our at-risk communities the hardest; and

WHEREAS, Implementing an accessible refrigerator program, run by each district and its neighborhoods is a step in the right direction. Several cities across the country such as Los Angeles, Oakland, and New York have already created community fridges. Businesses, organizations, and individuals work together to keep the fridges stocked with prepackaged meals, leftovers, fresh fruits and vegetables, water, and other drinks. Anyone who feels the need to can take anything they need, at any time of day; and

WHEREAS, This is essential now. Food insecurity is an issue that ravages homeless communities. Yet, in some cities, we dump more than one million tons of food into landfills . Many community fridges are located in areas with high levels of food insecurity, either in "food deserts" (neighborhoods that lack access to fresh, affordable food) or "food swamps" (neighborhoods where there is an overabundance of fast food); and

WHEREAS, In the City of Oakland, the community group "Town Fridge" has set up refrigerators in publicly accessible locations throughout Oakland. The purpose is to create a mutual aid to address food insecurities in the community. These community refrigerators have donation guidelines posted at their locations, where they accept produce, pantry staples, bottled water, prepared meals but forbid raw meat. They also require: label and dates of all perishables on food containers; placing non-perishables on the shelving outside the fridge; If a fridge is full, they ask donors to not leave the food outside the fridge, but donate the food to a nearby encampment. Many locations have outside shelving for placement of non perishable items. Residents can also apply to be a "fridge host", hosting a community refrigerator on their block. Since this program has been established, it is a model for other cities to implement; and

WHEREAS, Community fridges will allow 24/7 access to fresh foods to the public, while empowering people of our community; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Berkeley, California supports not only the implementation of district fridges to reduce the amount of food insecurity in the homeless community, but also the reduction of financial inequities in our city. Specifically, the Council of the City of Berkeley calls for:

1. Create an allocation of the homeless budget towards the purchasing of community refrigerators to be distributed in Council districts to provide access to food for those who have no refrigeration or may be food insecure.
2. Allocate \$8,000 of the budget for the purchasing of the refrigerators.