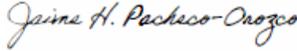


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: June 24, 2024

To: Honorable Members of the City Council

From: Jaime H. Pacheco-Orozco, General Manager 
Los Angeles Department of Aging

Subject: **Department of Aging Report Back on the Rapid Rapid Senior Meals Program Status, Eligibility Criteria, Other Revenue Sources, Other Senior Meal Programs**

In considering the motion (CFN 24-0600-S11) by Councilmember Heather Hutt to provide \$8 Million from the Unappropriated Balance to continue the Rapid Response Senior Meals Program (RRSMP) for FY 2024-25, the Budget, Finance, and Innovation Committee (BFI) amended the motion to instruct the Department of Aging (LADOA) to report back on:

- The status of the RRSMP including number of seniors receiving meals through the program
- The criteria used to determine who is eligible to receive meals under this program and, if no criteria is used, then instruct the Department to propose criteria similar to other senior meal programs
- Indicate if other sources of funds may be used to continue the program
- Indicate other senior meal programs that are available

Background

In its budget request for Fiscal Year 2023-24, the Department of Aging indicated that food insecurity is a continuing and growing concern among seniors. The Department noted that many individuals and families turn to food pantries and food banks to get food staples; however, the Department also indicated many seniors are unable to benefit from these options because they lack transportation, because they must wait in long lines, or because they have chronic and disabling conditions. The request for funding was partly to address hunger among older adults but also partly to provide access to nutritious, healthy foods as a way to avoid and reduce malnutrition among older adults. The Department emphasized the importance of addressing malnutrition because over time, malnutrition leads to poor health outcomes, longer hospital stays, and higher health costs for seniors.

The Department also indicated that the pandemic did not create food-insecurity among older adults; it simply highlighted what was and is a continuing concern for seniors. The end of the Public Health Emergency did not end the food insecurity that many seniors experience daily. People are living longer, and as they age, they often want to retain their autonomy and independence. Unfortunately, nearly a quarter of older adults in Los Angeles subsist on incomes that are at or below 150% of poverty level and nearly two-thirds pay more than 30% of their

income on housing costs. Many older adults live alone, and many lack the social and family networks that would allow them to prepare their meals at home or to access the congregate meal sites.

Status of the Rapid Response Senior Meals Program

As implemented, the RRSMP is a locally funded effort to complement the federal and state programs offered through the City's Multipurpose Senior Centers (MPC). The RRSMP alleviates food-insecurity for thousands of older adults, many of whom are isolated and unable to access nutritious meals at our congregate meal sites. Home-delivered meals are often the first in-home service that an older adult receives and serve as an entry point into the other services that the City's Department of Aging provides.

The Department undertook a Request For Proposals (RFP) procurement process to solicit applications from food vendors to participate in the RRSMP. This RFP process identified four qualified providers—Revolution Foods, Everytable, Sushi Koo, and Made by Meg—to prepare and deliver meals to city residents requesting to participate in the RRSMP.

In its April 9, 2024, Report Back to City Council (CFN 23-0600-S38), the Department provided a status update on the RRSMP. The Report Back stated the RRSMP program was fully enrolled with 5,800 seniors and had a waitlist of over 1,400 individuals. The Report Back also provided the BFI Committee with three possible end dates given the funding available: (1) an end date of June 30, 2024, if the City Council prohibited the Department from execute time-only amendments to existing providers; (2) an end date of mid-November 2024 if the City Council authorized the Department to execute time-only amendments to use funds encumbered in the existing contracts (\$10,405,200); and (3) an end date of mid-February 2025 if the City Council authorized the transfer of funds in the Unappropriated Balance (\$3,945,854) and coupled those additional funds with the any rollover funds.

As part of the City's Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget Process, the City Council authorized the Department to use \$2.711 Million of unexpended funding to extend the ramp down period to August 31, 2024.

