

From: [Sebastian Shetty](#)
To: [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: Comments for City Council Meeting 4/27/20
Date: Sunday, April 26, 2020 11:43:51 PM

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Dear Members of the Richmond City Council,

The Partnership for Smarter Growth (PSG) recognizes that you face difficult budgetary choices in light of the fiscal contraction resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak. However, we stand with other members of the Richmond community in asking that you carefully consider the priorities of our community as you review the Mayor's proposed FY2021 budget for the City.

In particular, we would like to emphasize two priorities: transit and affordable housing.

While transit ridership in Richmond has fallen during the current state of emergency, ridership has dropped far less than it has in many other cities. This illustrates just how important maintaining our transit system is, not only for those deemed essential workers who must still commute to their jobs, but for all of us who rely on the grocery stores, pharmacies, and supply chains that would cease to function without these workers. The recent transit improvements the City and GRTC have made have proven to be very successful, and we need to build on that success to create a safer, more equitable, and more accessible city -- and to drive post-pandemic economic recovery.

In addition, even before the onset of the pandemic and ensuing stay-at-home orders, Richmond faced a shortage of affordable housing. Unfortunately, the circumstances we now face have exacerbated this problem, and the number of evictions is on track to rapidly increase in the coming months, creating untenable levels of suffering in our community.

To help address these issues, we ask that you support the following provisions in for the FY21 budget:

- Maintain GRTC funding at 100% of current levels.
- Allocate \$2.9 million to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (as the Mayor has proposed). In addition, pass a resolution stating that as an additional \$600,000 becomes available in 2021, such funds will be allocated to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (as was originally proposed).
- Staff the Department of Housing & Community Development for purposes of administering the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- Allocate what was originally proposed for the Eviction Diversion Program (\$686,000).

These steps will help Richmond retain its position as a leader within Virginia, as well as throughout the nation, while helping to protect our friends and neighbors and enhancing our future. PSG, along with many other members of our community, urge you to support these

steps.

PARTNERSHIP *for* **SMARTER GROWTH**

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