



For Immediate Release

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Contact: carefirstsouthpas@gmail.com

Local Coalition Outlines ‘Care First’ 2021-22 Budget as South Pasadena Coffers Run Over

Care First South Pasadena today introduced a series of proposals for South Pasadena’s upcoming fiscal year 2021–2022 budget to support a racially and economically inclusive future for all residents and an improved natural environment and transportation system.

The proposals outline a “Care First” approach to city budgeting, encompassing services and ideas to enhance lives in myriad ways imagined by South Pasadena residents. Never has local fiscal action been needed more to address today’s deep socioeconomic problems and never has the city been better positioned financially to step up.

“Now is the time to address pressing problems, from housing affordability to opening up more opportunity for Black-owned businesses and people of color, as well as the increasingly acute need for mental health services,” said Ella Hushagen, Care First member. “Recent heat storms and fires further show the now desperate need to take action on global warming.”

Care First invites all South Pasadenans to hear more about the proposals at a webinar set for 7:30 p.m., Monday, May 10. For a link to the webinar e-mail carefirstsouthpas@gmail.com or go to <https://www.carefirstsouthpasadena.com/>.

Going into the coming fiscal year, South Pasadena will have up to \$12 million in general fund revenue in excess of this fiscal year’s expenditures of about \$28 million. The \$12 million surplus includes expected money under the American Rescue Plan Act and from a recently entered cellphone tower lease. In addition, the city will have reserve funds totaling \$23 million, much of it dedicated years ago to projects that have never come to fruition.

The Care First proposal outlines how the general fund surplus could be used, plus calls for redirecting resources from the police department to using social workers to respond to calls about people who are unhoused or facing mental health crises.

“This month, we saw three guilty verdicts for George Floyd’s murder.” said John Srebalus, member of Care First South Pasadena. “That’s justice in one instance, but it still leaves intact a fundamentally flawed system. South Pasadena is not a miraculous exception to over-policing, racial bias in policing, and lethal misuse of force.

“As we worked on this budget proposal together, it became clear that public safety involves security in many areas of life. There’s no question the police budget eats up a huge portion of the pie. That’s where we start in appropriating dollars toward other services and programs.”

At the top of the Care First Budget is housing security. Layered by the homelessness crisis facing the greater Los Angeles area, South Pasadena's own housing affordability crisis must be curbed. More than half of the city is comprised of renters, a third of whom are rent burdened or paying half for more of their household income on rent. Additionally, a tidal wave of evictions is anticipated when tenants' accumulated back rent comes due as eviction moratoria sunset.

"We are sharing many ideas to preserve existing affordable housing, add more affordable housing, protect and support tenants, and create a South Pasadena Homeless and Housing Resource Center," said Anne Bagasao, co-founder of South Pasadena Tenants Union. "It is important for the city to fund dedicated staff positions to proactively pursue affordable housing strategies and protect renters."

Some of the innovative highlights of the Care First Budget are to support and bring Black-owned businesses to South Pasadena and to establish a demonstration Guaranteed Income program. "It is far past time we reckon with the very real wealth gap that exists between white and Black residents," said Fahren James, founder of Black Lives Matter South Pasadena. "From our town's inception, white residents have had a distinct advantage in building wealth and commanding representation in city affairs, while Black residents have been shut out due to redlining, discrimination and racism."

The youth of South Pasadena have also joined the Care First budget process. Some of the proposals to improve youth services in the city are to expand youth voting rights in local elections, make preschool and child care widely available and affordable, create youth jobs, and enhance mental health services. "Young people here are looking for more ways to get involved in the community, and we have many ideas about how to do it with the city's support," said Ava Dunville, a junior at South Pasadena High School.

Finally, the Care First budget proposal would boost funding for environment stewardship. "South Pasadena has adopted ambitious plans to improve the environment under its Green Plan and Climate Action Plan and to reduce auto use and the related environmental impacts by implementing complete streets," said Michelle Hammond, local environmental activist. "Yet little has been done to actually implement these plans despite grant money from the county and various state and federal programs." The City Council should adopt a Care First budget for the upcoming year that will achieve the following:

- Address racial and economic inequalities as the city emerges from the pandemic in a strong fiscal position;
- Create new positions within City Hall in the areas of housing, social services, environmental affairs, and transportation;
- Reimagine public safety: Fund and launch a multi-city mental health crisis response program with city money instead of waiting for county or outside money; freeze growth of the police department; and
- Direct funding through specific budget line items in six areas: (1) affordable housing, (2) homelessness, (3) racial equity in economic opportunity, (4) youth development, (5) the environment, and (6) transportation.

"We envision a city where everyone, regardless of race or wealth, can live and visit safely, with dignity and care for each other and the land we are on," said Helen Tran, member of Care First South Pasadena.

Care First South Pasadena is a group of residents who joined together last year after the murder of George Floyd to reimagine how local resources can be used to improve public safety and well-being and reduce the need for policing.

Read the full Care First Budget 2021–2022 [here](#).