

Solano County Board of Supervisors
675 Texas Street, Suite 6500
Fairfield, CA 94533

October 11, 2021

Re: Solano Board of Supervisors proposed allocation of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

The Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition (VHJC) submits this comment letter to Solano Board of Supervisors on the need to prioritize addressing the housing crisis in your proposed allocation of American Rescue Plan Act Funds (ARPA). We ask that you meaningfully address the housing crisis through prioritizing funds to protect tenants from the wave of evictions that threaten to devastate our communities and invest in models of permanently affordable housing.

VHJC is composed of community members, policy advocates and organizations that come together to fight for affordable housing in Vallejo. VHJC believes that housing is a human right, and is committed to working with the city and community groups in Vallejo to ensure that everyone in our city has a safe and stable home regardless of race, culture, age, and sexual orientation.

In the fall of 2020, VHJC engaged the City of Vallejo as they developed their proposed Housing Strategy. In the fall of 2020 VHJC submitted a comment letter and in the spring of 2021 VHJC gave public comment at multiple public meetings regarding the City's adoption of the Housing Strategy. Our message has been clear, take bold action to stabilize Vallejo's communities in the near-term by protecting tenants from displacement and invest in long-term community stability by investing in models of permanent affordability such as community land trusts (CLTs).

The Solano Board of Supervisors proposed allocation of ARPA offers the opportunity to invest on both of these proven strategies to address the housing crisis in the county. Housing is identified as a priority issue in both the Solano County Community Health Assessment Report and Napa/Solano Area Agency on Aging Four-Year Plan on Aging. It is an eligible category under the U.S. Treasury Department guidelines for ARPA eligibility.

However, VHJC members and the Vallejo residents we organize with are deeply concerned about the board's proposed priorities for ARPA funds and the failure to meaningfully address the housing crisis. The challenges of implementing the state's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), and the decision to not extend the state's eviction moratorium, as well as the lack of action on county and local eviction moratorium protections, means thousands of Solano County residents are facing the threat of eviction.

We ask that the board allocate funds to support the eviction response recommendations in BARHII's "Eight Essential Actions for the Bay Area" COVID response (see attached). Specifically, #2 on the checklist with an emphasis on cash assistance to residents who need to be rehoused, undocumented residents, and support for unhoused residents currently sheltering in place outside.

In addition, VHJC along with Northern California Land Trust (NCLT), Urban Habitat, BARHII, and other partners listed in Attachment A of this letter have partnered to develop the Vallejo Community Land Trust (VCLT) to provide long-term permanently affordable housing in Vallejo. NCLT has secured approximately \$2 million from the California Department of Housing and Community Development to create permanently affordable housing in Solano County with an initial focus in Vallejo. The funds will help build new permanently affordable ADU units and provide down-payment assistance to help low-income renter households become first-time CLT homeowners. NCLT will be able to provide up to \$100,000 in down-payment assistance to approximately 18 households who earn at or below 80% of Area Median Income. The state allows a maximum of 36 months to expend the awarded funds. The board can help provide funding, as outlined in Attachment A, to support the pilot acquisition phase and provide long-term affordable housing in the county.

We ask that prioritize ARPA funds to support these proven community-driven and community identified strategies to meaningfully address the housing crisis on the county. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cristal Little
Lead Organizer, Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition

Attachment A

The Vallejo Community Land Trust (VCLT) seeks to develop community-driven permanently affordable housing in Vallejo. VCLT is the result of a partnership between Northern California Community Land Trust (NCLT), the Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition (VHJC), Urban Habitat, and Bay Area Regional Health Inequity Initiatives (BARHII).

During the pilot phase, we are creating a governance structure, raising funds for acquisitions and operations, and purchasing an initial portfolio of properties as we build the foundation for a fully independent community land trust. This project builds community power by creating long-term housing affordability and stability, strengthening tenant rights, and building bridges across different communities in Vallejo. The Vallejo Community Land Trust is designed to be under local community control, with neighborhood residents serving as trustees. The ultimate outcome will be more stable communities with less displacement and permanently affordable housing.

A community land trust (CLT) is a nonprofit organization that holds and stewards land for the benefit of the community, with a particular emphasis on ensuring permanently affordable housing and community facilities. CLTs are governed by residents who live on the land and therefore reflect the community and its needs. A CLT board membership is composed of 1/3 CLT residents, 1/3 community members, and 1/3 stakeholders with expertise in housing and finance. CLTs take land out of the speculative market through a 99-year renewable ground lease, which ensures affordable housing. The CLT retains ownership of the land, and residents own the homes on the land. CLTs can consist of single-family homes or units that are owned by residents, rental housing, local serving retail, community centers, and community gardens.

WHY NOW?

NCLT, a Vallejo Community Land Trust partner, secured approximately \$2 million from the California Department of Housing and Community Development to create permanently affordable housing in Vallejo. The funds will help build new permanently affordable ADU units and provide down-payment assistance to help low-income renter households become first-time CLT homeowners. NCLT will be able to provide up to \$100,000 in down-payment assistance to approximately 18 households who earn at or below 80% of Area Median Income. The state allows a maximum of 36 months to expend the awarded funds.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR FUNDERS

The Vallejo Community Land Trust is seeking \$500,000 to \$750,000 in capital grant support during the first two years of the pilot program. This funding will cover the cost of up-front acquisition and development of the land and establishing a CLT. Additionally, financial partners may support NCLT during the acquisition stage by offering gap financing through low-interest loans such as deferred payment and forgivable loans.

