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Urban Alchemy welcomes new CFO: Melek Totah

Plans to increase ability to scale and grow

SAN FRANCISCO – Urban Alchemy has hired Melek Totah as its new chief financial officer. She brings more than 20 years of experience working with nonprofits and publicly traded companies to manage and improve their financial controls and processes.

“Having Melek on board will allow Urban Alchemy to continue to grow,” said Lena Miller, the social enterprise’s co-founder and CEO. “She has extensive experience helping nonprofits and public companies create financial structures that can scale up, which we need as we continue to expand to new cities and service lines.”

Urban Alchemy, which hires returning citizens to address homelessness and the resulting chaos it causes in city neighborhoods, has grown rapidly over the past six years. It started as a small non-profit that managed mobile hygiene sites in San Francisco. It now has a staff of more than 1,200 that operates temporary shelter sites for the unhoused, provides community-based public safety, and offers other related services.

Melek is joining the C-suite leadership team at the same time the social enterprise is negotiating contracts with additional cities. She most recently served in similar roles at Aspiranet and Caminar, a San Francisco Bay-area nonprofit that provides mental health and substance abuse treatment and prevention services.

“I wanted to join Urban Alchemy because of its commitment to transforming lives and communities,” said Totah. “When I was young, my family offered up our home as an emergency foster care shelter, and that experience inspired many of my career choices. I see the entire

social services sector as a continuum that encompasses health, housing, criminal activity, addiction and more. Addressing one problem helps solve them all.”

Her goals in the new role are to create a scalable financial infrastructure and to increase efficiencies by leveraging technology and automation.

In addition to her role at Urban Alchemy, Totah will continue to teach courses at the University of California San Francisco about healthcare finance and economics. She holds a Master of Business Administration degree from the Arizona State University Thunderbird School of Global Management.

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About Urban Alchemy

Founded in 2018, Urban Alchemy brings a fresh approach to the problems of homelessness, crime, and challenging street conditions faced by communities throughout the nation. Currently operating in and around San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, and Austin, Urban Alchemy’s unique approach provides meaningful, well-paid jobs to the formerly incarcerated. These Practitioners leverage their emotional intelligence and leadership skills to empathize and de-escalate, helping create safe communities, clean communities, and housed communities.