



MEMORANDUM

TO: All City and County Officials; Local and Regional Planning Organizations; Nonprofit Development Organizations; Area Agency on Aging Organizations; Local Council on Aging Organizations; Local Community Action Partnership Organizations; and all other interested organizations

FROM: Phil Schenk, Executive Director
West Virginia Partnership for Elder Living, Inc.
Mary Skeens, Executive Director
CommunityWorks in West Virginia, Inc.

DATE: July 13, 2016

RE: A Call for Letters of Interest in Making Your Community a Model Senior Living Community

On behalf the Board of Directors of CommunityWorks in West Virginia, and West Virginia Partnership for Elder Living, Inc., we invite you to submit a Letter of Interest in making your community a Model Senior Living Community.

The Senior Living Project is a collaboration among groups and individuals working toward better and more affordable housing in West Virginia and toward better living for the state's growing elder population. The project is led by CommunityWorks in West Virginia (CWWV) and the West Virginia Partnership for Elder Living, Inc. (WVPEL).

CommunityWorks in West Virginia, Inc. (CWWV) is a statewide membership organization made up of 27 local agencies that provide housing-related services throughout the state of West Virginia. CWWV was established in 1991 and is certified by the United States Department of the Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). CWWV has been a chartered member of NeighborWorks America since 1996. The mission of CWWV is to create housing and community development solutions for all West Virginians through a network of member organizations. CWWV carries out its mission by providing effective training and technical assistance to local housing organizations; developing sustainable capital investments in local housing; advocating for sound housing policies; and increasing public awareness of local housing issues throughout West Virginia.

WVPEL is a non-profit organization with a mission to foster opportunities for seniors to age with dignity and purpose. Its activities involve identifying issues that affect those opportunities. Groups

of professionals and others interested in the issue are convened to analyze it and develop strategies and projects which might improve opportunities for elders. Lately, WVPEL has been focused on the living environment as a key issue for seniors. This involves looking at that environment as both the physical living place (e.g. house or apartment) and the community in which that living space is located.

CWWV and WVPEL want to partner with three communities in West Virginia to provide technical and monetary assistance to become model senior living communities. A group of experts in affordable housing, housing development, finance, health and human services, and community development have prepared this project. This core group, along with others, will be working with our three communities for the next few years to make visions become realities.

This letter is an invitation for inclusive collaborative community groups to submit ideas for creating new housing for seniors and making the community more livable. The project is looking for energetic, creative, and cooperative communities which can create visions and solid plans for realizing those visions. We are looking for West Virginia communities that believe that their elder populations are not a deficit nor a burden, but rather a valuable resource that should be a foundation for an improved and model community.

In WV, nearly 500 individuals are turning 65 every week in the state. That rate of growth will continue all the way through the next decade. Even faster is the rate of growth of people 85 and older in our state. The percentage of people 65 and older is higher in West Virginia than in all but two other states. Already, the ability of traditional government services such as home delivered meals, transportation, and health services are over-burdened. Seniors, especially those living in remote, rural areas around the state are losing access to assistance that seniors have enjoyed over the past 50 years. Many of those problems can be overcome with improved housing for elders along with more efficient systems of assistance.

Over half the houses in the state are over 40 years old, more than a third are 55 or more, and 16 percent of homes in the state were built 75 or more years ago. Many of these homes in which seniors live are not physically safe for them to remain in (e.g. old electrical systems, old roofs, or rotted supports) and many create health problems (e.g. faulty heating, cooling, or plumbing systems can affect health). People living on a fixed income have a very hard time fixing those problems. Thus, other housing alternatives become more important as our senior population continues to grow. So it is no surprise that the number of elders living in rental housing is increasing in 54 of the 55 counties. A recent comprehensive study of housing in the state by the WV Housing Development Fund found that “the greatest housing need (in West Virginia) exists for affordable senior rental housing.”

That calls for new senior housing that is attractive in design and in function. Seniors say they want to stay in their own home no matter how difficult it is to live in. They believe that they don't have any options – it's either the old home or the nursing home. They need to be provided with alternatives. They need attractive affordable housing. This new senior housing must offer comforts, provide social opportunities, bring services closer (walking distance or even right in the housing complex), and meet their different income levels.

It is also a well-established fact that a majority of seniors will need some type of long term care and other services as they age. Most people over 65 have at least one chronic disease. Over 50% of people over 85 have 2 to 4 chronic conditions. Many seniors have no readily available

transportation to get to health care or even a pharmacy and people with chronic diseases need to see doctors and get medications.

In other parts of the country health services and wellness programs have been delivered to elders directly in their housing complexes. This model has been shown to improve the health status of the seniors involved and save millions of dollars in health care costs.

