



Councilmember Ben Bartlett

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CONSENT CALENDAR

June 11, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmembers Ben Bartlett & Cheryl Davila
 Subject: Budget Referral: Funding for Youth Spirit Artworks

RECOMMENDATION

Refer \$198,000 annually to the Budget process to support Youth Spirit Artworks for the BUSD Homeless Student Program: \$55,000 to serve high school aged youth who are in school; the YSA Vocational Arts Program: \$65,000 to serve 130 Berkeley youth with job training services, and for the new YSA Tiny House Village Program: \$78,000 to case manage youth who are in transitional housing services.

BACKGROUND

Youth Spirit Artworks (YSA) is a twelve-year old interfaith jobs and job training non-profit located in South Berkeley which is committed to empowering and transforming the lives of homeless and other underserved low-income Bay Area young people, ages 16-25. YSA is a proven community leader in youth-initiated and led efforts, providing innovative jobs training in seven vocational areas, as well as jobs placement involving over 150 youth each year.

YSA engages youth as leaders in running their own art gallery and store with a regular, youth-led public events program. It is deeply involved in community revitalization efforts. YSA participants have created more than a dozen murals adorning public space in South Berkeley, with more murals being executed every year toward creation of its Alcatraz Alley Mural Park.

YSA engages young people in leadership through publication of *Street Spirit*, the 24 year old East Bay homeless newspaper, which serves as a fundamental economic anchor for eighty homeless and unstably housed adult street vendors in any given month.

YSA's Youth Tiny House Village project is part of its larger ten-year organizing campaign to create "100 Homes for Homeless Youth." With the strong leadership of

homeless and other YSA youth leaders and over twenty-five committed community volunteers, YSA has been working for over 18 months on plans to develop a model, first-in-nation youth Tiny House Village (THV). This project involves completion of up to 22 tiny houses for homeless and unstably housed Berkeley young people, three on-site resident manager living units & two support buildings.

YSA began its Tiny House Village organizing efforts with the design and construction of a tiny house prototype, teaching youth construction skills. In addition to housing homeless and unstably-housed couchsurfing youth, the project empowers over 20 YSA underserved young adults with job skills through engagement in construction efforts, community outreach and organizing, and project management.

YSA's tiny house prototype has been featured in multiple local publications, including a prominent *SF Chronicle* front-page article highlighting innovative, model tiny house solutions to the current Bay Area housing crisis.

Six volunteer-led working groups are currently actively engaged in organizing and design efforts related to the Village. The Tiny House Village project plans rely primarily on private funding for construction and development of the village.

Construction of tiny houses will involve YSA youth trainees and groups of volunteers from the interfaith religious community in an active "Adopt-A-Tiny House" program, with 100 volunteers per day building houses in two sets of three weekend build days, twelve houses at a time in 2019/20. Fifty-five community Build Leaders are leading volunteers engaged with the project Aug 17, 18, 24, 25, Sept. 7 & 8.

In March and April 2019 "Build Leaders" training to lead volunteers in 12-house builds constructed two additional tiny houses which are currently engaged on a tiny house congregation tour, involving the interfaith religious community in supporting YSA's efforts.

The strong focus of YSA's Tiny House Village Program Model is on youth jobs training and placement as well as academic success of Berkeley youth, with wrap around case management services and deep support in a caring community for all residents through rootedness in Youth Spirit Artwork's activities.

Multiple local non-profit partners are being organized to collaborate as partners in this effort, carrying out elements of the work to ensure the project is a success. Collaborators enlisted in YSA's Tiny House Village development and programs already include: Rising Sun Energy, The Berkeley School, Planting Justice, Berkeley Youth

Alternatives, The Way Christian Center, Lifelong Medical Center, YEAH Shelter, Urban Adamah, Berkeley City College, and UC Berkeley Public Service Center.

CURRENT SITUATION & NEED

On any given night as many as 400 Berkeley young people (ages 18 to 25) find themselves homeless, couchsurfing, sleeping in unstable housing settings, and/or desperately in need of consistent, basic care and other supports necessary for success. Youth facing housing instability have difficulties pursuing academic excellence and their vocational goals, and face life-threatening challenges and risks. Many of our African American and Latino youth face challenges of displacement from the Berkeley neighborhoods where their families have lived for decades, which impacts our historic diversity and cultural richness. Youth hold the key to our future and while working to pursue goals and dreams, our community seeks ways to provide stabilizing housing to these transitional aged young people in poverty. We are in an emergency housing crisis that is growing worse.

Providing the necessary funding for YSA to sustain current activities benefiting youth is a way to directly address youth homelessness and other issues many youth face and struggle with in the City of Berkeley.

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANS, PROGRAMS, POLICIES, AND LAWS

In response to the growing homelessness crisis locally and regionally, the City Council voted unanimously on January 19, 2016 to declare a Homeless Shelter Crisis. This resolution was reaffirmed in 2017 and is currently operating. The initiative serves as a key step in both expediting actions needed toward solving the problems of homelessness, minimizing the red tape of potential solutions, as well as encouraging creative partnerships and innovative solutions.

