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MEMORANDUM

**To:** Robin Stieler, Clerk of the Board

**From:** Supervisor Andrew Do, 1<sup>st</sup> District

**Subject:** "Safe Homes for OC Seniors" item – July 16, 2019 Board of Supervisors Meeting

**Date:** June 26, 2019

2351

*C. Do for Supervisor Do*

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Please add the attached item to the July 16, 2019 Board of Supervisors meeting agenda.




## Agenda Item

# AGENDA STAFF REPORT

## ASR Control

2331

**MEETING DATE:** 7/16/19  
**LEGAL ENTITY TAKING ACTION:** Board of Supervisors  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT(S):** All Districts  
**SUBMITTING AGENCY/DEPARTMENT:** Supervisor Andrew Do   
**DEPARTMENT CONTACT PERSON(S):** Chris Wangsaporn (714) 834-3110  
Chris Gaarder (714) 834-3110

**SUBJECT:** Establish "Safe Homes for OC Seniors" Pilot Program for Low Income Senior Home Repairs

**CEO CONCUR**  
N/A

**COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW**  
No Legal Objection

**CLERK OF THE BOARD**  
Discussion  
4/5 Vote

**Budgeted:** No

**Current Year Cost:** \$500,000

**Annual Cost:**  
FY 2020-2021 - \$500,000

**Staffing Impact:** No

**# of Positions:** 0

**Sole Source:** No

**Current Fiscal Year Revenue:** N/A

**Funding Source:** NCC 100%

**County Audit in last 3 years:** No

**Prior Board Action:** 5/10/2016 #64

### RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Direct Director of Orange County Community Resources or designee to create "Safe Homes for OC Seniors" pilot program from August 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021, utilizing \$1,000,000 from Net County Cost to provide grant assistance for Orange County unincorporated community residents age 62 or older with household incomes below 80% of the Area Median Income for Orange County as reported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to rehabilitate their homes (including manufactured homes) to enhance their health, safety, and welfare, in an amount not to exceed \$20,000 per household.
2. Find that Safe Homes for OC Seniors pilot program will serve a public purpose of the County of Orange in accordance with Government Code Section 26227 by assisting older low income adults in Orange County complete basic health, safety, and welfare-related housing repairs that will help enable them to continue living safely and independently in their own homes; and that County staff, funding, and resources may be used in furtherance of such program.
3. Direct Director of Orange County Community Resources or designee to prepare Safe Homes for OC Seniors pilot program guidelines and allocate overhead expense.

4. Direct OCCR to return to the Board of Supervisors within 120 days to seek Board approval of a plan to establish an ongoing home rehabilitation program for low-income seniors in unincorporated communities as part of the County's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, or any other federal or state funding source; consider opportunities to partner with non-profit organizations that may provide additional financial support, in-kind assistance, or otherwise enhance the effectiveness of the County's Safe Homes for OC Seniors program; and consider innovative models adopted by other agencies that are designed to address similar needs.

## **SUMMARY:**

Establishing the Safe Homes for OC Seniors pilot program will help low-income seniors in the unincorporated communities of Orange County to perform basic health, safety, and welfare-related repairs that enable them to continue living safely in their own homes.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Until FY 2016-17, the County of Orange supported home rehabilitation projects for low-income households in the unincorporated communities using federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding and other sources. With the decline in CDBG funding and rise of other County priorities, the home rehabilitation program for low-income residents of unincorporated communities was no longer funded starting in FY 2017-18.

Despite the decreased federal funding and competing priorities, the need for senior-safe home repairs is more urgent every day as Orange County's housing stock ages and its senior population grows. The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) reports that 59.8% of homes in the unincorporated communities were built before the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, and nearly 20,000 unincorporated community residents are 65 or older. According to the 2018 Orange County Community Indicators report, when cost of living and social benefit programs are considered, 18.1% of Orange County seniors live in poverty, and 9% live on less than \$15,000 per year. Over the next twenty years, it projects the over-65 population will double in number and become the largest segment of Orange County's population.

Most cities in Orange County offer home rehabilitation programs by offering grants, loans, or rebates toward home repairs for low-income families. Allowable repairs typically include plumbing, electrical, lighting, roofing, HVAC, accessibility, security, and safety improvements. For the purposes of this limited-term pilot project, a grant model is most appropriate. A review of the numerous programs operated by Orange County cities finds programs offering grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Low-income seniors in the unincorporated communities, particularly in the long-established communities of Midway City, Rossmore, West Anaheim, North Tustin, and the Canyon communities, need home repairs just as much as those who live in cities. With SCAG reporting that nearly 80% of unincorporated community residents are homeowners, a focus on homes owned by seniors is appropriate for this pilot.

The ability to live independently, with dignity is endangered by the unsafe living conditions many seniors face in their own homes. As many seniors get by on limited, fixed incomes, even though they may be "house rich," they cannot afford simple improvements that would dramatically improve their quality of life. Debilitating injuries instigated by falls at home can cause immediate trauma and imperil long-term health. Predatory private actors also try to take advantage of seniors who need basic home improvements, without serving their best interests.

Government Code section 26227 authorizes the Board to appropriate and expend money from the general fund of the County to establish County programs or fund other programs it deems necessary to meet the social needs of the population of the County including, but not limited to, the areas of health, law enforcement, public safety, rehabilitation, welfare, education, and legal services, and the needs of physically, mentally, and financially handicapped persons and aged persons. Government Code section 26227 also vests discretion with the Board to authorize the use of County funds, resources and staff to benefit such programs. The proposed Safe Homes for OC Seniors pilot program may appropriately be authorized by the Board under Government Code section 26227 because it will assist the County in meeting the social needs of low income seniors in unincorporated communities in Orange County in the areas of health, safety, rehabilitation, and welfare.

Before the pilot comes to a close, federal or state funding should be programmed once again toward home rehabilitation for low-income seniors, perhaps under a new model. However the repairs are funded, the County of Orange will make clear that despite its regional role, the County will not shortchange its responsibility to serve the residents of the unincorporated communities. By stepping up efforts to meet the need for safe homes for seniors now, the Board can make Orange County more friendly and safe for people of all ages.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

A one-time appropriation of \$1,000,000 shall be requested for inclusion in the FY 2019-20 Budget using Net County Cost, which may be spent across FYs 2019-20 and 2020-21. Additional funding for a successor program or programs in future years may come from federal, state, or local sources.

**STAFFING IMPACT:**

N/A

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

Attachment A – Government Code Section 26227