As previously indicated to City Council during the Budget Hearings, the Department started the ramp down phase in May 2024, shutting down the enrollment portal, eliminating the transfer of seniors from the waitlist to newly opened slots, and beginning the process of informing both enrolled and waitlisted seniors as well as the contracted service providers of the Program's end date (August 31, 2024).

As of this reporting period, the RRSMP currently serves 5,469 seniors with five meals weekly and has a waitlist of 1,307 individuals. The table below indicates the number of individuals by Council District enrolled and waitlisted in the RRSMP.

Table 1: Number of Enrolled and Waitlisted Participants per Council District

By Council Districts	Enrolled	Waitlist
CD 1 (Eunisses Hernandez)	497	110
CD 2 (Paul Krekorian)	196	37
CD 3 (Bob Blumenfield)	216	46
CD 4 (Nithya Raman)	248	43
CD 5 (Katy Yaroslavsky)	250	63
CD 6 (Imelda Padilla)	304	90
CD 7 (Monica Rodriguez)	209	39
CD 8 (Marqueece Harris-Dawson)	571	137
CD 9 (Curren D. Price, Jr.)	317	75
CD 10 (Heather Hutt)	634	191
CD 11 (Traci Park)	350	78
CD 12 (John Lee)	308	83
CD 13 (Hugo Soto-Martinez)	516	108
CD 14 (Kevin de Leon)	659	148
CD 15 (Tim McOsker)	194	60
Total	5,469	1,307

Projected Expenditures Through End of FY 2023-24

Based on current operating levels, the Departments projects to expend a total of \$5,227,510 by the end of FY 2023-24 consisting of:

- Meals: \$4,983,135
- Staffing: \$234,373
- Outreach: \$2,782.40
- Equipment: \$7,219.42

Eligibility Criteria

In response to the FY 2023-24 Budget Report dated June 30, 2023 (CFN 23-0600-S40), the Department submitted to the City Council its proposed Implementation Plan for the RRSMP. As indicated in that Report Back, the City Council approved the eligibility criteria for this program.

Participants will self-certify the following:

