



Memo

To: Jay Fountain, Interim Director of OPM

Date: Jan. 9, 2018

Subject: Request for City of Stamford FY19 funding for East Side Community Center Utilities

From: Mike Duggan, Executive Director, Domus

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**1. Mission Statement & Program Description: The City of Stamford requires the inclusion of a Mission Statement and a Program Description in the submitted budget package. Please include major challenges facing your entity and accomplishments you plan to achieve in the 2018-19 fiscal year.**

Domus began as a single residential group home for ten boys in 1972. In 1991, we started expanding our programs to meet the growing needs of the youth we serve. Today, Domus is a multiservice organization serving more than 1,200 of the most struggling youth in Stamford.

Domus finds and loves young people who are shut out, unwanted, unloved, and afraid; young people society has failed and discarded; young people who, without our intervention, would drop out of their schools and their communities and wind up incarcerated, homeless, or dead. Our kids are often referred to as the “bad kids”—those young people that society has labeled as undeserving of additional resources and sympathy and whose lives are seen having little or no value to the larger community. At best our kids are seen as incapable of change and at worst as dangerous criminals or criminals-in-training. Because our young people have been chronically exposed to adverse childhood experiences and because they have reacted to this trauma by harming or threatening to harm themselves or others, they are feared and shunned. Because they are difficult, disconnected, and disengaged, they have not received the interventions they need to not only achieve their goals but to even understand that they can strive for goals and that their lives can be better.

Domus supports vulnerable, high-risk young people to rise above adversity. Through more than a dozen programs, we provide academic support, social-emotional skill building, and personal and practical connections to help guide our youth through critical junctures in their lives so they may become resilient, positive contributors to their communities.

As important as what we do is how we do our work. Everything we do at Domus is shaped by our five core principles:

- Our work is about the kids.
- We never give up on people.
- Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.
- People should have many chances to learn and grow from their mistakes.
- Loving relationships change people.

The City offered Domus a lease in 2009 for part of the 83 Lockwood Avenue building to house the Trailblazers Academy charter middle school, its out-of-school-time programs, and to host programs

operated for the benefit of the local neighborhood. We have been occupying this space since that time and the building currently houses a police substation, a youth workforce development program, The East Side Partnership, Childcare Learning Centers, the Stamford Youth Foundation, the Stamford Public Schools Alternative Routes to Success program, and Child Guidance. This Lockwood Avenue building provides the space necessary for many local groups to organize regular meetings for recreational, social, local service, and educational needs. For example, we host basketball, soccer, and volleyball leagues to engage and supervise youth who might otherwise participate in negative behaviors. The center acts as an IRS site where low- and middle-income neighbors get help with tax return preparation. We host events such as Martin Luther King celebrations, weddings, christenings, other family events, an international food fair showcasing local businesses which can encourage economic development, Three Kings Day, Ecuadorean Independence Day Festival, the Crisol/Acuarela event in support of the Leslie Ann Padilla Foundation, and East Side Day. Over the course of a year, thousands of people visit the center:

- We operated a free summer camp for 185 youth who live in Stamford and are not students at Trailblazers Academy middle school or participants in any other Domus programs.
- A church group meets in the building weekly.
- Stamford Youth Football stores their equipment in our building and hosts various meetings here.
- Local organizations like Literacy Volunteers offered 12 ESL classes Monday through Fridays each week to at least 120 individuals (approximately 600 classes per year).
- Domus hosted and coordinated one-day activities such as Easter Egg Hunt (450), Tree Lighting (150)
- Local clubs and sports leagues use our field and auditorium: Eddy's Fun Soccer for 4 to 8 year olds (200 kids, twice a week); Ecuadorian Soccer League (250 adults with over 600 people attending weekly games); Mighty Mites basketball (150 elementary, middle, and high school basketball players three times week from February to May).
- Approximately 200 tax returns were prepared at this location through the free VITA program run by the IRS.

Every year we host more events which attract more and more people. We expect to continue to serve as a gathering place for this area of Stamford, providing educational, recreational, social, and athletic events to engage the residents of this neighborhood in safe, pro-social, community-building activities.

Our greatest organization-wide challenge centers around facing significant fundraising challenges in each of our three sectors at Domus due to cuts at the State level as well as changing funding priorities from some of our longstanding private funders. We continue to reach out to new partners, and have found some success stretching grants into multi-year commitments and with funders who have a specific interest in one area of our work. For those areas where funding is insufficient to allow the program to continue, we have closed programs, such as our partnership at Domus Academy with the New Haven Public Schools, which closed last year.

