



City of East Providence
Office of the Mayor
Roberto L. DaSilva
Mayor

February 17, 2022

Rep. Marvin L. Abney
House Finance Chairman
State of Rhode Island
12 Summer St.
Newport, RI 02840

Re: Municipal Matching Grant Program Support

Dear House Finance Chairman,

I am writing in strong support of the Governor's proposal for the Municipal Matching Grant Program. This innovative policy initiative will be a significant benefit to communities across the state aspiring to develop comprehensive wellness programs for their residents.

As a result of COVID we have witnessed firsthand the widespread devastating impacts of chronic disease. The impacts include not only physical ailments but also long term mental and emotional harm. Many of our residents need help to better cope with these difficult issues. A community wellness center can serve a critical role in addressing these issues. By providing a range of programs in a community setting, we will be able to overcome the heightened level of disconnection and detachment that residents have experienced during the pandemic. These feelings of withdrawal and isolation have proven to be harmful to an individual's underlying well-being.

Currently, the City of East Providence is conducting a feasibility study to construct a state-of-the-art Community Center that serves as a thriving hub of activity for youth, families, senior citizens and civic organizations. The Community Center will also provide the Police Department with a wellness and training facility and serve as a recreation center.

The City plans to construct a new building on City owned property located at 610 Waterman Ave. The location is also currently home to the East Providence Senior Center which has space in the rear of the parcel for the construction of the new Community Center. This location was selected because it is centrally located and can be accessed by public transportation.

The project is in the advanced planning phase. The City issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) on March 3, 2021 seeking professional architectural and engineering design services to evaluate site locations and produce a preliminary design and construction cost estimate for the new Community Center. The City selected William Stark Architects, Inc. The preliminary plans estimate a total building area of 29,000 square feet. The total estimated cost to construct the building is \$15 million and construction is anticipated to start in 2022.

The following information discusses the planned usage for the envisioned Community Center. The plans include job training, health monitoring, recreation and community & civic engagement, all of which meet the requirements set by the U.S. Department of Treasury.

Job Training

A new facility will enable partnerships with the Rhode Island Department of Labor for workforce training while expanding existing services currently offered by the Library Department's digital literacy training for all ages. Digital literacy training is a critical need to those who are job seeking and includes training on computer use, internet, email, Microsoft and Google Suite products. The new Community Center will allow the City to expand existing job training workshops which include resume writing, interviewing basics, online job searching and resume submission, changing career workshops, understanding and using Back to Work RI, as well as programing for entrepreneurs and start-ups.

Health Monitoring

The new Community Center will expand the City's health monitoring services. Existing services provided by the Senior Center, the East Providence Health Equity Zone, and the East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP) that will be enhanced and expanded include registered dietician services, blood draws, chair exercise classes, assistance with Medicare and Medicaid applications, blood pressure clinics, dental clinics, nutrition classes, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) seminars, flu clinics, COVID-19 vaccine and testing appointments, and serving hot meals daily to seniors and those with disabilities.

Recreation

The new Community Center will provide adequate space for the Recreation Department's programming which includes after school programming for school aged children, an exercise area, and athletic courts and fields to be used for both organized and unorganized sports.

Community & Civic Engagement

The Community Center will also provide the East Providence Police Department a space to conduct planning and training. The multi-purpose facility will provide office and conference space critically needed to conduct community meetings and public safety operations.

Sincerely,



Roberto L. DaSilva
Mayor