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**Proposal for York County ARPA Funding
Southern York County Resource Hub & Affordable Housing Project**

This project includes two components: a resource hub of social services and 40 units of affordable housing. While they serve complimentary purposes, in this proposal we treat them as two separate projects that may be funded and developed jointly, or independently.

ARPA Funds Requested: \$750,000 to acquire a site for either, or both project components

Resource Hub:

Project Summary & Statement of Need:

Vulnerable families in Maine have always faced the discouraging hurdles of having to go to multiple locations and navigate a fragmented system to access support for basic needs such as food, shelter and mental health services. These failures in our support systems became frighteningly evident as households impacted by the pandemic struggled to find the entry point for assistance. Those who were able to connect with an agency still often found themselves in an exhausting game of ping-pong as they were bounced around between referrals and forced to share their often traumatic story time and time again.

Fair Tide and our local partners are working to address this through the creation of a **one-stop resource center** in the very southern part of our state. This center will bring several agencies and services under one roof so as to more effectively serve families and realize efficiencies for partner organizations; a win-win for those most in need and for the nonprofits that serve them. As folks continue to navigate the post-pandemic path to recovery, this resource center will serve as the doorway to stability.

This proposed project is deliberately aligned with statewide efforts currently underway to redesign the homeless service system through the creation of regional and local service hubs. Individually, these hubs will offer an access point through which struggling households can get connected to a more coordinated and comprehensive system of care. Collectively, the network of hubs works seamlessly to make cross referrals and coordinate with statewide agencies. The hubs will provide critical data and feedback on our service delivery system statewide and help target resources to where they are needed most. Data from the hubs will also inform legislation aimed at improving the safety net for our most vulnerable citizens. The proposed resource center in the very southern part of our state would not only directly benefit the local communities it serves, but will be a critical piece of the larger efforts to address homelessness, housing, and poverty in our state.

Partners:

Partner agencies to be included in the Resource Hub and current statistics on clients served:

- **York County Community Action: Outreach, Women Infants and Children, and Head Start services;**
- **Footprints Food Pantry** –185 households/month making 900 individual visits. 24,000 lbs of food distributed each month.
- **Kittery General Assistance** -Average of \$46,000 spent each year on emergency expenses for households. **Number of households supported**
- **Fair Tide Housing** – Supporting an ongoing caseload of 30 households with an additional 45 households assisted through information and referral services per year. 46 households stabilized through COVID Relief Program.
- **Fair Tide Thrift Store** – Almost \$2.5 million in store sales contributed to Fair Tide's housing programs.

Potential Site:

We have been exploring a promising site in Kittery that would work well if we were to develop the resource hub separately from the affordable housing. It is easily accessible, owned by a nonprofit with an interest in moving locations, zoned properly, and has an existing building and parking area that would limit the amount of renovation necessary for our intended use. We are currently in early conversations with the owner and believe that if we had the funding to offer, they would likely move forward with a deal.

Funding and Sustainability:

Initial funding required for the resource hub will vary depending on the property, however the potential site mentioned above is valued around \$750,000. Fair Tide and the other social service agencies would work together to raise the additional funds necessary to retrofit the building to meet our needs. Given the partners' collective years of successful fundraising, we are confident in our ability to achieve capital campaign goals.

Ongoing costs would be assumed by each partner, on a pro-rated basis. Each agency currently pays rent and overhead in their existing locations. This co-located space should help achieve cost-savings while allowing agencies to invest in their own properties.

Affordable Housing:

Project Summary & Statement of Need:

The second component of this project is an affordable housing development with around 40 units of rental housing aimed at those making 60% of the area median income. This aspect of the project addresses one of the biggest and most urgent crises of our time: the extreme lack of affordable housing options in the southern part of the state.

According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in southern York County, an individual must make \$25.52/hour to afford an average 2-bedroom rental. Compare that to the actual mean renter wage of \$11.51/hour and the issue becomes quite glaring. What these statistics mean in very simple terms is that more and more households are paying a majority of their incomes on housing costs. Without a financial cushion to speak of any additional expense like a medical bill or car repair, or any loss of income, like those experienced due to COVID, pushes these folks into homelessness and into our already overburdened emergency shelter system. The less than 1% vacancy rate in our community makes it almost impossible to re-establish housing once it's lost. This project would help fill a critical gap in housing and strengthen our community now, and for future generations.

Partners:

Fair Tide has been working with Community Housing of Maine (CHOM), a nonprofit affordable housing developer, for over four years to find a site for this proposed project in the Kittery area. CHOM has over 20 years of experience successfully developing and managing affordable housing in our state. Their model is to partner with a local social service agency, like Fair Tide, to help identify a site, garner community support and, eventually refer tenants. CHOM will be the lead on this project and is responsible for funding, constructing, leasing and managing the property and tenants.

Potential Site:

Due to the specific funding criteria tied to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, there are only a handful of sites in our area that would score high enough to obtain funding. We have explored almost all of them, and have honed in on one that is particularly promising. The size, location, density and zoning make it a great site for this project, and it is owned by a local community member who is an affordable housing advocate. Our partners at CHOM have created a rough site plan which we have run by the folks in the Kittery planning department and received an initial positive response. The site would work for the affordable housing units alone, or in conjunction with the resource hub.

Funding & Sustainability:

This particular site is quite valuable and the owner is asking around \$3 million. We would utilize the ARPA funds, in conjunction with money from local investors, to purchase the site. The costs to build the affordable housing units would primarily come from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, which CHOM has a terrific track record of securing. Ongoing costs to maintain the development would be provided by rental income and managed by Community Housing of Maine.

Should either, or both of these projects be chosen for ARPA funding, we are well positioned to push the work forward in earnest.