

**MEMORANDUM**

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City Manager's Office

**DATE:** June 2, 2022

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Christina Gilmore, Assistant to the City Manager

**VIA:** Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Final Report of the Mountain View Solidarity Fund Program**

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**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the City Council with a final report regarding the Mountain View Solidarity Fund/Fondo de Solidaridad de Mountain View Program's disbursement of City-appropriated relief funds to Mountain View residents in need due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**BACKGROUND**

On June 22, 2021, the City Council appropriated \$1 million as part of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Adopted Budget to support the Mountain View Solidarity Fund (Solidarity Fund), which provides direct cash assistance to Mountain View residents who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Solidarity Fund is a volunteer, mutual-aid fund that began in spring 2020 as a direct response to the pandemic and the negative economic consequences for vulnerable and undocumented residents in Mountain View. The primary goal of the Solidarity Fund is to raise funds and distribute financial assistance to undocumented people and families who, for a variety of reasons, have not been able to access funds or programs from safety-net providers, community-based organizations, or State and Federal programs that provide economic relief to people impacted by job loss, reduced working hours, school closures, or COVID-19-related illness.

On October 12, 2021, Council approved the Solidarity Fund program and agreement terms with the Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation (LAMV-CF) as the Solidarity Fund's fiscal sponsor. The agreement allowed LAMV-CF to retain a 7.5% fee for administrative services. The program parameters were to provide up to \$4,000 per household to extremely low-income eligible residents (at or below 30% of area median income) residing in Mountain View who have been financially impacted by the pandemic through job loss, reduced working hours, school closures, or COVID-19-related illness.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Outreach and Engagement**

The Solidarity Fund conducted extensive outreach in English and Spanish to raise awareness about the availability of pandemic relief grants. Volunteers reached out to school districts, faith-based organizations (e.g., St. Athanasius and St. Joseph Church), and community-based organizations (e.g., Day Worker Center, Mountain View Tenants Coalition, Move MV, Reach Potential Movement, and Cafecito) as well as community groups and neighborhood associations identified by City staff. Applications were provided in English; however, the Solidarity Fund reported that most of applicants preferred to speak to volunteers in Spanish. During their outreach, the Solidarity Fund shared information and referred applicants to other assistance programs, such as the State Rent Relief Program and Community Services Agency (CSA).

One of the contributing factors to the Solidarity Fund's success is that volunteers came from the community, were known and trusted leaders, could communicate in Spanish, and used accessible communications tools, such as phone and text messaging, rather than email during the engagement process.

In recognition of the Solidarity Fund's work in collaborating with the City to distribute \$1 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to vulnerable Mountain View residents, the Solidarity Fund was recognized by the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce and received the Cal Cities Women's Caucus "Women of Persistence" 2022 Award.

### **Summary of Fund Distribution**

Staff structured the agreement with LAMV-CF to provide disbursements in three phases—\$400,000, \$300,000, and \$300,000—with the funds transferred to the Foundation on November 22, December 13, and December 26, 2021, respectively. Each phase was transferred upon notification from the LAMV-CF that the prior tranche had been fully expended. The City disbursed the funds with an expedited turnaround time, which allowed the Solidarity Fund to provide the first relief resources in time for the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, the second phase of grants before Christmas, and the final phase around the new year.

Although LAMV-CF initially estimated that they would assess a 7.5% or \$75,000 administrative fee for fiscal sponsorship services, the Foundation only retained \$30,000 in administrative costs, which allowed the Solidarity Fund to include an extra \$45,000 to families in need. Utilizing strong community relationships and implementing a simple and accessible application process, the Solidarity Fund was able to quickly disburse \$970,000 in direct cash assistance grants to low-income families in less than two months. Examples of the types of needs addressed by these grants include rental assistance, utility bills, food, medical bills, and paying down debt accumulated due to the pandemic.

### **Grant Reporting Metrics**

A total of 1,353 residents from 393 households received an average of \$2,535 in direct cash assistance. Of these households, 72% had children; 81% were not eligible for Federal aid (e.g., unemployment, stimulus checks, etc.), and 45% had no financial assistance during the pandemic. Low-income families identified by the Solidarity Fund resided in the following zip codes: 94040 (57%), 94041 (23%), and 94043 (20%). More information on these and other reporting metrics are provided in Table 1.

