

Leader begs city to release money to improve 'worst living conditions' in Richmond: 'Help the people'

Councilwoman: 'Give them the money. Take the money, wherever it's at, take it out and... help them.'

By: Elizabeth Holmes

Posted 4:51 PM, Mar 26, 2023

<https://www.wtvr.com/news/local-news/richmond-mobile-home-repair-city-funds-update-march-26-2023>

RICHMOND, Va. -- Catarino Santiago Galvez showed CBS 6 the inside of his mobile home, located off Richmond Highway on the city's Southside, on Sunday, March 19.

The home is several decades old. The floor is sinking in, with pallets laid over rotting floorboards. The roof is cracked in several places. Windows are not properly insulated.

The conditions Galvez, and many other residents living mobile home parks across Richmond's Southside, are said to be some of the worst in the city, according to the Virginia Poverty Law Center.

Now, Richmonders Involved to Strengthen Our Communities, also known as RISC, is advocating for those like Galvez, who say city leaders promised the creation of a fund totaling roughly \$300,0000 in funding, to help repair and replace deteriorating mobile home units as part of the FY23 budget.

That funding was never appropriated.

When asked why the funding had not been made available, a spokesperson for the city sent CBS 6 this emailed statement:

"The City has not issued any Notice of Funding Availability for the FY23 \$300,000 Mobile Home Demonstration Program funding yet because the City Administration has been working with Councilwoman Trammell to create an equitable strategy to reach all of the mobile home park (MHP) residents and owners so that the city can share and discuss the nature of the demonstration program."

"I went to every mobile park in my district, gave them the phone number, the address, the name, and I've called every one of them and they've told me the city has not reached out to them," Trammell said. "And that's been since January. Here we're going into April. Give them the money. Take the money, wherever it's at, take it out and help the people. Help them."

As part of Mayor Levar Stoney's FY24 budget, \$500,000 would be added to the \$300,000 fund, but creates a revolving loan program that would require families to pay back whatever is taken out for repairs or replacements.

"Administration plans to issue a NOFA contract with an experienced nonprofit to work with eligible MHP residents to assist them in purchasing a new manufactured home and to install it on a vacant pad site," a spokesperson for the city said. "Assistance will include purchasing the manufactured home for them, getting it delivered to the pad site and helping the MHP resident obtain traditional home mortgage financing."

Trammell said families in her district struggle to establish credit and cannot pay back loans.

"People are calling me up, telling me that they can't get a loan to mobile home over here, over there, anywhere," she said. "That's what these people tell me. We don't have the money."

Trammell said many of the mobile home parks experience flooding because of poor infrastructure, and many of the roads in the mobile home parks are cracked and littered with potholes.

She also worries that many of the families who are unable to apply for funding for repairs or replacements may be rendered homeless.

"They want to stay in those homes, but if you can't fix them because they're so old, what do you do? How do you give them a new home, because this is where their family and friends live, so they don't want to be separated from them. They want to stay here. And where else are they going to go and pay \$400 for the lot? No where," Trammell said.

The city does offer a program that could help pay up to \$8,000 in repairs, but representatives with RISC said the waitlist is long.

Trammell said she's listened to her constituents' concerns, but City Administration is responsible for releasing the funding.

"How much money has been spent that's already in there? I don't know," she said. "Why are you holding onto it? Let it go."

There will be a public hearing on the Mayor's proposed FY24 budget on Monday, March 27 at City Hall.

On Tuesday, March 28, RISC is hosting a meeting at St. Paul's Baptist Church to discuss affordable housing, a repair and replacement program, and gun violence.