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The Columbus Hub of Opportunity: A Pioneering Effort of Economic Sustainability for Individuals with Disabilities

Columbus's "Hub of Opportunity" is an innovative transit-oriented, 200,000 square-foot commercial/residential development that will bring together a unique combination of community services, workforce development opportunities, and community living for individuals with disabilities. The project is located at 3900 S. W. Temple adjacent to the UTA Meadowbrook TRAX station in South Salt Lake. This innovative project is a community-based, mixed-use development



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that provides opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities to be good neighbors, tenants, consumers, and taxpayers. Because this will be one of the first of its kind in the country, other communities will be looking at the project as an innovative, replicable model of community living. *Columbus has secured \$37.5 million in financing and donations towards this innovative \$40 million project. Columbus is in the last phases of a major capital campaign looking to raise \$2.5 million to finalize the Hub project.*

- **The Hub is a shovel-ready project that will provide a significant inventory of accessible, affordable housing.** The entire project includes 156 residential units, and it will be built from the ground up with accessibility and integration in mind. The project will be designed to enhance access and "visitation," where residents, families, and visitors have barrier-free access to the community and each other. Of the 156 units, 110 units will be designated as affordable housing and the remainder will be market-rate apartments. Individuals with disabilities will be fully integrated into the community living side-by-side with neighbors that reflect the demographics of our community, ranging from those with severe disabilities to families to young professionals.
- **This is a replicable project that will provide an innovative model of integration, employment, and housing for individuals with disabilities.** Columbus will provide seamless program supports and services to ensure individuals with disabilities can leverage paychecks, subsidies, and entitlements in a way to ensure safe, integrated living in the community. This includes basic supports that many of us take for granted like accessible transportation, life-skill training, and vocational training. This project could be replicated on any TRAX or major bus line along the Wasatch Front, and portions could be replicated in other Utah communities outside of the Wasatch Front.
- **The hallmark of the project will be the NextWork Hub, a live/work program for young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).** Utah has spent many years successfully cultivating a STEM business environment, but in this robust economy, companies are struggling to fill jobs with skilled talent. The NextWork Hub will provide a "live/work" environment where 16 apartments and a vocational training space will give young adults with autism a safe environment to transition to community living and employment. This is an economic "win-win-win" for our community—employers tap into a talented but overlooked workforce; individuals with disabilities have access to employment and decrease their dependence on social services; and families have options for their adult children to live and work in the community.

For more information, contact Stephanie Mackay, Columbus's chief innovation officer at smackay@columbusseves.org; 385-715-5399 (direct); or 801-699-5954 (cell).



The Hub of Opportunity

Creating Dignity and Independence for People with Disabilities

Columbus is requesting a \$500,000 legislative appropriation for the Hub of Opportunity in 2018. Here are some talking points about how the Hub aligns with Legislative priorities:

<p>Affordable, Transit-Oriented Housing through Sensible, Innovative Solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Hub is inclusive, affordable housing that reflects all income groups, from those with severe disabilities to families, aging adults, and young millennials who are drawn to transit-friendly, diverse, neighborhoods. ✓ This is one of the few shovel-ready projects that will add much-needed affordable housing by 2019. Of the 156 units, 110 units will be designated as deeply affordable housing and the remainder will be market-rate apartments. ✓ The Hub demonstrates that an “upstream” solution can improve the socio-economic stability of “at-risk” populations when they live in stable communities where they can be good neighbors, tenants, consumers, and taxpayers. ✓ One in eleven adults ages 16-64 has a disability, but this stark statistic is not reflected in our community development planning.
<p>Workforce Development: Cultivating the Tech Talents of Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Utah has the 3rd highest rate of autism in the country, and young adults with autism and their families have NO comprehensive services to help them transition to work and independent living. ✓ The NextWork Autism Academy, which will be located in the Hub, is the first of its kind in the country to provide an innovative program that will serve 180 participants annually. ✓ As of 2016 there are 7,500 young adults with ASD in Utah that could offer employers access to a talented but overlooked workforce. ✓ Columbus is committed to building a model that can be replicated by other Utah urban and rural areas based on community need. ✓ The NextWork curriculum is employment-focused and can be adopted by employers and educators in rural and urban communities.
<p>A Strategic Public/Private Partnership that Leverages the Best of our Community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The \$40 million project is a public-private partnership that is fiscally sound. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 87% of the project is financed through Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), New Market Tax Credits (NMTC), private activity bond (PAB), and low-interest revolving loan funds. ○ 13% of the financing is coming through Columbus’s \$5 million capital campaign (\$2.5 has been committed by donors). ✓ This mix of funding demonstrates how a strategic public/private alignment brings housing and workforce development solutions to those most likely to face poverty and social isolation. ✓ Support from the Legislature is an important endorsement and raises visibility for solutions to affordable housing and employment among “at risk” populations.

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