



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

30 S. Nevada Avenue, Suite 701
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
PH 719-385-5912
www.coloradosprings.gov

December 9, 2021

The Place
423 E Cucharas St
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
Shawna Kemppainen, Executive Director

Ref: Permanent Supportive Housing to be developed by The Place

Dear Ms. Kemppainen:

The City of Colorado Springs, Community Development Division (CDD), fully supports The Place's proposal to develop 50-units of permanent supportive housing to help meet the significant housing needs of our city's homeless youth.

The project is consistent with the City of Colorado Springs' affordable housing plan, HomeCOS: Housing Our Future, in which creation of more permanent supportive housing units is highlighted. One of the six core objectives of HomeCOS is to house individuals experiencing homelessness. By offering permanent supportive housing in a project conveniently located to transit, shopping, and employment opportunities, The Place's project will help the City of Colorado Springs meet one of its primary housing goals.

With two decades of experience serving homeless youth in the region, I appreciate the efforts that The Place has made as a leader in improving equitable housing access for youth, including more than a decade of experience with housing programs ranging from transitional housing to permanent supportive housing. In 2021 alone, The Place served 670 youth experiencing homelessness, including 147 youth in their housing program. Seventy-nine percent of youth who exited the housing program went on to a safe and stable place. A permanent supportive housing apartment community dedicated specifically for youth will significantly increase the proportion of youth who exit into safe and stable conditions in the future.

I look forward to working with you and the rest of your team to move this project from concept to reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Posey".

Steve Posey
Community Development
HUD Program Manager
steve.posey@coloradosprings.gov
719-385-6880



9/6/2022

Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School has had a long history of caring for the youngest residents of Colorado Springs for over 60 years. We have been at our current location on 19th street for over 50 years. We love our west side neighborhood with all its quirks and even challenges. One challenge we have really struggled with is having an open field to our south. It has been overgrown on occasion, been the site of illegal camping and fires and home to unsafe wildlife. We have had our building shot at from that field and it has never felt like a part of our community. We were so excited that the lot had been purchased by The Place to be used for supported youth housing (The Launching Pad). There is such a huge need in our broader community for housing and services for our unhoused and housing-insecure young people. We are excited to form partnerships with this incoming community, offer parenting and education opportunities to residents, share ideas and resources and hopefully even offer jobs to residents who are interested. This part of our community desperately needs an anchoring organization to pull it together. While there will be bumps and wrinkles to work out along the way, we truly just cannot wait to have this amazing organization and housing in our neighborhood. We will continue to work with the tiny folks in our community while The Place works to support those who need a little boost towards independence. It truly does take a village and we are thrilled to be a part of that village.

Sincerely,

Jen Filonowich
Executive Director,
Ruth Washburn Cooperative Nursery School



April 5, 2023

Mr. William Gray, Senior Planner
City of Colorado Springs- Land Use Review Division
30 S Nevada Ave Suite 701
Colorado Springs, CO 80903
William.gray@coloradosprings.gov

Re: Launchpad

Dear Mr. William Gray,

It is my pleasure to provide this letter of support from the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care (PPCoC), a program of Community Health Partnership, on behalf of The PLACE's land use application to create Launchpad, a 50-unit permanent supportive housing (PSH) project geared towards transition age youth experiencing homelessness. The PPCoC is a program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and represents a regional stakeholder group of over 50 non-profit organizations, faith-based groups, municipal government entities, and healthcare organizations with an aligned goal to make homelessness Rare, Brief, and One-time in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Our community has a critical deficit of permanent housing solutions and service enriched housing. In February 2023, there were 115 youth unsheltered in El Paso County, according to the PPCoC data. This is only half of the total youth in homelessness of varying degrees, who were counted. The PPCoC recognizes the importance of developing and growing local capacity to address these needs. The PLACE as a dedicated youth service organization already supports more than 125 youth annually in diverse housing types, including a scattered site PSH model. We all need a decent place to live, people to support us, and a life purpose. The Launchpad is something we can support to help young people live up to their potential.

Young people who have experienced homelessness need a real chance to change their lives. The PLACE has provided hope and housing for youth all over Colorado Springs for two decades. I support the Launchpad apartments coming to the westside, and I know these young people will get the help that they need. Having their own modest apartment, learning how to take care of themselves, getting counseling and help with jobs and school – that makes a lot of sense for young people. And if we help them now, we're less likely to see them as adults facing homelessness.

The location of the Launchpad at 810 N. 19th Street is currently an empty lot and has gone untended for decades. It would be positive change to see new affordable homes there. The zoning for that property has always been multi-family (R-5). The Launchpad team met with more than 200 people in the neighborhood of the proposed apartments and from adjacent neighborhoods. The majority said they were glad to see something positive coming to the area, and several asked to volunteer.