In addition to inadequate housing, communities in West Virginia lack many of the amenities that make a community “livable.” Things like walkways, benches, accessible street crossings, and transportation need to be considered in moving toward livability. AARP’s Public Policy Institute has developed a “Livability Index” for every zip code in the nation (www.livabilityindex.aarp.org) to create a ranking or livability score (scale of 0 to 100). The index looks at factors such as access to services and recreation, health, clean air and water, transportation, civic and social engagement, and opportunities.

Most towns in West Virginia score around the numerical average of 50 on the index. Some are as high as the mid-50s and some are down in the 40s and lower. What is important about the index is that the scores can be improved. AARP tells of communities that have made great strides. We’re not looking for the best scores now, we are looking for communities that have ideas to improve their score, whatever it is. We think that a model senior living community will have better scores on this index when work is complete.

From the letters of interest (LOI) received as a result of this invitation, we will go through a process of analysis, community visits, and selection. In the end, we will have a beginning with three communities to be assisted in becoming what we are calling Senior Living Communities. These three will be the ones that address senior housing, community livability, and probability of success with creativity, energy, and community cooperation.

For the purposes of this project, a community can be any type of population center or political subdivision that has its own population and draws people to it from remote outside areas nearby.

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation has provided funds for planning and for selection of three partner communities. Further funding is being sought to provide assistance to the communities for education and planning. That funding will be dependent on identifying the three communities. We are confident that the project is being taken seriously and is attractive to funders, developers, and community development people in and outside the state.

Total funding to complete these projects will depend on the combined efforts of the coordinating staff and the local steering committees to secure those funds. We are seeking funding from various sources for the planning stages and will have professionals in the field of housing development and funding working with us to make these projects happen, but the local committees will share responsibility for seeing the program through to completion

Because of deadlines for new grants and delay in planning, it is imperative that we move quickly at this time to find the three communities that exhibit the organization, imagination and energy to take on this project. If you have an interest in this initiative, please send us a letter of interest, which meets and

aligns with the submission guidelines outlined below. Your letter of intent should briefly address the “Applicant Questions” outlined in Section 4 below. For additional information please contact Phil Schenk at pschenk@wvpel.org. All Letters of Interested must be submitted by mail or electronically to: Lisa Scarberry no later than 4:00 pm on August 15, 2016 as follows:

West Virginia Partnership for Elder Living, Inc.

Attn: Lisa Scarberry

P.O. Box 8919

South Charleston, WV 25303-0919

Or

Email: lscarberry@wvpel.org

Instructions for Submission of the Letter of Interest

1. Submission Guidelines

The following submission guidelines and requirements apply to this call for letters of interest.

Letters of interest will be accepted from:

1. Tax-exempt nonprofit organizations under the 501(c) (3) category
2. Any county or local governmental entity
3. Community-based coalitions who are tied to a non-profit or governmental entity

At minimum, qualified applicants must demonstrate:

1. Community buy-in and readiness – some evidence that there is energy and forethought about better senior living. As a first step, a local steering committee should be identified, and should include key players such as community volunteer leaders, political leaders, service providers, religious leaders and seniors. This group needs to actively support this effort and be willing and able to make decisions about the project.
2. Demonstrated community need and data on the target population(s) to be served
3. Creative ideas for an Innovative senior housing project
4. Creative ideas for community improvement projects to increase livability
5. Some evidence of economic need created by the decline in the coal industry (need not be a coal mining or ex-coal mining community to be affected).

2. Purpose of this Project:

The purpose of this project is to encourage the planning, design and development of three integrated senior living communities that will address the seven (7) key components of a livable community:

1. Mobility
2. Community integration
3. Access to services
4. A mix of housing
5. Adaptability to individual needs
6. Affordability to serve a mix of incomes, and
7. Supportive community features and services.

This project will demonstrate that West Virginia communities can be attractive, safe and healthy places for elders to live, and will identify best practices, barriers, funding needs and resources, and marketability factors of senior-friendly communities and models.

The population to be served is seniors aged 62 and over and persons with disabilities aged 55 and older.

Applicant Questions to be Answered.

The application for inclusion in this project is a LOI. It must include normal contact information and something about the background of the community. It must also let us know of current participation in any other community development projects. Letters should address the following six (6) questions as best as you can while adhering to the time constraint for submission:

1. Is this community involved in any community development projects? If so, please describe briefly.
2. Describe your organization's experience and capacity to lead cross-sector work to achieve measurable outcomes.
3. Provide a list of the people who will or may form a local Steering Committee for this project and, if possible, levels of experience.
4. What is your demonstrated need and what do you strive to change? Why are you interested in this project?
5. What is the evidence that your community would be interested in participating in this process?

6. Describe the senior living model that your organization is considering and the livability plans for the target population. Include ideas for long-term sustainability and use of property.

5. Project Deliverables for Phase 1.

Selected applicants will be responsible for:

- Establishing a Steering Committee
- Working with CWWV, WVPEL, and the project steering committee

The coordinators will:

- Provide project leadership
- Technical assistance
- Funding for the community groups to develop the projects when available