



Legislation Text

File #: 17-1087, **Version:** 1

DATE: November 9, 2017

TO: Members of the Housing & Redevelopment Authority

FROM: Janine Atchison, Housing Coordinator

Northfield Union of Youth (NUY) Safe Homes Program

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

BACKGROUND:

The NUY serves more than 700 youth in various programs and supportive services. Most publicly, NUY runs “The Key” youth center as a drop-in center for youth to connect with peers, caring adults, and the Northfield community. The Key is a blend of relationship-driven enrichment activities for youth and a supportive hub for youth reaching out for help.

The NUY is launching a Host-Home Program (NUY Safe Homes) to serve and support youth experiencing or at -risk of experiencing homelessness in the Northfield area. NUY’s ‘core group’ of youth includes about 100 of the most at-risk youth in Northfield. This includes 75% who have a serious mental/chemical health issue, 68% who are living in poverty, and 22% who are currently homeless.

Northfield’s homeless youth are either staying with friends, other family, couch surfing, sleeping outside, or in cars. A majority of them come from homes where parents or relatives are abusing substances or have a serious mental health diagnosis. NUY has witnessed the downward spiral of youth in these circumstances. Too often, youth homelessness leads to chemical addiction, truancy, and crime.

NUY has received partial funding from the state of MN to hire a licensed social worker to both build a host-home system for homeless youth in the Northfield area and to manage this same system as a youth advocate. NUY is seeking additional funding from Northfield HRA through the CDBG Community Based Youth Programs Block Grant program to help round out this partial funding to enable NUY to retain a full time licensed social worker to work on behalf of all Northfield youth regarding issues and needs beyond homelessness.

ANALYSIS:

CDBG funds may be used for public service activities. The Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) may spend up to 15% of their CDBG allocation toward “public services activities” which equates to approximately \$9,000. Assisting NUY with CDBG funds for a full-time social worker to build and manage a Host-Home Program for homeless youth in Northfield is well within the CDBG requirements and would empower NUY to provide more formal and robust supportive services to prevent and eliminate the effects of poverty on Northfield’s most at-risk youth.

The HRA Board will need to decide how they want to apportion CDBG funds for the 2018-2019 program year prior to making application in early January, 2018. The matter will be on the December 14, 2017 HRA agenda.

RECOMMENDATION:

The NUY request for funds fits within the HRA goals and meets the CDBG requirements. The HRA is asked to consider utilizing \$9,000 of the 2018 CDBG allocation year for this program.