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April 25, 2021

The Honorable David E. Price Chairman U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on THUD

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart Ranking Member U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on THUD

Dear Chair Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart,

I am requesting \$1.57 million under the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Economic Development Initiative (EDI) program for the City of Avondale's Historic Old Town project.

This project will serve to update public infrastructure and beautify the area along Western Avenue in the City of Avondale's Historic Old Town. One component of the project will reconstruct Central Avenue to 4th Avenue. The pavement condition in this section of Western Avenue is beyond its useful life and preservation treatments are no longer effective. This has resulted in poor drainage and rutting of the pavement at pedestrian crossings. The poor condition of the pavement has caused issues with noise and rideability that residents have voiced their concern with.

The improvements will include a \$925,000 *first* component that includes the replacement of asphalt and pavement throughout the roadway, enhancement of existing storm drain facilities, and the addition of on-street, parallel parking spaces. Reconstruction of driveways, sidewalks, curb and gutter are also included to replace failing sections. This is especially important as the City strives to upgrade the overall infrastructure in our aging neighborhoods and fulfill the requirements to come into compliance with standards set by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Beautification efforts include a \$645,000 *second* component that includes the removal of 52 existing double mast arm decorative pedestrian light poles/fixtures along Western Avenue between Dysart Road and Central Avenue. In order to provide for a consistent style along the roadway, the current light poles will be replaced with single mast arm pedestrian light poles and fixtures like those used on Dysart Road north of Buckeye Road (MC85). The new pedestrian lights will be able to use the existing bases with a retrofit kit. The project will also upgrade existing wiring, conduit and junction boxes to new standards.

Through Avondale's Capital Improvement Plan, they have approved and will fund a \$325,000 third component of this project which includes the purchase and installation of lantern-style decorative strings lights to be strung above Western Avenue. The new lighting system will improve aesthetics on Western Avenue and will enhance pedestrian safety.

The overall project serves as a robust revitalization effort in accordance with the Historic Avondale Specific Plan adopted by the City Council via resolution on Monday, March 22, 2021. The City is prepared to obligate all funds within 12 months after enactment. Currently, the project is programmed in the City's Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 2022.

Western Avenue is the central business district for the City's historic neighborhoods and is the core of Old Town. It has been developed with restaurants, retailers, offices, automotive services, and other personal service businesses. City investments in the area and nearby include capital projects that constructed the Sam Garcia Library, Care1st Resource Center, parklets, and various infrastructure improvements. Additional investments have included public art, wayfinding signage, business micro-lending, business façade improvements, home repair programs, and a children's playground outside of Sam Garcia Library.

This project will further the strategies laid out in the Historic Avondale Specific Plan by updating public infrastructure to promote a safe and comfortable environment. It also supports the redevelopment and revitalization of the old downtown area to attract new opportunities for residential development and commercial businesses. With these improvements as a basis, the City can begin focusing on other major improvements such as increased signage and branding to establish the area as a destination while preserving and enhancing the unique character of the area. As the infrastructure and aesthetic of the area improves, our Economic Development team will home in on business attraction efforts to breathe new life into the area.

Historic Avondale is a priority area in the City's Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Consolidated Plan and would impact beneficiaries of HUD's rental assistance programs. Furthermore, Western Avenue is included in one of the City of Avondale's three Opportunity Zones (OZ). These OZ's are economically distressed areas that may have a significant rate of poverty or low-income households. By continuing to invest in the area, the City hopes to foster a sense of pride in residents and establish itself as a unique tourism destination. This is a valuable use of taxpayer funds as it supports the redevelopment and revitalization of the old downtown area to attract new opportunities for residential development and commercial businesses.

I appreciate your time and consideration of this important project.

Sincerely,

Raul M. Anjalva

Raúl M. Grijalva Member of Congress