We continue to see students coming to Trailblazers Academy and Stamford Academy with significant academic challenges, particularly in reading proficiency—and have experienced multiple traumas in their lives, including domestic abuse, witness to violence, hunger, homelessness, academic failure, chronic untreated health care issues, death of a family member, incarceration of a parent, and/or untreated mental illness. We have on-site medical and mental health counseling services for our youth—and we refer young people to other needed services. We also address social and emotional learning daily at Trailblazers—and were recertified in November 2016 as an elite trauma-responsive organization using the Sanctuary Model.

We also see Stamford becoming ever less affordable for our families—especially with regard to

housing costs, as more and more low-income neighborhoods get bulldozed in order to build expensive new apartment and condo buildings designed to attract young professionals to the city. This has driven up rental costs—and our young people are suffering chronic stress from poverty. We are seeing an increase in the number of our students whose basic needs for food and shelter are not being met. We do our best to help these young people: We feed all Trailblazers students breakfast, lunch and snack daily, and we provide families with emergency financial relief to help defray short-term financial emergencies, such as a broken appliance or a security deposit for new housing. (For long-term financial assistance, we refer families to community partners, such as Neighbors Link and Person-to-Person, and we link them with Filling in the Blanks for food.) And we provide free transportation to Trailblazers students whose families have been chased out of Stamford by housing costs. There are currently approximately 12 students who started with us as Stamford residents but are now commuting from Norwalk or Bridgeport because their parents could no longer afford Stamford.

#### Multi-year Initiatives for 2017-2019:

- Domus won a \$150,000 planning grant from the Barr Foundation to reimagine Stamford Academy alternative charter high school. We will explore the ideas of flexible school hours for students who work or provide childcare; internships with local businesses where high school graduates can earn family-sustaining wages; and multiple pathways to graduation. We were one of nine grantees selected out of 49 applicants throughout New England. We hope to receive a two-year, \$750,000 implementation grant at the completion of this planning project.
- We have also received a two-year, \$400,000 grant to fund a new partnership with the Stamford Public Schools. Domus staff is working with disengaged 9th grade students at Stamford High School to address attendance, behavior, and other non-academic challenges to their school success.
- For the third year in a row, we have received a grant to help our school leaders provide more robust instructional teacher coaching and allow our schools to better use student assessments to drive classroom decisions.
- We now operate a high school inside the Hartford Juvenile Detention Center, which will serve more than 100 youth per year.
- Thanks to foundation and private grants, we are creating new curricula for our schools that approach history and literacy through multiple points of view, including those of American Indians, Americans descended from Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, and women. This work is ongoing and will expand to address other topics in our curriculum over time.
- We have completed a three-month planning project to explore a re-entry program for young men returning to Stamford after incarceration. Domus staff would begin working with the young people six months before release from incarceration and continue for six to 12 months after release—working to prevent recidivism and teach work-readiness skills. We hope that this planning project will lead to long-term funding.

**2. Fiscal Year 2016/2017 Operating Results: Please include your most recent statement of your actual operating results. The statement should include your operating results for expenditures and revenues, compared to budget, for every line item in your budget.**

See attached.

**3. Fiscal Year 2017/2018 Operating Budget: Please include a copy of your current operating budget, year-to-date expenditures and revenues as of October 31, 2017, and projected operating results for the current fiscal year.**

See attached.

**4. Proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2018/2019: Please include a copy of your proposed operating budget, including revenues and expenditures by line item, which has been approved by your respective board. Please include any capital improvement plans that may not be reflected in the forwarded budget.**

See attached.

**5. Audited Financial Statement:**

- Entities receiving more than \$50,000 from the City of Stamford in any one fiscal year are required to submit an organization-wide financial statement prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles audited by and with the report of, an independent certified public accountant.
- Entities receiving at least \$25,000, but less than \$50,000, from the City of Stamford in any fiscal year may be required to submit an organization-wide audit to the City at the City's request.
- Entities receiving less than \$25,000 from the City of Stamford in any fiscal year may be requested to submit a financial statement indicating the overall financial condition of the organization and identifying the impact of City funding. The City may require that such a report include: (1) a balance sheet showing appropriate categories of assets, liabilities and fund balances, (2) a statement of operations showing appropriate categories of revenues and expenses and (3) appropriate explanatory footnote disclosures. Two officers of the organization shall attest to the accuracy of all financial disclosures in writing.

See attached.

