



DATE: March 2, 2026

TO: Council Economic Development Committee

FROM: Chief Economic Development Officer

SUBJECT Hayward Restaurant Month 2026

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council Economic Development Committee receives an update on the Third Annual Hayward Restaurant Month Promotion.

SUMMARY

The Economic Development Division launched the third annual Hayward Restaurant Month promotion in January 2026. The program supports local restaurants during a slow time of year after the holidays. The goal is to increase customer visits and sales.

In 2026, staff expanded digital marketing and media outreach. Staff created 15 custom social media reels to promote participating restaurants. The City continued its partnership with Yelp to increase online visibility. The promotion also earned significant regional media coverage, including stories on Telemundo, the East Bay Times, and live segments on KTVU FOX 2 San Francisco.

In addition, staff hosted two ribbon cutting events for participating restaurants. At each event, gift cards were raffled to encourage community members to dine locally during Restaurant Month. This report provides an overview of the program and details its impact.

BACKGROUND

January is historically a slow month for restaurants due to reduced spending after the holidays and seasonal dining trends. Since 2010, VisitCalifornia.org's California Restaurant Month has promoted California Restaurant Month to encourage dining and support restaurants across the state. Many cities have adopted similar programs to help local businesses during this slower time of year. The City of Hayward launched its first Restaurant Month in January 2024. After strong participation and positive feedback in 2024 and 2025, staff continued to refine and expand the program in 2026 to increase business visibility,

community engagement, and media outreach.

DISCUSSION

In 2026, staff focused on improving digital promotion, increasing media coverage, and creating in-person events. Key highlights include:

Custom Video Promotion:

ED staff collaborated with Community and Media Relations staff to produce 15 custom Instagram reels featuring participating restaurants. The videos were posted on City social media accounts and shared with businesses so they could post them on their own channels. This helped expand reach of the promotion. The City also provided businesses with raw video footage that they can continue to use beyond the promotion.

Print Marketing Materials:

Staff created custom graphics and printed posters for participating restaurants. These materials were provided for use in their restaurants, ensuring consistent branding and making it easier for restaurants to promote their specials. Large format posters were also placed in the downtown kiosk and at City Hall entrances to promote the program to visitors and City staff.

Yelp Partnership:

The City continued working with Yelp to promote an online map of participating restaurants. This included map and listing accessible through the mobile application and online. This made it easier for customers to find local dining options.

Media Coverage:

Restaurant Month earned extensive regional coverage, including:

- Promotional segment aired on Telemundo 48
- Coverage in the East Bay Times Online and Sunday Print Edition
- Five restaurants appeared live on KTVU FOX 2 including:
 - Concha Dreams
 - The Old City Roastery
 - Storybook
 - Golden Safari
 - The Neighborhood Grandma

Digital Billboard Promotion:

Restaurant Month 2026 was promoted through ad placement on two high-visibility billboards on major regional freeways. One billboard, located on Interstate 880 near Whipple Road, carries approximately 188,000 vehicles per day. The second billboard, located on State Route 92 near the San Mateo–Hayward Bridge toll plaza, carries approximately 104,000 vehicles per day. These high-traffic locations increased awareness among daily commuters and regional travelers, expanding the promotion’s reach beyond social media and local audiences.

Ribbon Cutting Events:

Economic Development hosted ribbon cuttings for two restaurants that were celebrating important milestones during Restaurant Month. One event marked the grand opening of Storybook, and the other celebrated the opening of a new outdoor rooftop patio at Hinata Sushi Kitchen. Staff coordinated with both businesses in advance to align the events with the Restaurant Month Campaign and encouraged the restaurants to feature special menu offerings during the celebrations.

Restaurant month branding and messaging were incorporated into each event to increase visibility and drive participation. At each event, four \$100 Together for Hayward gift cards were raffled to attendees to encourage local dining and reinforce the month-long promotion.

Business Participation:

A total of 24 restaurants participated. These businesses offered special menu items, fixed-price menus, or discounts to attract customers.

Social Media Promotion:

The Community Media Relations Division promoted Restaurant Month across City social media platforms, with a focus on short-form videos. ED staff also provided a press release distributed in *The Stack* newsletter.

City social media posts generated 19,289 impressions and 14,498 video views across Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. An additional 2,145 views were recorded on YouTube. The campaign generated 639 engagements, resulting in a 3.3% engagement rate.

Short-form videos performed well. The most viewed video received over 3,000 views. Several restaurants featured in the City's videos were later highlighted on KTVU and Telemundo, expanding exposure beyond City platforms.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Following the promotion, Economic Development conducted a survey of participants to assess impact and identify areas of improvement. Participating restaurants were surveyed following the conclusion of Restaurant Month to assess impact and identify areas of improvement. Staff conducted multiple rounds of follow-up outreach, including reminder emails and direct communication. A total of 8 out of 24 participating restaurants responded.

Survey results are as follows:

- 6 out of 8 restaurants reported an increase in sales compared to a typical January
- 5 restaurants reported increases of at least 5%
- 1 reported 29% increase in sales, while another reported at least 20% increase

In addition to sales increases:

- 7 reported increased foot traffic compared to a typical January
- 6 indicated customers mentioned or showed excitement about their offered special
- 5 reported repeat customers because of the promotion

Respondents rated their overall experience highly.

Several respondents noted that City provided marketing materials including custom Instagram reels, JPEG graphics, mini posters, and printed materials supported their promotional efforts. Businesses that reposted City content or created their own original social media content reported stronger engagement and customer awareness of their specials. Multiple restaurants specifically mentioned that customers referenced social media posts or in-store posters when ordering promotional items.

While survey results reflect feedback from respondents rather than all participating businesses, the data indicates that overall, the 2026 Hayward Restaurant Month campaign contributed to increased customer activity, sales growth for a majority of respondents, and strong community engagement during a traditionally slower month.

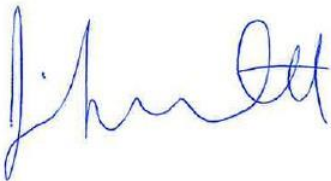
FISCAL IMPACT

As with the first year, the implementation of Hayward Restaurant Month required no additional City funds beyond Economic Development and Community Media Relations staff time. Promotional efforts were conducted through existing social media and communication channels. The Together for Hayward e-Gift Cards raffled at ribbon cutting events were funded using unredeemed balances from prior promotional campaigns. No new City funds were allocated for this program.

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