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FOR WEEKLY SPECIALS



EDITOR'S NOTE



# Smart money

Wanted: Great ideas for economic justice

BY FOON RHEE / foonr@newsreview.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF PORTLAND MERCADO

Portland Mercado opened in 2015. The Franklin Neighborhood Development Corp. is seeking city money to develop a similar marketplace in Sacramento.

competition will be tough. Some of the funding will come from the Measure U sales tax hike, which was sold to voters in 2018 as a way to generate another \$50 million a year for inclusive economic development. At the urging of Mayor Darrell Steinberg, the city also plans to use some Measure U money for a \$100 million affordable housing fund.

The 23-member investment committee, appointed by city manager

Howard Chan, includes Amanda Blackwood, CEO of the Sacramento Metro Chamber; Fabrizio Sasso, executive director of the Sacramento Central Labor Council; and other community and business leaders. The investment committee's nonbinding recommendations go to the city manager. Those of \$100,000 or more also require City Council approval. Any recommendations that count on more than \$100,000 in Measure U money will also be reviewed by a 15-member citizens advisory committee.

That citizens panel is mostly neighborhood and grassroots activists, including Stevante Clark, brother of Stephon Clark, whose killing by police in 2018 renewed the call for economic justice.

The citizens committee is angling for more influence. It wants to review *all* Measure U expenditures, including those funded by the original half-cent sales tax first approved in 2012. It also wants to support investments in housing, libraries, parks and youth programs.

"We are concerned that opportunities to address pressing needs in these and other areas will be lost without more robust community engagement and ongoing financial support," the panel states in a Jan. 27 letter to the City Council.

To that end, it is calling for at least \$5 million a year to be set aside for projects identified through a "participatory budgeting process in priority neighborhoods."

While both the investment and citizens committees want to fund ideas that will make the biggest impact, it's entirely possible they will disagree at times. If that happens, it will put even more pressure on council members to make the final—and correct—decisions. □

## Proposals are rolling into a committee of

experts advising the city of Sacramento on which ideas will best improve neighborhoods and promote economic justice.

Some of the projects sound great—particularly those that create jobs while meeting other community needs.

The Franklin Neighborhood Development Corp. wants \$725,000 to buy an undeveloped lot as the future home of The Mercado, a marketplace of indoor vending and outdoor food trailers that would provide discounted rent and micro-enterprise training for Latino entrepreneurs.

Fresher Sacramento wants \$84,000 to start developing a business that would train catering crews to produce and distribute low-cost meals to needy families.

Working Scholars, a Silicon Valley outfit, wants \$1.5 million to help 400-plus Sacramentans finish their college degrees through courses presented in five-minute videos on a phone app. The Fruit Ridge Community Collaborative is asking for \$85,000 for a long-term plan to keep it open as a hub and incubator for community services. And Greater Sacramento Urban League is seeking \$85,000 for Marysville Grand South, an affordable housing and small business training project in Del Paso Heights.

While city officials want to invest in projects and programs that will create opportunities for all Sacramento residents, the priority is on "people of color, low-income individuals" and "distressed and disadvantaged neighborhoods that have not benefited from previous economic growth," according to city documents.

The city started soliciting applications in December, and the initial deadline was Jan. 31. The

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4-Essays can be 550-600 words and must not be previously published.

5- Email your letters and essays to foonr@newsreview.com

