

Precinct Reporter

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"I wholly disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" –
Voltaire

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TFCF Wins Bid, Forced to Wait

By Dianne Anderson
Staff Writer

Still no movement after weeks of keeping the new Phoenix Village Multi-Housing funding at bay has local nonprofit Time for Change Foundation and their shovel ready project stuck in limbo, waiting to break ground.

The organization won a competitive RFP [Request for Proposal] competition colors for their low income housing development, expanding their existing seven-unit Phoenix Square model that has been widely praised by dignitaries and officials as good for the city.

Having won first place in the bid process, Time for Change Foundation met the highest criteria, scoring 87 out of 100 points against four other competitors. Their project plans exceeded feasibility and HUD requirements, and they complied with the city's five year plan in 2010, and one year plan.

Why then, they wonder, is the city holding back the award. After weeks of not getting an answer, they took their question to city hall on Columbus Day, demanding an end to the "dirty politics."

Kim Carter, founder and executive director of Time for Change Foundation, said the city requested shovel ready projects, they issued the resolution announcing the funding was available, and then decided to table the money just as her project got ready to roll.

She said she feels some discrimination is involved.

"I don't care if it's because I'm a female, or if it's because I'm an entrepreneur, or if it's because I'm Black. It still feels the same way," she said.

Carter, who is the project developer, said that even though she has pledges from other funders, without knowing how long the city money will drag on, she is stuck.

She is waiting on a city allocation of HOME funds from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development Department at \$695,000, which represents just a portion of her entire project. She worries that her funders are not going to hang around indefinitely to move forward.

"We keep asking them to make a decision on our City Council agenda, or give me a reason why you're not doing it," she said.

Her project is ready to acquire and rehabilitate four separate structures to provide six affordable living spaces and supportive housing for at-risk families in the San Bernardino area. The project

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TFCF Wins Bid

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includes garages, storage space, plenty of green space playground to keep the kids away from the street, and parking space.

At council meetings, she has emphasized that she is matching the city's allocation by two to one, while creating 50 local jobs. She said that her last project created, retained jobs, and kept dollars local instead of bleeding out to Los Angeles or Orange County.

"You have other people taking your [city] money, not putting jobs in the community, leaving town and you see nothing but remnants of what they left behind.. You [the city] go for that all day long," she said.

She slammed the city for issuing the resolution stating the funds were available, and then removing the resolution in mid-September and again two weeks

ago. She said the Proposal Review Committee specifically stated that TFCF complied with all HUD requirements, and strategic plan.

"You have to tell me something. You can't hold a contest and have the person come in first place, and don't give the award for no apparent reason," Carter said.

Ultimately, the decision is still in City Council's hands, as members voted 4-2 two weeks ago to table the item indefinitely. But if they don't make a decision, that money could be swept back to HUD.

Michael McKinney, chief of staff to Mayor Carey Davis, said that Time for Change Foundation met the criteria for staff referral, but the issue remains at Council approval stage. Or, he said, the city could decide to reallocate the money to

a different project.

"The Council could continue to move forward with staff's recommendations, which is to award the monies to Time for Change, or it could reject all bids and put the money [\$2 million] back out for reallocation," he said.

HUD has questioned whether that money should be used for a different project, he added.

However, because HUD just began its new budget year, running on an October to September cycle, conceivably the allocation could be up in the air until next year this time.

If it is tabled, and the city waits too long, he said HUD could take the money back, reallocate it to another project within or out of the state, or give it back to the Federal government. Or, the Federal allocation could roll over, he said.

"HOME funds may not necessarily be spent within the year they are allocated. It could be spent over periods of time," he said.