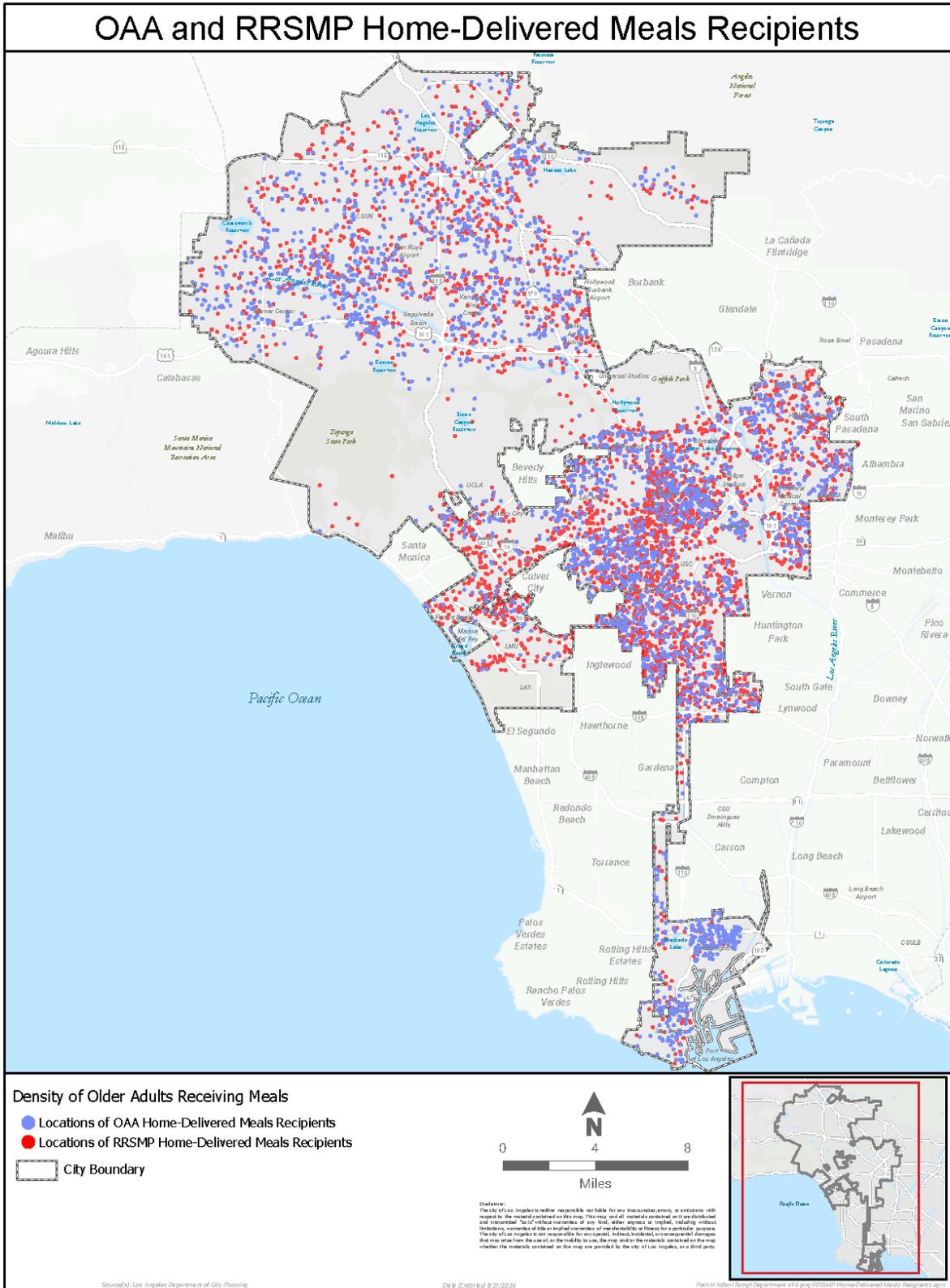
- 60 years of age or older
- Residency in the City of Los Angeles

While these basic criteria are similar to the Older Americans Act (OAA) Home-Delivered Meals Program operated through the MPCs, there is a significant distinction between the two programs. The OAA Home-Delivered Meal Program conformed with federal and state definition of a frail older adult, one that requires individuals undergo a comprehensive assessment to determine their inability to perform a minimum of two Activities of Daily Living (such as bathing, toileting, dressing, feeding, breathing, transferring and mobility and associated tasks, without substantial human assistance, including verbal reminding, physical cueing, or supervision); or to determine if a cognitive or other medical impairment, requires substantial supervision because the older individual behaves in a manner that poses a serious health or safety hazard to the individual or to others.

The RRSMP eligibility criteria were specifically designed to allow food insecure seniors attain nutritious meals when they might not otherwise qualify to be served through the OAA Home-Delivered Meal Program. These criteria mirror the presumptive eligibility guidelines used in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs for seniors, where individuals self-certify being 62 years of age and older.

To help ensure that this Program benefitted low-income, overlooked individuals as much as possible, the Department worked closely with allied City Departments (including the Community Investment for Families Department, Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department, the Department on Disability, the Economic and Workforce Development Department, and the Youth Development Department). The Department also attended numerous community events, including those hosted by Council Offices, to promote both its RRSMP and OAA Home-Delivered meal programs as well as to share information on the myriad of services that the City provides to seniors.

In the map below, Rapid Response Senior Meals Program recipients are represented by red dots and Older Americans Adult Home-Delivered Meals program participants are represented by blue dots; as is evident, the vast majority of recipients are concentrated in areas which align with our presumptive eligibility approach (see end of report for maps of each separately).



