News Release

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City of Riverside Teams with The Grove Community Church to Create Four Housing Units on Church Property for Homeless Individuals

Project's fees will be paid with $120,000 in Measure Z funds designated for reducing homelessness

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – In a historic first that could be replicated around the city, Riverside has agreed to use Measure Z funds to pay as much as $120,000 in fees to make possible four cottages at The Grove Community Church that will house homeless individuals and families.

An agreement unanimously approved by the City Council today (6/19) calls for the small village on the southwest corner of property at 19900 Grove Community Drive to remain in place for at least five years. Representatives of The Grove said they expected to continue the program beyond that required period in order to keep the housing available to people who need it.

The Grove Community Church also accepted a $40,000 check from Rotary International District 5330 to help pay for the project, which will include substantial counseling services, substance abuse recovery programs, job training and other services provided by The Grove.

"I'm just so proud to be a part of this community, and this faith community," said Mayor Rusty Bailey, who has championed the faith-based approach to providing housing for more than a year. "Our team has gone to great lengths to ensure that this village will not only meet the needs of our neighbors without homes, but will also integrate successfully into the neighborhood."

The project calls for homeless and/or low-income individuals to utilize the village housing until they can stabilize their lives, then move into permanent housing elsewhere. The $120,000 in Measure Z funds set aside for reducing homelessness that would go into the project equate to $6,000 per unit per year. The amount could be less than $120,000 if some agencies agree to waive their fees.

Other partners in the project include Tilden-Coil Constructors, Rotary International, Habitat for Humanity, Champion Electric and the Riverside Unified School District STEM School.

"We're so thankful for all the partners who have come along with us," said Tom Lance, Senior Pastor at The Grove. "It hasn't been easy, but it has been good."

The project, on 0.28 acres formerly used for volleyball courts, is designed to create a template that can be replicated by other faith communities and non-profit organizations in providing housing across Riverside.

"This is the first, I think, of many projects like this across our city," said Councilmember Mike Gardner. "This is an example of how it can be done and the partnerships that are necessary to make it happen."

The project comes at a time where housing is more expensive than ever and harder than ever for many people to obtain. Only 29 percent of California households can afford the median-priced home in the state, and only 38 percent of Californians could afford the median-priced condominium or townhome. In Riverside County, there were 59,000 extremely low-income renter households, but only about 15,000 apartments to house them.

Given those facts, Riverside officials have been examining ways to address the most pressing housing needs in the city, which are permanent supportive housing units that follow the "Housing First" approach, which includes on-site counseling and other support services for people trying to lift themselves out of homelessness.

City officials have been talking with local faith-based communities for several months about the possibility of developing Housing First units on church properties and how to resolve the fee issue. Options include everything from the small cottages that are built at The Grove to larger multi-family developments.

"To Tom Lance and The Grove, God bless you," said Councilmember Chuck Conder, who represents the area. "I look forward to coming up there and hammering a nail or two, if they will let me."

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