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Alameda County Picks Firm to Create Groundbreaking Solution for Affordable Housing

Inspired ADUs to Lead Design for SHIFT Initiative, a Scalable, Economically Competitive Model to meet the Region's Affordable Housing Needs

HAYWARD, CA – The Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) today announced the award in a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Scalable Housing Infill Funding Toolkit (SHIFT) initiative, a pilot program designed to pioneer the production of affordable housing through standardized, pre-permitted designs and streamlined development processes.

The SHIFT Initiative represents a fundamental reimagining of affordable housing development; using an innovative approach that combines sustainable public investment with regulatory and design approaches that drastically cut the time and cost to deliver a project for lower income households earning 60-80% of Area Median Income.

The winning firm, Inspired ADUs, is based in Oakland and has extensive experience building affordable housing in Oakland, Santa Clara, Novato, Berkeley and other cities across Northern California. Inspired ADUs specializes in small-lot infill development with a special focus on using changes in State law to enable streamlined small and middle sized development. Their proposal was chosen because of the firm's strong design approach, wide portfolio of completed infill projects, and clear alignment with the goals of the SHIFT program.

"Alameda County's SHIFT Program is among the most forward-thinking housing initiatives in the state, and Inspired ADUs is uniquely equipped to help realize its vision," explained Carrie Shores Diller, Inspired ADU CEO/Principal Architect.

Breaking New Ground with Architectural Innovation
Affordable and secure housing options are dwindling for people across income levels, with over 9,000 Low-Income Alameda County households currently paying more than half of their monthly income on rent. The SHIFT initiative addresses this critical need

for cost-effective residential construction by prioritizing cost reductions through efficient architectural solutions, streamlined approvals, and simplified public investment.

Key innovations of the SHIFT program include:
- **Pre-permitted designs** that eliminate months of approval processes
- **Adaptable solutions** scalable from 4 to 16 units per property
- **Strategic use of recent state legislation** including SB 9 and SB 4 to unlock new opportunities
- **Open-source tools** making all designs publicly available to accelerate broader adoption
- **Simplified funding** through a single-source, non-competitive investment model.

This RFP, issued in October, sought qualified architecture firms to develop residential design proposals optimized for small-scale developments on irregular infill lots throughout Alameda County. Proposals were evaluated based on their adaptability to three representative sites in Oakland, Castro Valley, and Ashland. Successful proposals demonstrated site adaptability and scalability, alignment with streamlined by-right approval processes, long-term financial sustainability with minimized operating expenses and construction costs of no more than $600,000 per unit.

"We're excited to award Inspired ADUs the contract to build what we know will be a groundbreaking way to produce affordable housing," said Housing Director Michelle Starratt. "Pre-permitted standardized designs will bring down regulatory barriers and create quality housing below the cost we have been seeing in the last ten years."

Building a Replicable Model for California
The SHIFT initiative goes beyond individual projects to establish a replicable framework for affordable housing production statewide. All pre-permitted designs developed through the program will be made publicly available, creating a valuable resource for developers, municipalities, and housing advocates throughout California.

Alameda County HCD will work with local planning departments over a 36-month period to refine designs, navigate pre-permitting processes, and support the development of up to 50 affordable units in the pilot's first round of development. The partnership will also generate critical insights about program structure, investment requirements, and scalability that will inform future affordable housing initiatives.

About the SHIFT Initiative
The Scalable Housing Infill Funding Toolkit (SHIFT) represents Alameda County's commitment to every resident having a safe and stable place to call home. By combining thoughtful design, regulatory reform, and strategic investment, SHIFT aims to make moderate-density housing possible in California for the first time in decade.

The SHIFT Initiative specifically targets small, irregular, or undervalued parcels that are currently uneconomical for traditional development, effectively expanding the pool of

developable land without generating significant market competition. This approach promises to accelerate housing production while helping our communities to become stronger, more inclusive, and healthier.

About Alameda County Housing and Community Development
The Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department (HCD) is dedicated to building healthy communities through the development and preservation of affordable housing, neighborhood stabilization, and fair housing services. HCD administers federal, state, and local funds to support housing development, homeownership assistance, and community development activities throughout Alameda County**.** Alameda County is an Equal Housing Opportunity and Accessible Housing Provider.