



24-4200

DATE: February 6, 2024 (Item No. 12)
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Sara H. Cody, MD, Health Officer/Director of Public Health
SUBJECT: Blue Zones and City of San José Partnership

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Under advisement from November 7, 2023 (Item No. 10): Consider recommendations from the Public Health Department (PHD) relating to the proposed Blue Zones Project in partnership with the City of San José. (LA-1)

Possible action:

- a. Receive report from the Public Health Department relating to the proposed Blue Zones Project in partnership with the City of San José.
- b. Approve delegation of authority to the County Executive, or designee, to negotiate, execute, amend, or terminate agreement with the City of San José relating to the Blue Zones Project in an amount not to exceed \$150,000, and a contract term that starts no earlier than February 6, 2024 and ends no later than June 30, 2025, following approval by County Counsel as to form and legality, and approval by the Office of the County Executive. Delegation of authority shall expire on June 30, 2025.
- c. Approve Request for Appropriation Modification No. 154 - \$150,000 transferring funds from the General Fund Contingency Reserve to the PHD budget, relating to matching funds for the City of San José's Blue Zones Project. (4/5 vote)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action would transfer \$150,000 from the General Fund Contingency Reserve to PHD to match the City of San José. If adopted, this action would have a one-time impact of \$150,000 on the General Fund Contingency Reserve.

The Adopted Budget for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 General Fund Contingency Reserve is \$218,587,995. The balance of this reserve as of February 6, 2024, is \$208,875,262 indicating that a net of \$9,712,733 has been allocated for other purposes. There may be additional pending actions that will impact this balance once they are approved and processed. Board policy 4.3 states that the contingency reserve should be 5% of general revenues net of pass-through revenue. Since the use of contingency reserve impacts

compliance with this policy, the midyear budget analysis may include a recommended action to replenish this reserve.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION AND BACKGROUND

On November 7, 2023 (Item No. 10), the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved a referral to Administration by Supervisor Chavez to return to the Board with options for consideration relating to funds to match a \$150,000 contribution by the City of San José to the Blue Zones Project. Blue Zones, LLC, partners with cities to aim to support longevity and a healthier life by applying principles inspired by people who have lived the longest in communities around the world. In June of 2023, the City of San José confirmed its intention to partner with Blue Zones, LLC, on a Blue Zones Project. The City of San José contributed \$150,000 to assist in the preliminary funding allocation for the Blue Zones Project Readiness Assessment. The Readiness Assessment is a first step in a collaborative effort to implement a structured exploration of a focused community in San José, aiming to evaluate the community's current state of well-being, identify the highest priority strengths, challenges, and opportunities, and produce and present a plan for community transformation. The assessment would also provide opportunities for the City of San José (City) to strengthen its partnership with various departments, initiatives, and programs within the County who also work to improve population health.

Blue Zones, LLC, describes their work as implementing “evidence-informed initiatives to develop and document sustainable, system-level solutions to improve population health, resiliency, and stability.” Their “Blue Zones Power 9” framework is designed to highlight lifestyle habits of the world’s healthiest, longest-lived people, and includes the following tenets: move naturally, know your sense of purpose, downshift (stress management), 80% rule (eat until feeling 80% full), plant slant (plants as major source of protein), wine at 5 (moderate drinking), belonging (faith-based community), loved ones first (family first, multi-generation living), and right tribe (social circles that share healthy behaviors).

The mission of PHD aligns closely to the stated purpose of previous Blue Zones projects, as PHD aims to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of communities in Santa Clara County. Specifically, PHD provides data, expertise, and resources to support the implementation of evidence-based interventions that promote healthy behaviors, environments, and policies. Many of these efforts closely align with several of the tenets espoused by the Blue Zones Projects, specifically those related to plant-based nutrition and access to exercise. PHD uses data to understand inequitable impact and prioritize support for communities experiencing disproportionate burden of preventable health outcomes. PHD also monitors and evaluates the impact of policy changes and activities on health outcomes that may overlap with Blue Zones projects. And by collaborating with stakeholders, PHD helps engage affected community members to create a culture of health and wellness in

focused communities and ensure proposed solutions are feasible, culturally responsive, and grounded in community endorsement.