As noted in the previous report, the City's Department of Aging, as a state and federally designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA), is prohibited from means-testing older adults to qualify or to deny them services. Under the OAA Home-Delivered meals program, individuals must be 60 years of age or older; and must be homebound by reason of illness, incapacity, disability, or otherwise isolated. Additionally, spouses and caregivers of eligible participants, regardless of age, may also receive meals if it is beneficial to the participant; and individuals with a disability who reside at home with an older individual may receive a meal if it is in the best interest of the homebound senior.¹

Other Funding Sources

At present the Department does not have other resources to implement this locally funded program. Our staple meals programs are paid for primarily by the Older Americans Act Title III-C grant programs and Older Californians Act (Title III-C1, Congregate Meals; and Title III-C2, Home-Delivered Meals). In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the Department was allocated \$9,914,633 for the Title III-C2 Home-Delivered Meals program; for Fiscal Year 2024-25, the Department has been notified that its allocation will be reduced by \$384,419, for a total Title III-C2, Home-Delivered Meal award of \$9,530,214. Similarly, the City's allocation for the Congregate Meals Program (Title III-C1) has been reduced for FY 2024-25 by \$188,837, from \$5,764,029 to \$5,575,192. Combined, this results in a net reduction of \$573,256 in funding for senior meals programs.

Alternative Senior Meal Programs

The Department oversees a network of congregate and home-delivered meal programs funded by the Older Americans Act and other supplemental state/federal grants that are provided through our Multipurpose Senior Centers. As the program ramps down, we have identified Multipurpose Senior Centers (MPCs) for each participant and waitlisted individuals and will refer them to their respective centers to present them with other meal options they can turn to once this program ends. If individuals choose not to participate in the meals program offered through the MPCs (or, if the MPCs lack the logistical and staff capacity to serve them), the Department can refer them to other community and regional food programs including, but not limited to:

- Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
- Meals on Wheels
- Project Angel Food
- Urban Food Partners
- Food Finder

It is important to note that the Department does not have contractual agreements with these organizations. Some programs are fee-based, with a sliding scale depending on the senior's ability to pay, some may have limited home-delivery options, and some may provide only pick-up options.

¹ https://aging.ca.gov/Providers_and_Partners/Home-Delivered_Nutrition/Program_Narrative_and_Fact_Sheets/

Based on the Department's experience with the end of last year's RRSMP, the Department anticipates many program participants likely will not access meals in the congregate meal program offered through the MPCs, for a variety of reasons, including the continuing fear of being exposed to respiratory infections, lack of readily accessible transportation options, and caregiving obligations to spouses/partners, dependents, and individuals with disabilities. Notwithstanding these, the Department is concerned about the operational, logistical, and staffing capacities of our MPCs to absorb an influx of a significant number of new participants within a very short period.

Conclusion

Flexible meal programs made possible through local investments, like the Rapid Response Senior Meals Program, continue to play a critical role in serving a key segment of the food insecure older adult population that is not being served by traditional forms of congregate and home-delivered meal programs. While the previous iterations of this program were designed as a pandemic response effort, the RRSMP was designed to address the more prevalent and underlying issue of hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition among a number of seniors. The pandemic did not cause but highlighted this existing and growing issue that continues long after the end of the Public Health Emergency.