Since 2018, the Strong, Prosperous, and Resilient Community Challenge (SPARCC) national community development initiative has been supporting the Bay Area for All's work to build VHJC in order to organize community voices and address housing affordability issues through policy work and the direct acquisition of land. To date, SPARCC has provided technical assistance and grant support to fund key strategic partners, but SPARCC is eager to build on those early contributions with project-based capital. For example, SPARCC has supported Oakland Community Land Trust and Northern California Land Trust with grants, loans, and equity-like capital to acquire 25 units in seven properties over the last three years.

PARTNERS

Northern California Land Trust (NCLT)

NCLT is a Community Land Trust (CLT) that uses community ownership and control of the land in order to provide affordable homes and community facilities in perpetuity. Founded in 1973, NCLT has led the development of many innovations and developments in cooperative and community ownership models that help ensure housing and economic justice for all. NCLT envisions a world where persons of all means have secure, sustainable and affordable housing and community facilities through resident and community control and ownership.

<https://nclt.org>

Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition (VHJC)

The Vallejo Housing Justice Coalition (VHJC), a project of Urban Habitat, is composed of community members, policy advocates, and organizations that come together to fight for affordable housing in Vallejo. VHJC believes that housing is a human right and is committed to working with the city and community groups in Vallejo to ensure that everyone in our city has a safe and stable home regardless of race, culture, age, and sexual orientation.

<https://www.vhjc.org>

Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative (BARHII)

BARHII is the coalition of 11 Bay Area public health departments, whose mission is to transform public health practice to address upstream social determinants of health like health equity, housing quality and affordability, economic opportunity and inclusion, immigration, climate resilience, and racial equity. We advocate for local, state, and regional jurisdictions to integrate health-promoting approaches into their policies and procedures. Our strategy embraces integrated health, equity and resiliency planning through leadership development and power base-building and policy and systems change by transforming institutions to health justice champions. www.barhii.org

Urban Habitat

Urban Habitat works to democratize power and advance equitable policies to create a just and connected Bay Area for low-income communities and communities of color. They confront structural inequities impacting historically disenfranchised communities. Through strategic partnerships, they support increasing the power and capacity in low-income communities and communities of color. <http://urbanhabitat.org>

Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge (SPARCC)

SPARCC is a national community development initiative of Enterprise Community Partners, the Low Income Investment Fund, and the Natural Resources Defense Council, with funding support from the Ford Foundation, The JPB Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and The California Endowment. <https://www.sparcchub.org/>

Attachment B



EIGHT ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR THE BAY AREA

Preparing for the COVID-19 Eviction and Foreclosure Cliff

All Home

Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment

Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative

Bigglesworth Family Foundation

Black HAT (Housing Advisory Taskforce)

California COVID Justice: Recovery, Response & Repair

ChangeLab Solutions

Centro Legal de la Raza

Community Housing Development Corporation

Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto

Contra Costa Immigrant Rights Alliance

Corporation for Supportive Housing

Destination: Home

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy

East Bay Housing Organizations

Ensuring Opportunity Campaign to End Poverty in Contra Costa

Enterprise Community Partners

Faith in Action Bay Area

Greater Napa Valley Fair Housing Center

Health Leads

Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County

Housing Now!

Human Impact Partners

Legal Aid Association of California

Legal Aid of Marin

Legal Aid of Sonoma County

Legal Link

LISC Bay Area

The Bay Area should be a place where people of diverse incomes and backgrounds can live and thrive. With one million California adults behind on rent, the statewide emergency eviction moratorium expiring on September 30th, and foreclosure protections ending, the **Bay Area's cities, counties, and philanthropies must act quickly to support our communities**. Many households—especially in Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Pacific Islander communities—face a tenuous future as the pandemic continues to deepen existing racial injustices, claim lives, increase debts, and threaten livelihoods. Our solutions should advance racial justice and make everyone safer by prioritizing the people who have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

This overview and implementation guide outlines eight essential actions that local governments and philanthropies should take to prepare for the September 30th eviction cliff and the end of foreclosure protections. It includes solutions that are already working across the region; was created by legal assistance and safety-net organizations, community organizers, philanthropic leaders, and public health experts; and is supported by a broad group of nearly 50 organizations.

For additional information on how to implement these actions in your community, please see the complete **implementation guide** below or at bit.ly/8-essential-actions.

EIGHT ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY READINESS

- Prevent evictions and foreclosures**
 - 1 Expand Just Cause protections
 - 2 Expand debt relief
 - 3 Target homeowner relief
- Educate, inform, and advocate to make rights and relief real**
 - 4 Fund community education and organizing
 - 5 Conduct robust, targeted outreach and communications
- Prepare our systems to respond**
 - 6 Fund legal services
 - 7 Work with local courts to adjust court policies and practices
- Demand state action**
 - 8 Pass resolutions urging the State Legislature and Judicial Council to take further actions.