While detailed recommendations of the proposed collaboration between the City and Blue Zones, LLC, would likely depend on outcomes of the readiness assessment and direction from the steering committee, the Blue Zones Project framework generally includes recommendations related to eating a plant-based diet, engaging in regular physical activity, having a sense of purpose, belonging to a social network, and avoiding stress. Multiple existing PHD programs align closely with elements of the Blue Zones framework including the following:

- Promoting walking and biking to school through the Safe Routes to School program;
- encouraging physical activity in outdoor settings with a prescription from a health care provider through the Juntos Initiative;
- community gardening projects in Mountain View, East San José, and Gilroy;
- increasing the accessibility of specific diets due to health reasons, environmental, allergens, or religion through Universal Meals at O'Connor Hospital and St. Louise Regional Hospital cafeterias and Blue Zones recipes at O'Connor Hospital;
- the MIND Diet trainings for older adults at countywide senior centers;
- promoting healthy living in elementary school cafeterias through CalFresh Healthy Living program, and its market match program at farmers markets; and,
- community nutrition promotion at community outreach events throughout the county.

Notwithstanding the current structural budget deficit anticipated for FY2024-25, PHD is currently resourced to continue its work in these areas and is committed to doing so ongoing, either in collaboration with the Blue Zones Project or without if funds are not available to support the collaboration with the City of San José and Blue Zones, LLC, at this time.

Should the Board choose to allocate funds to support the Blue Zones Project with the City, PHD recommends the following additional actions to ensure alignment with County activities and priorities, and to minimize duplication of efforts to optimize use of County resources:

- a. Recommend a member of the Public Health Department serve in an advisor role on the City of San José Blue Zones Project Steering Committee, to order provide in-kind support to the Blue Zones Project and to ensure collaboration and coordination of efforts aligned with City and County programs and values.
- b. Recommend Blue Zones, LLC, consultants and its Steering Committee align with underway County-wide initiatives including those addressing walkability, biking paths, neighborhoods parks, food systems, and climate resilience.
- c. Recommend Blue Zones, LLC, consultants and the City of San José utilize data, community input, and equity principles in determining the neighborhoods that may

benefit from the Blue Zones Project and the policies and processes utilized in the Project.

- d. Recommend the findings of the data-based equity assessment be presented to the Board in a report outlining the risks and economic opportunities of a full-scale Blue Zone Project implementation in the County of Santa Clara.

Reason for request of Delegation of Authority

Although delegations of authority are discouraged except under certain circumstances, this delegation of authority is necessary as the County is currently prioritizing health equity in the City of San José where some of the largest health disparities exist. Therefore, a delegation of authority would allow the County of Santa Clara to award funds to match the City's contribution for the Blue Zones Project and to solidify a commitment to a City-County partnership to improve health of San José residents.

CHILD IMPACT

The recommended action could positively impact children and youth by aiming to identify and enhance community assets and resources that address the root causes of health disparities impacting families and communities.

SENIOR IMPACT

The recommended action aims to identify and enhance community assets and resources that address the root causes of health disparities that limit seniors' ability to live a longer and healthier life. The population of older adults in Santa Clara County is expected to double by 2050, which heightens the importance of building place-based strategies to improve population health and longevity.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The recommended action could have a positive impact on sustainability by aligning the elements within the Blue Zones Readiness Assessment with the County of Santa Clara Sustainability Master Plan and the Food Systems Workplan, such as strategies to achieve carbon neutrality through reducing emissions related to livestock industry and vehicle transportation, and to reduce the number of days of poor air quality in vulnerable communities.

CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION

The County would not be able to match funds for the Blue Zones Project in partnership with the City of San José.

STEPS FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Upon approval, Clerk of the Board shall notify Jasmine Luna in the Public Health Department.