



STATEMENT OF JOHN PARVENSKY TO LAKEWOOD CITY COUNCIL
January 8, 2018

I am John Parvensky, and for the past 32 years, I have served as the president and CEO of The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless. The Coalition is a non-profit organization that provides integrated healthcare, housing, employment, and support services to more than 18,000 individuals and families each year throughout the state. The Coalition has been working for the past 33 years to serve homeless families and individuals throughout the state, including Lakewood and Jefferson County, directly and in collaboration with other local human service agencies.

The Coalition has applied to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to acquire the Federal Center Station property. This 59-acre property is owned by the federal government and managed by the General Services Administration (GSA). It is located immediately north of the Federal Center RTD multi-modal station. This property was declared surplus by GSA in 2016 and was initially deemed “unsuitable” for use to assist the homeless by HUD in October 2016.

The Coalition filed legal action to overturn HUD’s initial determination, and succeeded in obtaining a determination that the property was indeed suitable for use to assist the homeless in accordance with Title V of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Under Title V, federal surplus properties must be made available by lease or deed to organizations to assist the homeless. While HUD determines whether a surplus property is suitable for use to assist the homeless, HHS reviews and approves applications from eligible organizations for its proposed uses to serve the homeless.

Since the property is owned by the U.S. Government and considered a federal resource, HHS has the sole authority to approve the application by the Coalition to use the property to assist the homeless in accordance with Title V of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. While we have outreached to Lakewood and Jefferson County officials to provide details of our proposal, Lakewood and Jefferson County have no role in the decision to transfer the property to the Coalition.

GSA and HHS have determined that organizations can only apply to acquire the whole 59 acre parcel under Title V, and it will not accept applications for only a portion of the site. Title V also requires that the property be solely used to assist persons who are homeless. The Coalition’s application to acquire the property is currently under review by HHS.

The Coalition is proposing a two-phase use and redevelopment of the property. In Phase One, we will use the property to create a campus of emergency shelter and transitional housing and services for homeless families and individuals using temporary structures constructed or placed on the site by Coalition. This will allow us to work with other human service organizations in Jefferson County to meet the immediate emergency needs of homeless families and individuals in Jefferson County while completing planning for the second phase of development.

In Phase Two, CCH will replace the temporary structures with newly constructed permanent buildings to be used for permanent supportive housing, permanent affordable housing, transitional supportive housing, and supportive services for homeless families and individuals.

The area of the site between 4th Avenue and 6th Avenue will be used as a Solar Energy Collection Farm to provide electricity for the proposed uses during both phases and as a job training program for homeless individuals.

During Phase One, we will use a combination of manufactured housing, such as FEMA trailers, geodesic dome structures, and larger insulated tent structures to provide emergency and transitional housing for homeless families and individuals. Additional temporary structures will be used to provide support services, including counseling, employment and vocational services, and integrated health care services.

I have heard rumors that the Coalition wants to establish a “tent city” at the Federal Center. This is not accurate. CCH is not proposing to use the site as a “tent city”. We are proposing in Phase One to provide a number of temporary structures to provide emergency shelter, transitional housing and support services for homeless families and individuals. Only families and individuals enrolled in the program will be allowed to reside on-site. Referrals for the program will come from local human service agencies and the OneHome coordinated Intake and Assessment system. The container housing structures will have individual bathrooms and showers. There will be community bathrooms and showers for those residing in the emergency shelters. CCH is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all program participants. Access to the site during phase one will be limited by fencing and security personnel.

In Phase Two, we propose to construct five mixed-use apartment buildings on the site to provide up to 600 units of permanent and transitional housing for families and individuals, with community spaces and social service offices on the first levels. These four-story structures will be similar to apartment buildings constructed by CCH in other parts of the Metro Denver area, including its most recently completed development at 40th and Colorado Blvd. in Denver, the Renaissance at North Colorado Station. We have developed more than 1,800 units of housing in the Metro Denver area over the past 20 years, including the Renaissance at Concord Plaza development at 17th and Kendall in Lakewood. We pride ourselves in developing quality housing for formerly homeless families and individuals that look and operate like market rate housing.

CCH has been working with agencies providing services to homeless and at-risk families and individuals in Jefferson County to obtain input on the priority needs of those experiencing homelessness in support of our proposal. We will continue to work with these agencies to implement a success redevelopment of the site while helping address the increased homelessness in Jefferson County. We plan to give priority to Jefferson County residents for the emergency and long term housing and services provided at the site.

We plan to conduct meetings with the general public in Lakewood as soon as HHS approves our application for acquiring the property. We will form an advisory committee of interested persons to provide ongoing input into the development of the site. We will also work in partnership with the City of Lakewood to make this a successful project.

We believe this property provides a unique opportunity to address the growing homelessness crisis in Jefferson County. According to the 2017 Point-in-Time count, there are 394 individuals and 244 families with children experiencing homelessness in Jefferson County alone on a single day in January. We estimate that the number of persons experiencing homelessness during the course of the year is 2.5 times the Point in Time count. Thus, as many as 1,000 persons in Jefferson County experienced homelessness in 2017. The Colorado Department of Education estimates that there were 2,700 homeless students in the Jefferson County School District in 2017.

As the housing market continues to become less affordable to low income families in every county in Colorado, and homelessness is increasing throughout Jefferson County and Metro Denver, the Coalition is working meet the immediate and long term needs of homeless families and individuals by creating supportive housing, and providing integrated health care, employment and social services for these families and individuals, including veterans.

The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless has proven for three decades that providing affordable and supportive housing and health care helps our communities provide safe environments for children to learn, for adults to recovery from substance abuse and receive medical treatment, and for many individuals who have experienced trauma to receive much needed behavioral and mental health services. Such housing and services also reduce the unnecessary taxpayer costs of emergency services, including police and courts, emergency room and hospital costs, detox, and similar costs. CCH believes the Federal Center Property provides a once in a generation opportunity to create a new development to make Lakewood a community where everyone has a safe place to call home and an opportunity to thrive.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.