

Leadership Update

Carmen Herrera-Mansir Awarded the REST IS POWER Sabbatical



El Pájaro CDC's Leadership Team is prepared to continue advancing our mission during this transition.

CONTINUITY YOU CAN COUNT ON

- All programs and services will continue without interruption.
- Grant reporting and project implementation will remain on schedule.
- The Board-approved leadership transition plan is in place.
- An experienced leadership team is prepared to guide the organization.
- El Pájaro CDC remains fully committed to its partners and community.



Rocio Andrade
Interim Executive Director
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Helping Businesses Take Flight



A Letter from our Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Supporters,

I am delighted to share some exciting personal and organizational news with you.

After more than 22 years of serving as Executive Director of El Pájaro Community Development Corporation, I have been selected as a recipient of the REST IS POWER Sabbatical Program through the Latino Community Foundation. This highly competitive program recognizes nonprofit leaders for their long-standing commitment to their communities and provides an opportunity to rest, reflect, and return renewed to continue advancing their mission.

I am deeply honored and grateful to the Latino Community Foundation for this extraordinary investment in nonprofit leadership.

My sabbatical will begin on July 25, 2026, and conclude in late October. While this is a meaningful personal milestone, it is also an investment in the long-term strength, resilience, and sustainability of El Pájaro CDC. Organizations are strongest when leadership development, thoughtful succession planning, and staff growth are prioritized, and this sabbatical reflects our Board of Directors' commitment to those values.

Over the past several months, our Board of Directors and Leadership Team have worked together to develop a comprehensive transition and continuity plan to ensure seamless operations throughout my absence. I am pleased to share that all organizational activities—including client services, grant implementation and reporting, fundraising, financial management, strategic initiatives, and community partnerships—will continue without interruption.

During this period, Rocio Andrade will serve as Interim Executive Director, working closely with our experienced Leadership Team:

- **Cesario Ruiz** – Director of Culinary Business Development Program
- **Juan Melgar** – Director of Lending
- **Jonathan Rollings** – Interim Director of Strategy and Operations
- **Isaac Rodriguez** – Business Success Manager
- **Luz Falcon-Toledo** – Office and Property Manager



Together, this exceptional leadership team has spent months preparing for this transition and is fully equipped to continue advancing El Pájaro CDC's mission, supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that our programs continue to deliver meaningful impact throughout Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito Counties.

I have complete confidence in this outstanding team and know that El Pájaro CDC will continue to thrive during this period.

I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you. Your partnership, trust, and investment have helped build an organization that is resilient, innovative, and prepared for the future. Opportunities such as this sabbatical are possible because of the strong foundation we have built together and reflect the importance of investing in healthy, sustainable nonprofit leadership.

If you have any questions or would like to connect with our team during my sabbatical, please contact:

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Thank you once again for your continued confidence in El Pájaro CDC. I look forward to reconnecting with you this fall, refreshed and energized, as we continue creating economic opportunity and helping entrepreneurs, families, and communities thrive.

Helping Businesses Take Flight.

With gratitude,

Carmen Herrera-Mansir

Executive Director
El Pájaro Community Development Corporation