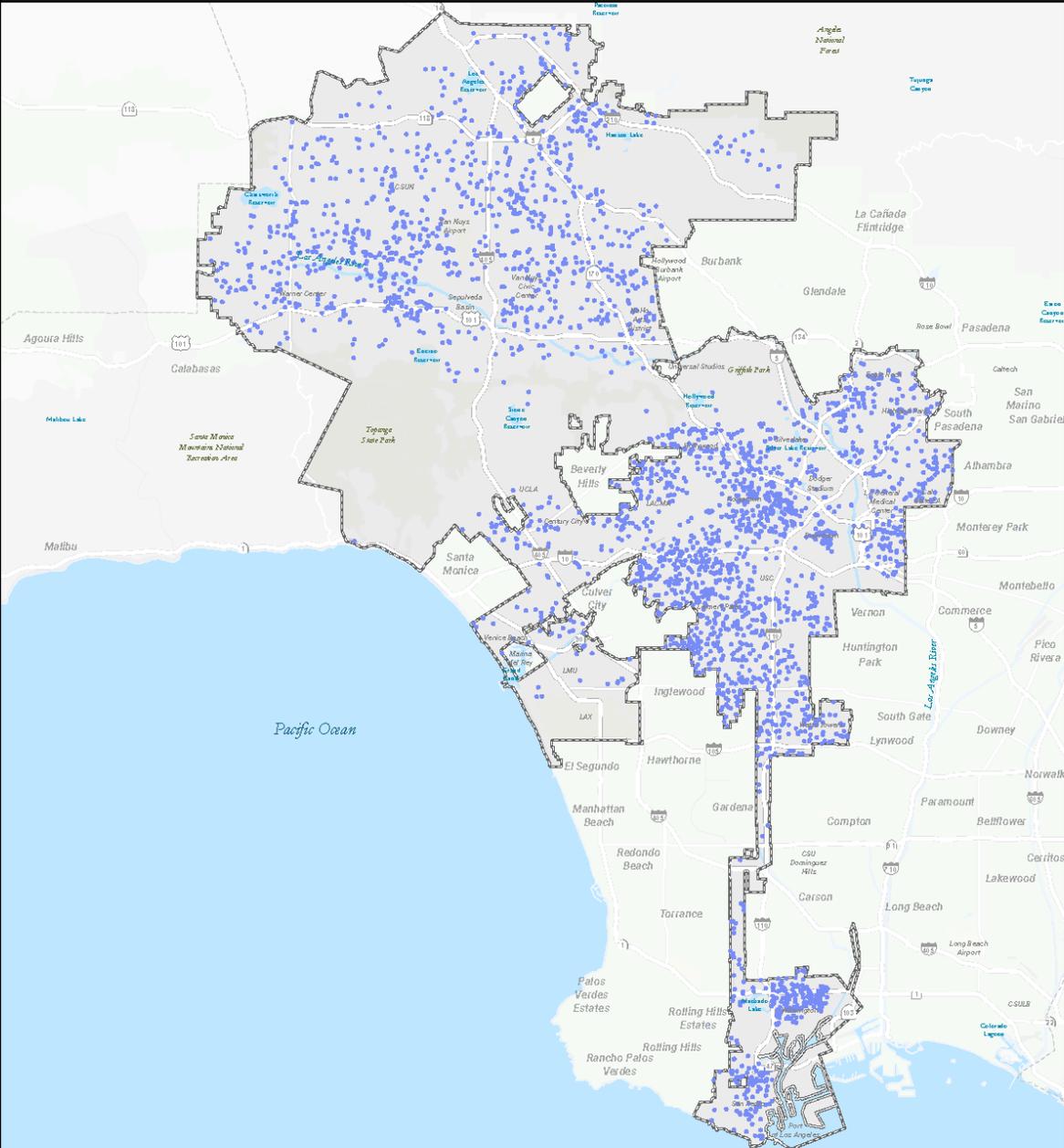
The Department is continuing to ramp down the Rapid Response Senior Meals Program. Without additional funding, the RRSMP will officially end on August 31, 2024.

Should the Council approve the motion by Councilmember Hutt to allocate \$8 million before Council recesses, the Department will pause the ramp down activities; renegotiate the agreements with the existing meals providers to account for increases in the costs of food supplies, labor, and transportation; and adjust the number of total meals available to be delivered. The Department continues to emphasize the need for dedicated staffing to administer this program; diverting staffing from existing grant funded programs impacts the Department's ability to manage those programs.

