



**SAN JOSE DOWNTOWN
ASSOCIATION**

November 2, 2021

Supervisor Wasserman, Board President and County Board of Supervisors
Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors
70 W. Hedding Street
San Jose, CA 95110

RE: County Board item #19: ARPA

Dear Board President Wasserman and County Supervisors,

The San Jose Downtown Association (SJDA) represents more than 1,800 businesses and property owners and as we are working on placemaking and clean and safe initiatives to help employees and customers return downtown, we have received feedback from members and visitors regarding their concerns for safety related to our unhoused population. Building off our current PBID services and expanded Groundwerx services, we strongly believe that we can act as a liaison and facilitate the county's unhoused outreach services leveraging ARPA funds (i.e. Grant Program for Community Based Organizations) that can help ameliorate these safety issues.

Upon our PBID renewal in July 2022, a new Social Impact Team that complements our renowned Groundwerx services will be created. This new program will address the unhoused concerns we face daily by working with key housing partners including non-profits, city, and county. However, due to the overwhelming feedback from our members, we believe this program cannot wait to be implemented until July 2022 when the new PBID district begins services. The Social Impact Team will be led by a Social Impact Manager who will have a background in social work (a Licensed Clinical Social Worker or similar credential and/or educational background). Team members will have experience working in case management, outreach, and/or lived experience with homelessness.

When hired, the Social Impact Team will also receive additional training around de-escalation tactics and crisis response. PBID staff are already working with service provider partners to help refine these training requirements and develop a coordination plan. ***Six months of funding would allow the Social Impact Manager to:***

- Create and bolster opportunities for building trust with our downtown unsheltered population, making the process of connecting an individual with needed social services increasing efficiency and efficacy
- Allow for increased support and coordination as the County begins to implement both assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) and the Community Mobile Response Pilot Program
- Foster increased peer-to-peer collaboration between SJDA, City and County staff and nonprofit social service providers

- Start connecting with our downtown unsheltered population to understand their needs prior to the implementation of the PBID's new 10-year management plan
- Allow Groundwerx to focus on the fundamentals: cleanliness, interacting with business and property owners, providing directions and guidance to downtowners and increase staff capacity to respond to customer concerns seven days a week

Anecdotally, in the last year Groundwerx has had more incidents of aggressive behavior associated with individuals with undiagnosed or untreated mental illness. These aggressive interactions have unfortunately resulted in attempted assaults on staff. While our public safety partners, and Groundwerx training, prevented these incidents from becoming life threatening, it has become clear that we need staff specialized in working with our most vulnerable population downtown.

We are kindly requesting \$150,000 of ARPA to fund this six month program that will be inherited into our PBID and fully-funded thereafter. We appreciate the consideration of prioritizing funds for our city and communities. *What our county can afford is to fund this program. What our community can't afford is to continue the status quo.*

Sincerely,



Scott Knies
Executive Director

cc:

Katia McClain, SJDA, Board President
Chris Freise, PBID, Board President