

To: Erik Upson

From: Heather Mc Laughlin

Date: January 13,2022

Proposal:

A proposal to develop Transitional Housing for survivors of Domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking in the city of Benicia.

Purpose of the Proposal:

I am writing this letter to propose a solution to the ongoing lack of housing for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking who are attempting to escape the violence that they encounter in their intimate partner relationships as they create healthy lives for themselves and their children.

Statement of Problem:

34.9 % of California women and 31.1% of California men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner sexual violence and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes. In 2018, there were 166,890 domestic violence-related calls to law enforcement; many other incidents went unreported. According to the Solano Commission for Women and Girls 1,129 incidents of domestic violence were reported in Solano County in 2018. During that same period there were 13 reported incidents reported in the city of Benicia. Currently there are two houses with the capability of housing only 20 women and children specifically dedicated to providing victims of violence with safe shelter. The city of Benicia does not have any such resources to provide safe shelter.

Proposed Solution:

I previously proposed that the city of Benicia, Soroptimist International of Benicia, SafeQuest Solano, Inc. and HomeAid Northern California collaborate in providing transitional housing for individuals attempting to escape domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. With possibility of ARPA funds from the County, the collaboration would include the County! The ARPA funds are particularly well suited to this project because we had to close

our previous transitional house because of COVID. I propose that we renovate an existing city residence to house at least four families and/or individuals who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault or human trafficking. Soroptimist International of Benicia will fundraise for required construction and furnishings. SafeQuest Solano, Inc. will lease the property from the city and manage the operations of the house. HomeAid Northern California will coordinate the construction of the property.

Because this is a transitional housing project it would provide at least four low to very low-income units for purposes of the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment Objectives. There is the possibility of constructing additional units on the property depending on the zoning requirements for the existing buildings.

Soroptimist International of Benicia is a nonprofit organization that provides women and girls with the access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment. We achieve this through our projects and their success in providing opportunities for women and girls. Our focus is their empowerment by reducing their worries over safe housing and purchasing necessities. We have provided shelter for domestic violence and human trafficking survivors through homes in two separate locations in Benicia. We are proud that neither of these locations has created nuisance concerns for the Police Department or our neighbors.

In addition, Soroptimist also have the Soroptimist Closet of Opportunities and Provisions or the SCOOP Closet that provides basic necessities like hygiene and cleaning supplies to any residents in need. We provide scholarships to high school students and women head of households. Soroptimists also has a proven record for fundraising. You may not know this, but Soroptimists were responsible for outfitting the Benicia Public Library when the library was new! At that time, it was a massive fundraising effort. You may have also seen evidence of our recent Flamingo Flocking. Who would have imagined we could have raised over \$10,000 during the Shelter in Place restrictions with the Flamingo Flocking! We will bring our skills in fundraising to the House of Hope project so there will be sufficient money for demolition, construction and to adequately furnish the home for new residents.

SafeQuest Solano is the designated Domestic Violence Agency and certified Rape Crisis Center in Solano County. Our mission is to prevent violence in our homes, schools, workplaces

and communities. We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing safe shelter, peer counseling, court and hospital accompaniment, 24/7 Crisis Line, children's programs, prevention education and community outreach to those affected by domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. We currently operate the two Safe Houses in Solano County and operated the Soroptimist International of Benicia Safe Houses in Benicia when they were opened.

SafeQuest offers survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking and their children with 24-hour support, on-site supervision, and basic needs. With these services from SafeQuest and other support, the residents of the Benicia house will be able to achieve stability and have support to successfully move on to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. The proposal is for transitional housing, and not emergency housing, since this is a gap in providing a broad range of services to our clients.

HomeAid Northern California is a chapter affiliate of HomeAid America since 1999. HomeAid's mission is to build new lives for families and individuals experiencing homeless through housing construction, renovation and community outreach. They will coordinate the construction and renovation services to update the existing residence to serve as Transitional Housing for four low to very low-income families and/or individuals.

When developing our proposal we considered two City-owned parcels: I Street and N Street. We have focused on N Street because of the existing buildings. Renovation of the buildings would reduce costs instead of a complete tear down and rebuild. Our request to the City is to lease the 472 East N Street for \$1 per year for 50 years. An alternative is to purchase the land from the City. If the land is purchased, the project would almost certainly involve a complete demolition of the existing buildings so that the drainage issues could be addressed. We have toured the property as a group and believe that it can be renovated to achieve our purposes. This parcel is not only close to public transit but also near other services such as the Community Action Council. It is within the secondary study area of the Eastern Gateway project.

Costs:

The potential costs for completion of the project are projected to be between \$700,000 to \$950,000 depending on whether a reconstruction or a new build occurs.

Result of the Project:

Construction and/or rehabilitation of the parcel will provide much needed safe housing to a marginalized population in our city and provide low to very low-income housing to assist in meeting the city's Regional Housing Needs Objectives.

Representatives of Soroptimist, SafeQuest and HomeAid are available to answer your questions and to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Heather Mc Laughlin