The Solidarity Fund partnered with school districts, faith-based organizations, and community-based organizations to conduct outreach to low-income households throughout Mountain View, including mobile home park residents and families living in vehicles.

**Table 1: Mountain View Solidarity Fund Reporting Metrics**

The <b>total amount of Solidarity Funds disbursed</b> as of January 31, 2022:	<b>\$970,000</b>
The <b>total number of households served</b> as of January 31, 2022:	<b>393</b>
The <b>total number of people in households served</b> as of January 31, 2022:	<b>1,353</b>
Percentage of households with children:	<b>72%</b>
The total number of inquiries received:	<b>476</b>
The total number of inquiries helped through non-City funds:	<b>34</b>
The total number of inquiries who did not qualify for the Solidarity Fund program:	<b>37</b>
The total number of nonresponsive inquiries:	<b>12</b>
Percentage of households not eligible for Federal aid (e.g., unemployment, stimulus checks, etc.):	<b>81%</b>
Percentage of households who had no financial assistance during the pandemic:	<b>45%</b>
The <b>average amount of cash assistance</b> :	<b>\$2,535</b>
The <b>number of recipients receiving other cash assistance</b> :	<b>188</b>
Administrative costs to LAMV-CF:	<b>\$30,000</b>
The Solidarity Fund distribution by zip code is as follows:	
• 94040:	<b>225 (57%)</b>
• 94041:	<b>91 (23%)</b>
• 94043:	<b>77 (20%)</b>

## **COVID Relief Stories**

The Solidarity Fund provided the two stories below, which were shared by families that the Solidarity Fund supported through the direct cash assistance program. Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the recipients.

### *Jose and Maria*

Jose and Maria are Latino immigrant parents who work as a gardener and housecleaner. They live in a modest apartment where they pay \$2,000 per month in rent and have not been eligible to access Federal resources during the pandemic. They have two children who live with them and who are the first in their family to go to college. During COVID-19, the parents' income became unstable, and, like many students and young people during this time, their daughter suffered from depression and anxiety. The financial support they received from the Solidarity Fund helped the family cover two months of rent during a challenging time. In the last couple of months, the parents have become a little more financially stable in their work, and their son is also helping by working part-time at a restaurant. Luckily, with support from the City and the Solidarity Fund, the family does not have any debt and is very grateful to have had this critical financial support that has helped keep them on their feet.

### *Beatriz*

Beatriz is a single mother with two children who works as a housecleaner. Especially during the early months of the pandemic, when many families were sheltering in place and worried about the unknowns of COVID-19 risk, she lost income, lost her financial stability, and did not have enough money to pay her rent. Because Beatriz feared getting evicted, she had to borrow money to stay current on her rent. In the last few months, Beatriz has returned to working regular hours and has regained her modest financial stability. She is very grateful to have received support from the City and the Solidarity Fund to cover the debt that she took on to stay current on her rent and in her home. With this newfound stability, Beatriz has become motivated to volunteer in the community and has gotten involved with the Community Action Team.

## **ONGOING COMMUNITY NEEDS AND NEXT STEPS**

The Solidarity Fund has shared with staff that there continues to be an ongoing need for direct cash assistance in the community as result of the ongoing economic and health impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Solidarity Fund plans on meeting these ongoing needs through continued collaboration with community-based organizations, grants from community foundations and nonprofits, and private donations.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2022-23 Recommended Budget includes a proposal for an additional \$500,000 in ARPA funding for the Solidarity Fund to distribute further direct cash assistance to residents who continue to experience the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This proposal will be presented for Council's consideration during the June 14, 2022 meeting.

CG/6/MGR

608-06-02-22M-1

Attachment: 1. [October 12, 2021 Council Report](#)

cc: Los Altos Mountain View Community Foundation

Mountain View Solidarity Fund/Fondo de Solidaridad de Mountain View