



Legislation Text

File #: HRA M2018-011, **Version:** 1

DATE: November 27, 2018

TO: Members of the Housing & Redevelopment Authority

FROM: Janine Atchison, Housing Coordinator

Northfield Union of Youth - Safe Homes (Wallflower) Project

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

The Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to review and consider report from the Northfield Union of Youth (NUY) Safe Home Program as presented by Executive Director Emily Fulton-Foley.

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.

In 2017, the NUY launched 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.

The NUY was awarded a substantial grant from the MN State Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) to retain a full time licensed social worker to work on behalf of all Northfield youth regarding issues and needs beyond homelessness. On November 9, 2017, NUY Executive Director Scott Wopata appeared before the HRA Board to request \$9,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) public service grant for 2018. Mr. Wopata also stated there is currently a gap in 2017 funds for the Safe Homes Program. The HRA Board asked Mr. Wopata to return on December 14, 2017 to provide the HRA with details of the 2017 funding gap. On December 14, 2017, the HRA Board, utilizing 2017 unspent funds from Street Assessment Assistance program, voted to donate the full \$25,639 needed to continue the Home Safe Program. The HRA Board also committed \$9,000 in 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds to the program to be dispersed in July/August 2018..

In July, 2018, the HRA learned of the NUY Home Safe Program was ineligible to receive CDBG funds. The HRA voted to donate the \$9,000 from their own 2018 budget and utilize the CDBG funds for the Northern Oaks rehabilitation project.

The HRA expressed the desire to continue funding the program and requested staff to create a budget line item for this expense.

Newly hired NUY Executive Director Emily Fulton will address the HRA Board on November 27, 2018 to report on the Safe Homes, now Wallflower Program.

ANALYSIS:

Staff will utilize an existing “programs” line item in the budget to budget and track any donations to the NUY Safe Home/Wallflower Program. Although this line was not budgeted for 2019, funds may be adjusted to support this item in 2019. The line item will be formally added to the 2020 budgeting process.

RECOMMENDATION:

The HRA to consider continued financial support of the NUY Safe Home/Wallflower Program in 2019.