YOUTH TINY HOUSE VILLAGE

A Program of: Youth Spirit Artworks
In Collaboration with Housing Consortium of the East Bay

Food Justice Mural by Angel Jesus Perez
THE CRISIS

There are upwards of 1,700 homeless young people in Alameda County, and less than 36 youth-designated beds in shelters and affordable housing. Young people facing housing instability have overwhelmingly experienced abuse, neglect, and mental and physical health obstacles, and lack access to public resources. They may have difficulty pursuing academic and vocational goals, and face life-threatening challenges and risks. Being homeless, even for a short period, can start a cascade of individual and social tragedies that can be difficult to overcome.

Our youth are the key to our future, and we believe that our community has a responsibility to support them. By providing underserved homeless and low-income young people a stable home, educational opportunities, and job training, we can break the cycle of homelessness.

WHO WE ARE

Youth Spirit Artworks (YSA) is a 13-year old interfaith job training non-profit committed to empowering and transforming the lives of homeless and underserved low-income Bay Area youth, ages 16-25. YSA’s youth-led efforts provide innovative jobs training and placement and engage youth as leaders in community revitalization. Since 2007, more than 700 homeless and low-income youth have participated in YSA programs and more than 500 program graduates have gone on to receive a high school diploma, enter college, begin work, or become employed by YSA.

Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB), YSA’s property management partner, is a well-established non-profit organization whose mission is to partner with nonprofit and for-profit agencies to develop affordable housing and inclusive communities for individuals with developmental disabilities and other special needs. HCEB has been doing this work in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties since 1996 and manages numerous housing programs, working in partnership with individuals, their families, and service providers.
OUR VISION: HOUSING, SUPPORT, AND COMMUNITY

Four years ago, the youth in YSA’s program identified the lack of stable and affordable housing in the Bay Area as the number-one obstacle they had in meeting their goals. They engaged in a vision exercise and reported that stable housing, consistent access to services, and the support of a peer-driven community could break the cycle of homelessness. Their vision led to the development of a plan for a Tiny House Village, designed with supporting services and amenities. Today, we are proud to announce that we are making that vision a reality.

DEVELOPMENT

Addressing the homeless crisis, especially in the Bay Area, requires fresh approaches and innovative thinking. To meet that challenge, the Tiny House Empowerment Village project is being built in phases:

PROTOYPE BUILDS:

In March and April of 2019, the YSA youth team, led by former West Coast Regional Manager of Habitat for Humanity Rolf Bell, partnered with skilled Build Leaders from the community to construct the first two houses. These houses served as vehicles for training and prototypes for future builds.

COMMUNITY BUILDS:

In summer and fall of 2019, over 500 volunteers from the interfaith religious community came together in Habitat for Humanity-style build days to complete twelve more houses.

Throughout 2020, volunteers from the community built 12 more houses, resulting in a total of 26 completed Tiny Houses.
MURAL CREATION:
The Tiny Houses have been painted with murals designed and created by local community artists and by youth artists with the help of adult artist mentors.

By opening day, all 26 houses will have completed murals, resulting in a mobile mural garden of tiny houses on wheels.

MOVE IN:
In February of 2021, 22 youth and 4 Resident Assistants will move into the Village. The Village will also feature two community yurts with a kitchen and meeting space, and on-site communal bathrooms and showers.

GROWTH:
To address the long-term need for affordable, permanent housing, YSA has committed to a “100 Homes for 100 Homeless Youth” campaign over the next ten years through additional Tiny House Villages and other models of affordable housing.

Tiny Houses are a common sense solution to the housing crisis. Tiny houses are:

- Quick, inexpensive, and easy to assemble
- Movable and adaptable
- Compatible with the Habitat for Humanity community build model
- Replicable across location and need

COLLABORATIVE LIVING AT THE TINY HOUSE VILLAGE

The Tiny House Empowerment Village will be operated as transitional-aged youth (TAY) emergency shelter following guidance provided by the City of Oakland's emergency shelter ordinance and Oakland's "community cabins" program. Its Covenant will allow young people to stay a maximum of two years or until youth are placed into permanent housing.