PPCoC, a program of Community Health Partnership, strongly recommends The PLACE's proposed housing project Launchpad being built as a model example of a housing project that addresses all strategic goals supporting the PPCoC vision of ending homelessness in the Pikes Peak region.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Evan Caster", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Evan Caster
CO-504 CoC Lead Agency
Senior Manager of Homeless Initiatives
Community Health Partnership
719-632-5094 x227
Evan.Caster@ppchp.org



Providing care and compassion to our neighbors in need

June 5, 2023

Esteemed Members of the Colorado Springs Planning Commission:

I regret that I cannot be there with you in person to express my unmitigated support of the Launchpad PSH project as proposed by The Place, and I hope this letter will suffice.

We are all complex people, with many identities that inform our approach to community-building.

For the purposes of this letter, my first relevant identity is one of a resident of the west side. My home is less than a mile away from the proposed Launchpad site, and I wholeheartedly welcome its development and fruition in my community. I would say the same if the Launchpad was literally next door to my home. The vibrancy of the west side community is rooted in its mixed-income composition, its quirky neighborhoods, and the availability of services and support for local residents to fully flourish.

I also write as a collaborator of The Place. As an administrator in the social service sector, I see a lot of organizations that cherry-pick folks who are the easiest to work with, who drop the ball on promises made, and who abysmally fail at keeping people housed by failing to support them. The Place is a standout in a sea of mediocrity – their housing rates often exceed 90% retention, and their ability to leverage adequate supportive services and deliver as promised are unparalleled. I trust them implicitly at the organizational and individual levels: they will do what it takes to make the project a success.

Another relevant identity is one of caseworker. Far from yelling and screaming at about what others should be doing to address “the homeless problem,” I am literally in the trenches every day trying to solve one of our society’s most vexing and complex problems. This gives me a unique vantage point: although I am still learning after 6 years at Westside CARES, I have personally facilitated housing or healing or both for at least two dozen people. I have a sense of what works, both in terms of getting an individual off the street and walking alongside them as they begin to achieve their goals, but also in terms of getting the most visible, most vulnerable people from crisis to safety. The latter piece, of course, is the community piece; the place where the community sees impact in terms of reduction of emergency service calls and reduction in “rough sleeping.” As outspoken and sometimes profane critics of “the homeless,” I can’t imagine why the petitioners would obstruct evidence-based practices to improve the community – and individual lives.

Let me state it plainly: **permanent supportive housing works**. It works to transform lives, and it works to improve the community. The evidence supports it, and any claim to the contrary is hogwash.

Opponents of the Launchpad have implied that there is no community benefit to transforming fallow, litter-ridden fields and dilapidated buildings in to a modern, fully supportive housing community. Other than the obvious aesthetic improvements of such a transformation, the potential upsides are numerous.

First, there is the upside at the individual level, the possibility of hope and transformation for vulnerable youth. Young people who have been abused or kicked out by their families; who have been trafficked; who have been exploited in ways I hope you can't imagine. So many of these young people just need a chance; a safe place from which to launch brighter futures.

Second, there is the upside of connecting these vulnerable youth to the services they need to heal. Too often, we hear critics of people experiencing homelessness alleging behavioral health or substance use disorder as the primary culprit of someone's homelessness. These allegations, beyond perpetrating fundamental attribution error, are aimed at bifurcating people, human beings, into the categories of "worthy" and "unworthy." As practitioners, we do not see the neighbors we serve through this troubling lens: we believe that everyone deserves help. And guess what? The Launchpad's supportive services will include substance use and behavioral health interventions, for those who need them.

To illustrate the third benefit, I'd like to tell you about a young woman I'll call D. D's parents left her in Colorado Springs so they could travel the country alone in an RV. She was trafficked, exploited, and explosive when we met her. She was responsible for at least 30 emergency calls a year and kept an incredibly messy camp. When D. was identified for housing two years ago, we were excited to usher her into permanent supportive housing. Today, D. has a job. And in the last two years, she has had not one single call to emergency services. She hasn't had a single altercation with anyone, and – needless to say – the spot where she used to camp is pristine: flowers have grown over the patch of dirt she called home. This is taxpayer savings to the tune of \$40,000, or more. And D. is just one person. The Launchpad will house at least 50.

Finally, I cannot understate how fortunate we are – as a community – to have The Place. While other service organizations are squeamishly distancing themselves from the people with the most complex, intractable challenges, while vituperative rhetoric about "those people" fills our inboxes, social media feeds, and editorial pages, The Place doubles down every day to serve "the least of these."