ACTIONS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

YSA provides its youth art vocational students with stipends to incentive them to attend classes consistently and to stay connected to YSA support services. No one is charged a fee for participation. YSA has a diverse funding portfolio of individual, business, and foundation donors and grant makers, and holds a contract with the AlaCosta Regional Center to serve neurodiverse young adults, and a new contract with Berkeley Mental Health to provide case management services to youth with a serious emotional disturbance that affects their ability to function. Approximately 15% of revenues come from the City of Berkeley's CDBG funds to partially cover the services to Berkeley youth. Currently, YSA holds two of these grant contracts. One, to serve 40 homeless high school aged youth in the Berkeley Unified School District (\$50,000 per year), and the other, to provide Vocational Arts training to an additional 60 low income City of

Berkeley youth (\$33,777 per year). This translates to a financial contribution from the City of \$833 per youth per year.

OVERVIEW AND RESULTS

YSA has historically met and exceeded its service goals, and last fiscal year served 69 Berkeley High School youth and 74 additional Berkeley youth with Vocational Arts programming, at an average actual cost to Berkeley of \$585 per youth per year. Annual goals met or exceeded for Berkeley students included improvements in grades, math scores, school attendance, enrollment in post-secondary education, and a decrease in suspension days. Each youth in Vocational Arts was offered 22 weeks of programming, and each averaged over 200 hours of instruction, with stipends, life skills classes, youth empowerment meetings, case management, and peer support services. Supportive relationships developed, and peers and housing providers worked to place youth in housing.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

YSA has increased its size and budget by over 100% in the past 3 years to meet the needs of a growing population of homeless youth. The Tiny House Village project has attracted interest from the media, the faith based community, and volunteers; the addition of *Street Spirit* has brought a new venue for youth art and poetry, and the youth voice; the entire agency is growing rapidly. To strengthen administrative infrastructure, YSA is currently working with a Management Information Systems Specialist and a Technology Consultant to improve data collection, data entry, and management reporting processes to better capture the success that it is having with youth. As a valuable member of the Berkeley community, YSA and YSA youth should have the full support of the Berkeley City Council.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

YSA has a cost effective model to deliver youth services, to provide a safe place for youth to work under adult supervision, and a process to tackle the root cause of homelessness, to prepare youth for a life of financial and emotional stability in a caring community. A homeless youth will cost taxpayers well over \$585 a year (the Foldes report prepared for Youthlink calculated taxpayer costs at \$18,000 a year). The long term benefit of supporting this vulnerable population is much more.

SUSTAINABILITY

YSA is working toward a sustainable operating budget, and is laying the groundwork to provide Medi-Cal billable case management services. Rents from Tiny House Village tenants will be another stable source of revenue, and as we expand Art Sales (using an

online platform), we anticipate an increase in earned income, a portion of which will go to the youth artists. YSA has a 3 year strategic plan, and is meeting its objectives as a healthy and growing agency.

Our request to the City of Berkeley for the fiscal year 2020/2021 is:

- BUSD Homeless Student Program: \$55,000 to serve 60 Berkeley high school aged youth
- Vocational Arts Program: \$65,000 to serve 130 Berkeley youth, and
- Tiny House Village Program: \$78,000 to serve 22 residents with social services

BERKELEY HIGH SCHOOL CAREER AND SUCCESS PROGRAM

YSA provides after school job training for low income, homeless and at risk of homeless high school aged youth who are referred by BUSD. Using art as a vocational medium, youth trainees progress through 5 levels, called: aspirant, apprentice, apprentice leader, leader, job placement/employment. Students are paid stipends if they participate a minimum of 10 hours a week, which increase when additional responsibilities are earned, and can earn sales commissions. In addition to art skills training, there are 7 key services youth receive each week: 1) individual case management with referrals to wrap around services; 2) behavioral coaching and mentoring; 3) 12 hr educational sessions on inter personal skills; 4) a 1 hr Youth Empowerment meeting to facilitate self determination and youth led organizational growth; 5) business skills training and an accredited personal finance curriculum; 6) a written individualized job Progression Ladder; 7) training in the use of (SMART) goal setting.

Funds will be used to allow students who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, and low income youth to receive direct assistance with meeting survival needs (paid internships) and vocational training to create a path out of poverty. Studies have shown that early intervention in adolescence is highly effective, and saves lives and taxpayer dollars. Working alongside the City of Berkeley 2020 Vision Program, YSA programs will help close the achievement gap, help students stay in school, and we help them prepare for college, within a community of support.

Request: **\$55,000**

Proposed Number of City of Berkeley youth to serve in 2020-2021: **60**

VOCATIONAL ARTS TRAINING PROGRAM

YSA provides job training for homeless and at risk youth in the Berkeley area, using art as a vocational medium. Youth receive hands on instruction and are paid stipends, which increase when additional responsibilities are earned and trainees move up the progression ladder. Last year, YSA youth completed 3 major community murals, helping to revitalize Berkeley's poorest neighborhoods and completed and sold over 300 works of art, with 50% of the sold proceeds going to the artists. The training program currently runs Fall Winter Spring, with three 16-week terms a year and a summer session. Youth become part of a cohort that meets 3 to 5 times a week, with rolling admissions. YSA

runs concurrent programs for youth in different progression levels. Our aim is to motivate and engage hard to reach youth, and strengthen peer to peer education and opportunities for employment/entrepreneurship, to move youth into productive lives.

Request: **\$65,000**

Number of City of Berkeley youth to serve in 2020/2021: **130**

TINY HOUSE VILLAGE PROGRAM

YSA is fundraising for a Tiny House Village for homeless youth and seeks funding for a Case Manager/Social Worker to assist Berkeley youth with placement and transition to permanent housing for 22 youth.

Request: **\$78,000.**

CONTACT PERSON

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