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NEWS Release

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Richmond mayor, community leaders update the public on Richmond Rapid Respond Fund, seek support for phase two

RICHMOND, CALIF. – Richmond Mayor Tom Butt is joining community and government leaders including staff from the city, RYSE Center, EdFUND West, Richmond Promise, Building Blocks for Kids (BBK), and the Richmond Rent Program to seek the public’s help in closing the fundraising gap for phase one of the Richmond Rapid Response Fund (R3F) and gain support for phase two.

R3F, which was born out of a group of over 100 cross-sector stakeholders called the West Contra Costa COVID Community Care Coalition, is a wraparound initiative working to meet the immediate and ongoing needs of the community during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. The fund is designed to support the community in three phases – 1) direct financial disbursement to residents 2) expand financial assistance and support for community-based organizations; and 3) facilitate a community needs assessment and ongoing infrastructure support. A fundraising goal of \$1 million was set for phase one of the fund and a total minimum goal of \$9 million has been set to support all three phases of R3F.

“For many households, R3F is making the difference in whether parents can put food on the table for their kids or cover other essential expenses,” said Mayor Tom Butt. “We need as much help as we can get to continue supporting Richmond residents struggling to make ends meet. If you have the means to give during this time, I urge you to support the work being done through R3F,” the mayor continued.

Since launching on May 5, 2020, R3F has raised over \$375,000 towards its phase one goal of \$1 million – 100% of which has gone to residents through direct financial disbursements. To date, R3F has supported approximately 330 families and individuals with more expected to be served through phase one funding. As R3F leaders work to meet their phase one fundraising goal, the response fund is simultaneously seeking funds for phase two which will provide support to community-based organizations and establish a Rent Assistance Program for Displacement and Homelessness Prevention to provide greater financial assistance to residents at risk of losing their housing as eviction moratoriums expire.

“In phase one we recognize many of the residents that received a disbursement used the funds to pay their rent. This reality prompted the team to move into phase two with an emphasis on ensuring people in Richmond can remain housed. With the support from the community and philanthropic partners we are building one of the first community-led funds while simultaneously responding to the crisis impacting our community” said the R3F Core Team.

Since launching in May, R3F has received donations from several foundations, organizations, and businesses including The California Endowment, Contra Costa Regional Health Foundation, East Brother Beer Company, Hellman Foundation, Mayor’s Community Fund, SH Cowell Foundation, Richmond Community Foundation, RYSE Center, and The San Francisco Foundation. The fund also received more than \$10,000 in donations from over fifty individual donors. R3F’s earliest support came in the form of a

\$25,000 technical grant from the Hellman Foundation, and Mayor Tom Butt was the first to commit a donation to the fund through a \$25,000 contribution from the Mayor's Community Fund.

In addition to using direct financial disbursement funds to pay rent, survey data from phase one shows that food and groceries are amongst the most common expenses paid using R3F's direct financial disbursement funding. Other top expenses include utilities, household expenses, transportation, and school supplies. Survey data also shows that Latino and African American residents are the leading recipients of R3F's direct financial disbursement funding.

"I was just rehired after being laid off for the summer due to COVID, but my fall hours have been cut. Thank you for considering me and trying to take care of the folks of Richmond," said a recipient of direct financial disbursement, who will remain anonymous.

To help support long-term fiscal sustainability for direct financial disbursement recipients, R3F has partnered with Community Financial Resources (CFR) to help individuals and families work towards economic security and financial literacy. As a result of the partnership, some R3F recipients are opting to use their preloaded debit card which contains their funding as a bank account.

"Our partnership with CFR highlights the uniqueness of R3F," said the R3F Core Team. "R3F is looking beyond just providing resources during COVID-19 and we're providing tools to build and sustain lives after the crisis is over," R3F leaders continued.

R3F's unique work thus far has helped earn a National Philanthropy Day Award for Outstanding Foundation or Grantmaking Organization and other award nominations. As R3F closes the gap in phase one funding and expands to phase two, the fund will continue focusing on its core priority areas: Food and Essential Supplies, Education and Learning, Health and Healing, Housing and Homelessness, and Economic Recovery and Security. Donations for phases one and two of R3F will continue to be used to directly serve Richmond community members in most need of assistance.

For more information about the Richmond Rapid Response Fund, including how to donate and how funds will be distributed to the community, visit www.richmondresponsefund.org. All donations are tax deductible.

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