



## Proposal: Working Fusion at Mill Street

### **We Fortify**

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### **Mission Statement**

We Fortify is a 501(c)3 that exists to pivot people out of poverty and into a state of economic and emotional stability and social connectedness. We Fortify does this by implementing four integrated strategies within a centralized environment; safe dignified housing within a small supportive community, consistent individualized trauma responsive therapies, life skills education, and living wage training and career placement.



### **Services Offered**

We Fortify's Working Fusion at Mill Street program is a first-of-its kind housing initiative in Colorado Springs dedicated to breaking the cycle of generational poverty and homelessness. This initiative provides dignified housing within a supportive village of trauma-responsive services – improving access to medical and mental health, social connections, life skills, education, career development and living wage employment for at risk young adults ages 18 to 25. The village consists of 18 tiny homes located on .63 acres in the Mill Street community. Each tiny home is move-in ready, fully furnished, and affordable at a cost of \$600/resident each month.

Both the community and the programs are individually tailored to meet resident's needs, with a sensitivity to the traumatic events they have previously endured. Clinical and non-clinical services to address health, mental health and overall well-being are provided on site and coordinated with local providers to avoid duplication. Working Fusion is collaborating with a diverse array of community partners in business, education and supportive services, so



residents can meet their goals. Working Fusion has developed social enterprise businesses and collaborations to provide residents job readiness training and living wage positions. Staff will seek out and create employment and career opportunities that will benefit program youth, including educating employers in trauma-responsive care for vulnerable populations.

In order to address the underlying causes of homelessness and instability, Working Fusion will provide clinical and non-clinical services. Individual behavioral health will be led by the Director of Clinical Services and Wellness. Programming will emphasize wellness, empowerment, resilience and self-determination. Trauma-responsive care is a program priority and will be implemented to address each resident's unique trauma history, including circumstances of family instability and rejection, substance use, violence, etc. There will also be experiential therapeutic activities like yoga, meditation, art, music, and gardening.

A key component of the Working Fusion program will be the volunteer “Spark” team. Volunteers will support residents through friendship, networking, and ongoing partnerships that will be fostered within the community. Staff will recruit, screen, train, and supervise these volunteers.



### **Project/Service Description**

Based on overall median single-family and multifamily housing affordability, as well as total homeless population counts, the City of Colorado Springs has identified improved housing affordability as one of its biggest priorities. More than half of renters in Colorado Springs pay 30% or more of their income on rent – far exceeding the recommendations for payments. Further, the annual Point-in-Time counts indicate youth experiencing homelessness are among

the fastest growing group of unhoused people. Many at-risk youth lack access to community, which further hinders their ability to be self-sufficient. The Working Fusion housing initiative will annually serve 18 at-risk, low-income youth between the ages of 18-25. These young adults will enter the program through referrals from the Continuum of Care or Care Referral Providers. To be a good fit, young adults need to be willing to maintain employment, or pursue job training/education so that they can qualify for a living wage position.

### **Project Use of Funds**

CURRENT NEEDS	AMOUNT
Level and straping of 13 units	\$5,460.00
Plumbing for 13 tiny homes	\$9,100.00
Furnishings for homes 13 homes (\$1800.00 per home)	\$23,400.00
Irrigation, Landscaping (sod, trees, plants, raised beds	\$98,000.00
Temp office interior build out	\$10,000.00
Sidewalks	\$26,080.00
<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$172,040.00</b>
Private donor for 1 home furnishings	-\$1,800.00
<b>TOTAL CURRENT CAPITAL NEEDS</b>	<b>\$170,240.00</b>

### **Other Project/Agency Funders**

NAME	AMOUNT	TYPE
HB&A	\$1,100.00	Donation
Edson Foundation	\$68,350.00	Grant
Classic Homes	\$10,000.00	Donation
Couples Who Care	\$5,600.00	Donation
BoeCorp	\$50,000.00	Donation
The Moniker Foundation	\$30,000.00	Donation
The Richard Petritz Foundation	\$30,000.00	Donation
El Pomar Foundation	\$50,000.00	Grant
Norwood Corporation	\$20,000.00	Donation
Dr. Dinny and Dr. Terri Webber	\$30,000.00	Donation
HBA Cares	\$5,000.00	Grant
Colorado Springs Health Foundation - Multi Year	\$130,000.00	Grant
Daniels Fund	\$275,000.00	Grant
Colorado Springs Utilities	\$68,400.00	Grant(s)
The Caison Company   Reliance Electric	\$97,941.50	In-Kind
CMG Corporation	\$127,000.00	In-Kind
Pike Peak Association of Realtors	\$20,000.00	Donation
Sparks Willson	\$10,000.00	In-Kind
Stockman Kast Ryan	\$5,000.00	In-Kind
City of Colorado Springs	\$65,000.00	Grant

Weidner Foundation	\$260,000.00	Grant
The Dakota Foundation	\$83,000.00	Grant
Consulting: Jeff Cooper, Shelley Jensen, Jill McCormick, +	\$201,000.00	In-Kind
Bart and Cathy Holaday	\$65,000.00	Donation
Individual donors (30+)   Team Kat Jorstad	\$123,000.00	Donation
Individual donors (7+)   Team Donna Guthrie	\$34,000.00	Donation
<b>Total Funds and In-Kind Services Raised to date</b>	<b>\$1,864,391.50</b>	

### **Outcomes and Evaluation**

Working Fusion at Mill Street works to provide affordable housing and supportive services to end the cycle of poverty and homelessness for young adults. This directly aligns with the Myron Stratton Foundation's emphasis on assisting poor children and their families. To successfully provide a launching point for young adults to transition to long-term independence, staff will gather information through ongoing, trauma-responsive conversations with individual residents. Then staff will monitor the progress of each resident's individual empowerment plan. Finally, staff will use the Porchlight platform to track the emotional well-being and relational health of each resident.

Overall program outcomes that will be measured include:

- Number of unduplicated residents who are housed. Estimated to be 6-18 residents in 2021 and 18 residents annually thereafter.
- Number and percentage of unduplicated residents who access supportive services including case management, mental health support, job training, peer support groups – estimated to be 80-100% of residents each year.
- Number and percentage of unduplicated residents who increase their income by securing a living-wage position – estimated to be 80-100% of residents each year.
- Number and percentage of unduplicated residents who move into independent housing outside of the village each year – estimated to be 80-100% of residents every 2 years.
- Number and percentage of unduplicated residents who maintain housing outside of community for 6 months – estimated to be 70% of residents.

In order to achieve these collective outcomes, residents will develop their own individual empowerment plans. Individual outcomes will vary but may include:

- Decrease in mental health symptoms (depression, anxiety, risky behaviors)
- Improvement in physical health, nutrition, and access to medical care
- Increase in social capital (number of healthy, supportive relationships and connections within the community)
- Increase in well-being per resident self-report (hope, competence, meaning, safety)
- Increase in healthy lifestyles and activities and the continuation of these activities after leaving the village





### **Recommendation**

This is an exciting affordable housing project that has garnered widespread community support, and that aligns very well with the MSH mission of providing a home to youth. Funds have been received or pledged for all 18 homes, but there are several remaining needs as listed above. I am recommending a \$50,000 proactive grant in support of this project.