Far from armchair-quarterbacking, The Place in general and the Launchpad in particular make good on the early promise of America, as captured in Emma Lazarus' famous sonnet:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Planning Commission members: please lift your lamp beside this golden door.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristy Milligan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristy Milligan



June 16, 2023

William Gray
City of Colorado Springs Planning Department
William.Gray@coloradosprings.gov

Dear Mr. Gray,

On behalf of arc Thrift Stores, one of Colorado largest social enterprises; we would like to formally offer our support for The Place and their efforts to assist with the housing crisis that Colorado Springs is facing.

The Place is determined to build a 50 unit apartment complex on 19th Street and Uintah. Arc Thrift Stores is directly across from this proposed location and as future neighbor, we would like to inform the council of our support for this project.

It is our understanding that the project should be completed by winter 2024 for occupancy and will directly impact youth ages 18-24 that are homeless or at risk of being unhoused. We also see this as an employment opportunity. Arc thrift Stores is a first and second chance employer and we pride ourselves at being 100% inclusive. We support the efforts of The Place in addressing an issue that is quickly becoming the most important topic for the Colorado Springs planning department.

Sincerely,

Lloyd M. Lewis
President & CEO
Arc Thrift Stores
Lewis@arcthrift.com



2010 E. BIJOU ST., COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80909
(719) 473-5557 | homewardpp.org

June 7, 2023

Dear City Councilors and Members of the Planning Commission:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and stakeholders of Homeward Pikes Peak, I extend our support for the creation of 50 units of supportive housing called The Launchpad. This project sponsored by The Place and developed by Cohen Esrey is vital to the community's goal of addressing homelessness in Colorado Springs.

The creation of a specific supportive housing program for young adults is in alignment with the City of Colorado Springs' goals to create at least 1000 affordable housing units per year. It aligns with the strategic plan of the Pikes Peak Continuum of Care to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring by creating specific programs for unique clients. Additionally, it is consistent with the 2022 Colorado Affordable Housing Transformational Task Force goals to increase the number of supporting housing programs across the State of Colorado.

The 2022 Point in time survey informs us that there were 75 youth between 18-24 experiencing homelessness. The Launchpad will house 50 young people and assist them to permanently exit homelessness. Imagine the impact this program could have! The demonstrated track record that The Place has created in this community means that over 80% of these young people will never experience homelessness again.

The Launchpad proposed location at 810 N. 19th Street Colorado Springs 80904 is suited for the site that has been selected. Bringing forward thoughtful, trauma informed, well designed homes to the Westside will add to the vibrancy of this unique community. The Westside is one of the most diverse areas of Colorado Springs. The proposal is consistent with many of the tenants of Plan COS adopted in 2019 by the City of Colorado Springs of which one of the pillars is "Vibrant Neighborhoods" which includes providing housing for all – a full spectrum of attainable housing. The Launchpad meets this pillar.

The proposed site is in a mixed-use neighborhood with apartments, retail/business, single family homes and services. The site for The Launchpad is near public transportation, groceries, employment centers and is centrally located to additional services.

I strongly encourage you to support this worthy project that will not only save lives but empower youth to transform their lives to become engaged citizens in our city.

Sincerely,

Beth Roalstad, MSW
Chief Executive Officer

-- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jasen Cooper**<jasen.w.cooper@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Jun 14, 2023 at 6:53 AM

Subject: Re: APPL-23-0002 info

To: Gray, William E <William.Gray@coloradosprings.gov>

Good Morning Bill,

I will be attending the CPC Public Hearing today to give comments in person. But I also want to submit written comments just in case:

I live near the proposed site of the Launchpad Apartments, and I'm writing to express my support for this project. I think the CPC Staff Report is a very thorough refutation of the appellant's ordinance-based objections, and it seems clear to me that City Code was followed when approving this project. So, deferring that side of things to the experts, I want to say something in response to the appellants' objection to the future tenants themselves.

When prompted in their appeal for the benefits and adverse impacts of this affordable housing project, the appellants stated: "There are no tacit benefits of this proposed housing." They go on to claim, with no evidence, that future tenants will be "unsavory characters" who use and deal drugs.

This appalling dismissal of our community's need for housing, and this gross bias against neighbors we've never even met yet is irresponsible and harmful.

The Launchpad Apartments would house some of the most vulnerable members of our community, in a space where they could thrive. What a beautiful mission. And what an asset to our community! I'm proud to live in a neighborhood where when someone came to us with a practical solution to an obvious problem we said: Yes, please, in my backyard.

Debates like this can be divisive, and the humanity of those involved is too-often forgotten. It's important to me that my future neighbors, who will someday land at the Launchpad Apartments, know this: You are worthy. You are welcome. And I'm so glad you're here.

Thank you,

