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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Downtown Community Launches *Positive Change* Donation Box Pilot Program Starting with four donation boxes installed in Downtown Berkeley

Berkeley, CA – On **Thursday, May 7th at 12noon**, the Berkeley community is invited to kick off the Positive Change Donation Program with Vice Mayor Linda Maio, who will donate the first dollar at the box installed at the Downtown Berkeley BART Plaza, along with Councilmember Jesse Arreguin, and Terrie Light, the Executive Director of Berkeley Food & Housing Project.

Positive Change was created in partnership with the Downtown Berkeley Association (DBA), the Berkeley Food and Housing Project and the City of Berkeley, to help the homeless who live on Downtown Berkeley's streets. The community can contribute into Positive Change donation boxes strategically located around the Downtown to help fund social services that reduce homelessness. Starting with four donation boxes, the pilot program is authorized for 10 boxes in total.

"Berkeley is a caring and compassionate community, and we want to encourage Berkeleyans and visitors to help those in need by funding much needed social services that provide long-term benefits like housing and job assistance," said John Caner, CEO of the Downtown Berkeley Association.

Positive Change is a pilot modeled on similar successful programs in other cities, including Louisville and San Diego, providing a convenient option for passerby to support social services that directly help those in need that reside in each city's central business district. Terrie Light, Executive Director of Berkeley Food and Housing Project said, "We are glad to partner with the DBA and the City on the pilot phase of Positive Change program, which will help fund social services to assist those in need get on the path to housing and employment."

After six months, the DBA will provide city council with a full report on the program, and if successful will explore funding for other agencies. "This is something we haven't done before – a way for visitors and residents alike to donate cash into secure and prominent collection stations, to help fund vital services for homeless persons in our community," said Vice-Mayor Linda Maio.

Specifically, the donations collected will go towards:

- **Transportation Assistance** which funds bus and BART tickets for qualified trips to travel to job interviews, search for housing, social services or other necessary destinations.
- **Personal ID Card application fees** which enable the street population to get an ID card, to be eligible to receive disability and social security benefits, as well as apply for housing and jobs.
- **Housing Applications Fees** that enable those in need to apply for permanent stable housing.

- **Hygiene products** like toiletries, and socks and underwear, which improve health outcomes, as well as enabling those in need a dignified clean presentation to successfully apply for jobs and housing.
- **Homeward Bound Program** which funds bus tickets and other incidental expenses to allow homeless persons to return home, reuniting them with family or friends who provide a long-term stable living situation.

Examples of services funded by the Positive Change proceeds:

- \$65.00 will pay for bus fare to reunite someone with family in CA (based on one way fare to LA)
- \$30.00 will pay for a credit check for a housing application
- \$8.00 will pay for someone to obtain their CA ID
- \$2.10 will provide bus fare to a medical appointment or job interview
- \$1.50 will provide someone with a new pair of socks

Berkeley Food and Housing Project is a nonprofit organization in Berkeley with the mission to ease and end the crisis of homelessness in our community by providing emergency food and shelter, transitional housing, permanent housing, and housing placement with support services to homeless individuals and families.

Downtown Berkeley Association is a nonprofit membership organization and the Owner's Association for Downtown Berkeley's Property-Based Business Improvement District (PBID), representing 187 property owners and approximately 680 of their merchant and business tenants. The purpose of the PBID is to create and sustain a vibrant and prosperous City Center by: 1) Producing a consistently clean, welcoming, and attractive Downtown experience; 2) Attracting and retaining new businesses; 3) Cultivating a fun and vibrant Downtown "living room;" 4) Enhancing property values, sales, and occupancies; 5) Helping Downtown businesses compete locally and regionally.

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