The youth in the Village will be fully integrated into Youth Spirit Artworks’ existing job training program, where they will access wraparound social services and case management at YSA. Over two years, the Village will transition youth from homelessness/unstable housing to financial self-sufficiency and stability.
FINANCIAL AND IN-KIND SUPPORT

To date, Youth Spirit Artworks has raised over $210,000 for tiny house construction from individual donors, private foundations, and corporations. It has raised $360,000 in ongoing operating funds for the Village from the City of Oakland. We are working to raise $100,000 in Case Management funds from the City of Berkeley.

“People that understand or experience something are the best at coming up with solutions for those problems. I think having homeless youth design the homes, they understand the problem and know what solutions to create.”

- Aboubacar Komara, former YSA collaborator

OPERATIONS

HCEB’s extensive supportive housing management experience will benefit both the Village and the community. Guiding principles of the operational plan include:

- A safe, clean, well-maintained environment;
- A model that is fiscally responsible, mitigates risk, and manages liability;
- A plan that ensures that residents are given every chance to succeed.

Operational costs will be offset by rents from residents. Our model is to use a sliding scale, based on an ability to pay, and we anticipate the average monthly rental income will be $250 per unit. Rents will be used to cover the cost of utilities and operations. Residents will be asked to participate in helping with monthly cleaning and property maintenance.

PROGRAM

The focus of YSA’s program model is on youth jobs training, job placement, and academic success. Once a resident is settled in a safe environment, they will be supported by a full range of services and training opportunities that focus on the job and life skills needed to transition toward long-term housing stability.
PROGRAM CONT’

These programs are currently offered at the YSA studio in Berkeley, with demonstrated success. Youth Spirit Artworks compliments its training programs with the provision of comprehensive case management support, leadership training, and social services.

For youth to successfully transition to long-term stability, we will provide a supportive and caring environment that delivers:

![Educational Opportunities](image1.png)

![Jobs Training & Placement](image2.png)

![Life Skills Support](image3.png)

![Emotional and Crisis Support](image4.png)

While in the program, residents will be expected to work or attend community college, and make consistent progress towards long-term goals. Residential community-based activities will be youth-led, complete with restorative justice conflict resolution and community consensus decision making.

During the summer of 2019, former superintendent of Andover Public Schools David Jackson met regularly with YSA youth to create a covenant of behavior for the Village based on community accountability and restorative justice. Residents will be accountable both to the program and to each other for helping all community members in achieving their goals.

TRACKING SUCCESS

YSA will track progress toward key goals and objectives:

- To help youth develop and solidify the skills they need to be job-ready
- To improve health and wellness, mentally and physically
- To set and meet educational and vocational goals
- To progress toward sustainable independent living

YSA will be well-positioned to measure outcomes of resident progress through both the housing and job training program, measuring services and housing stability throughout their participation. In addition:

All residents will develop written educational and/or vocational plans upon move-in. Regular case management meetings and community accountability will help support each participant, updating plans and timelines to track when goals are met.
TRACKING SUCCESS CONT’

Life skills, health, and wellness will be assessed regularly.

Leadership skills will be assessed; residents in our first Village cohort may apply to become paid community leaders and Resident Assistants, contributing their experience, knowledge, and skills to tomorrow’s youth.

YSA will track impact and outcomes longitudinally, over a period of years.

REPLICATION

The project team has documented the process of planning, building, implementing, and operating the program and its impact so the project model can be shared with other communities for replication.

Our model of the Tiny House Empowerment Village for young adults, with embedded wraparound services, will be one of the first in the country.

As such, our plan is to document and share lessons learned, challenges, successes, policies and procedures, and building plans.

Our work will therefore have a greater impact and this model can be used to help youth around the country.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

For additional information, please contact Sally Hindman, YSA Executive Director at shindman@youthspiritartworks.org.