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JHP:mn:gdz/Rapid Senior Meals Program Report Back

Department of Aging: OAA Home-Delivered Meals Recipients

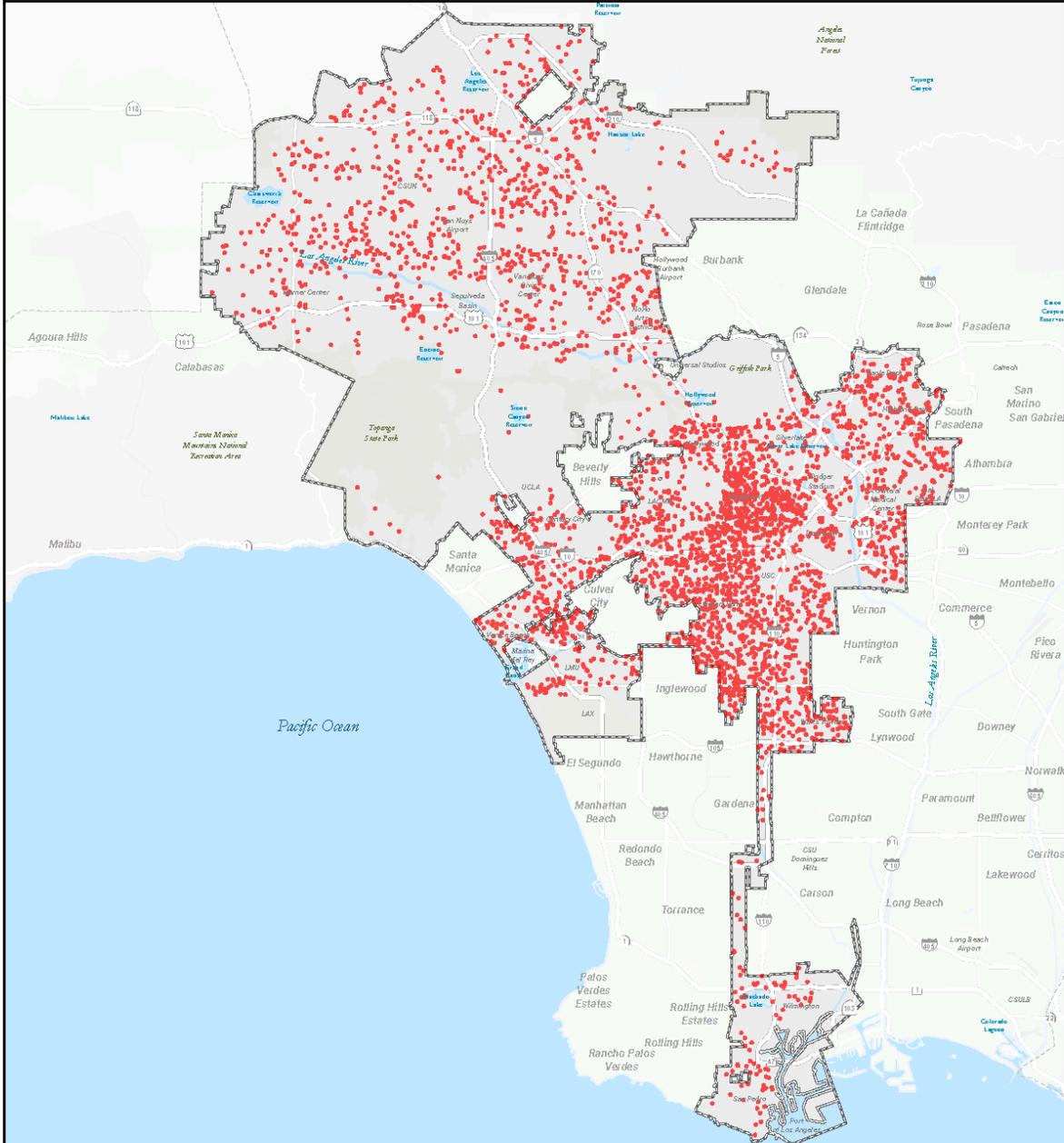


Density of Older Adults Receiving Meals
 ● Locations of OAA Home-Delivered Meals Recipients
 □ City Boundary



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Department of Aging: RRSMP Home-Delivered Meals Recipients



Density of Older Adults Receiving Meals

- Locations of RRSMP Home-Delivered Meals Recipients
- ▭ City Boundary



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