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Transmitted via email

January 10, 2022

President Wasserman and Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
70 West Hedding Street
East Wing, 10th Floor
San Jose, CA 95110

Re: Item 19: Consider recommendations relating to the Community Development Corporation Grant Program

Dear members of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of our members, we write today in support of funding the first round of the Community Development Corporation Grant Program.

Cities and communities across the county are exploring options for alternative approaches to developing and preserving affordable housing. Central to these ongoing discussions is the expanded role of community based organizations, and we appreciate the county being an active participant in those discussions. Santa Clara County currently lacks an infrastructure of Community Development Corporations, which can offer an opportunity for expanded community participation and decision making, and have the potential to integrate affordable housing development into a broader understanding of the complexity of community needs and the stabilizing role of additional affordable housing.

We continue to support building out a community based infrastructure, but as the staff report notes, the capacity building will take time and commitment. The proposed partnership with the Silicon Valley Council of Nonprofits to provide organizational capacity building and technical assistance creates an important pathway for expansion of these efforts. We would expect that this assistance will provide opportunities for a broad range of creative and innovative models of community controlled affordable housing development.

We would like to suggest defining the grant criteria to be as responsive as possible to the community driven processes underway, and those that may emerge in the future. We commend staff's expansion of communities of interest beyond geographically definitions. We are hopeful that different models of sustained affordability, including community land trusts and community cooperatives, will have opportunities to qualify for support. We would recommend a more explicit acknowledgment of the flexibility that may be required in the time frame for project initiation. The grant program should acknowledge the challenges of building new organizational capacity in an environment without an existing infrastructure for CDCs.

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Santa Clara County has benefited from the incredible capacity and experience of regional and local affordable housing developers in its response to the housing crisis. CDCs offer the potential of additional tools in this effort, and are deserving of support.

Sincerely,



Mathew Reed
Policy Director