**6. Budget Narrative: As part of the budget submission process, all outside agencies are requested to submit a narrative overview of their expenditure budget request. This overview should identify any significant areas of change or concerns related to funding levels, levels of service, and key issues you feel should be identified. In addition, any organizations requesting additional staffing or program expansions to be funded by the City of Stamford should outline those requests in this overview. Please address this memorandum to Mayor Martin but forward it to the OPM department by the due date identified in the attached budget schedule.**

This submission serves as our request for continued operating expense support of \$50,000 from the City of Stamford to help defray the cost of utilities and other operating expenses at 83 Lockwood Avenue. This building serves the surrounding neighborhood through employment programs, recreational programs, parent-focused programming, holiday celebrations, and other programs. The center hosts the IRS' VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) Program, which offers free tax help to low-to middle-income people who need help preparing their tax returns. Many nonprofits and community groups use the center for meeting space. The East Side Partnership and Child Guidance have permanent offices in the center, which also serves as a polling place for elections. The Domus Work & Learn employment-readiness training center opened in this building in October 2010 and helps hundreds of local youth gain the hard and soft employment skills they need to obtain and retain employment by providing paid job-skills training in bicycle repair, woodworking, small-engine repair, and restaurant kitchen. Literacy Volunteers offers English classes here five days per week. An open gym session is offered to teenagers in the community on a weekly basis, providing a safe and productive activity for kids who would not otherwise be engaged in supervised activities. Our sports field and gymnasium are used for adult and youth soccer programs, basketball, and volleyball. During the year, there are at least six large activities hosted in this building for the community, such as East Side Day, an international food festival, East Side tree lighting, Three Kings Day, Martin Luther King celebrations, and the Community Easter Egg Hunt. We often provide space for celebrations to mark birthdays, christenings, weddings, and

communions. We welcome local residents and staff of the Childcare Learning Centers (which shares the building with Domus) to join our physical education teacher in regular fitness workouts. Our garden and greenhouse grow produce used in our programs and donated to the community, acting as important educational vehicles to teach local residents healthy living. This location also houses Trailblazers Academy middle school and its out-of-school-time program called Lion's Den, which serve 128 students.

The people using the facility as a gathering and meeting location for social, recreational, educational, and public service activities are residents of Stamford, with the vast majority living in the East Side. Many are people of color. The population of students at Trailblazers Academy middle school, for example, is 50% Black, 44% Latino, 3% Multi-Racial, and 3% Other. Most families in the neighborhood are low-income and do not have the resources to pay for the types of programming offered here for free. Hours of operation stretch well beyond the school day into the evenings and weekends.

Last year we paid more than \$95,000 for utilities to operate this City-owned building, a significant portion of which is incurred in order to keep the facility open and available for the myriad of programs that we organize and host for community residents on evenings and weekends. We feel fortunate to have the space to offer to run or host community gatherings and act as a hub for this previously unserved section of Stamford. We hope the City will continue to defray a portion of the costs associated with providing this valuable service.

Impact on the center if funding is reduced or eliminated:

The center currently makes available its library, media center, computer lab, classrooms, cafeteria, gymnasium, outside field, parking area, and auditorium to community groups serving East Side residents and for a variety of educational and community events for the East Side. Most facilities and events are offered at no cost to residents, since they simply cannot afford to pay such fees. The majority of the events provided to the community take place during evening and weekend hours. The building also houses Childcare Learning Centers offices and classrooms and storage for the Stamford Youth Foundation sports equipment. The Stamford Police Department has a small substation in the building as well. If the City were to reduce or eliminate funding for our utilities costs, the center would have to reduce community programming by eliminating some of the evening and weekend activities or to charge community groups for using center space, which would prove a significant hardship to these groups. There are no other large spaces in this part of Stamford where groups can meet, so funding cuts would likely make it impossible for many groups to meet at all, which will negatively impact the work we have undertaken with our partners to make the East Side a cleaner, safer, more attractive, more cohesive, and more pleasant place to live.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions about this request or our work at Chester Addison, please don't hesitate to contact me.

**East Side Community Center**  
**Budget Fiscal Year 18-19**  
**Total Operating Expenses**

	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Revenues</b>	
Private	150,928.96
Other Income	20,000.00
City	50,000.00
	<u>220,928.96</u>
<b>Expenses</b>	
<b>Personnel Services</b>	
Salaries	79,760.37
Fringe Benefits	23,002.89
Indirect cost	11,132.02
sub total	<u>113,895.28</u>
<b>Other Than Personnel Services</b>	
Telephone	585.52
Audit	585.52
Bookkeeping	292.24
Office Supplies	292.24
Maintenance/Cleaning Supplies	5,848.96
Utilities/Repairs	99,429.20
sub total	<u>107,033.68</u>
Total Expenses	<u>220,928.96</u>
Net Income/(Deficit)	<u><u>(0.00)</u></u>