

**Written Justification for
Christian's Manor Affordable Housing Development Project
ARPA-24-122-376**

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Description of Harm or Need

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the economic fragility that many young families were facing and adversely impacted affordable housing trends. Single parent households have especially faced significant economic and housing challenges. In many cases, the loss of employment has caused significant delays in rental payments and in turn loss of housing. The lack of sufficient low income rental opportunities has also left many with the uncertainty as to where to look for housing. Such situations have caused significant mental distress and deep financial and housing insecurity for many families. Within this demographic, single-parent families, especially single-mothers saw a significant increase in these difficulties. Given the various roles that single-parents must assume such as education, work, and childcare, it has shown the mental and emotional distress they have faced in order to maintain housing security for their children. One study reported that despite high levels of employment, more than half of latina mothers with children under age 13 worry daily about not being able to pay their bills.¹ Approximately one in three children live in a single-parent family in the United States, with the majority of families (83%) headed by a mother. Although single fathers are a growing demographic who exhibit distinctive influences on child development, research has predominantly focused on single mothers given their greater prevalence. Much of the evidence suggests that single-mother families tend to be disadvantaged at systemic and individual levels relative to two-parent families and are far more likely to experience poverty than two-parent families due to the loss of a partner's finances, lower maternal educational attainment, and discriminatory wages.² Furthermore, children in single parent families face more emotional, mental and academic challenges; however, studies show that taking an interest in education as a family may increase family success.³

¹ https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Young-Mothers-Survey-Brief_FINAL.pdf

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5226056/>

³ <https://www.beststrongintl.org/programs/how-does-single-parenting-affect-education/>

It has been observed how the pandemic has greatly exacerbated the financial burden on many individuals, especially single mothers. Single-parent families face many challenges in their daily lives, with financial insecurity being the leading difficulty faced on a daily basis. However, studies have shown that significant financial insecurity also greatly affects the children raised in these households. Statistics have shown that children from a single-parent household living in poverty are far more likely to experience behavioral and mental health problems, shorter educational trajectories, and employment challenges well into adulthood.⁴ The effects of poverty on children of single-parent families can be detrimental to their lives and significantly increase the likelihood of continuing the cycle of poverty well into their adult lives.

The long-term effects of COVID-19 have impacted the health and well-being of all members in our community. However, it is clear that certain constituents have faced disproportionate burdens due to the resulting economic crisis that the global pandemic created. Due to the worsening of the affordable housing crisis, low income individuals have had great difficulty locating rental properties that may meet the demands of Very Low Income (VLI) and Extremely Low Income (ELI) renter households.⁵ This information also holds true for the residents of Hidalgo County where more than 25% of residents live at or below the poverty line. In a 2023 study by the U.S. Department of HUD, it was found that very low income households earn \$25,250 or less for one working individual.⁶

Although affordable housing programs exist, the number of those needing assistance outweighs the number of units available. As per the Texas Housing Association, there are 8,127 affordable housing opportunities in Hidalgo County with 6,243 being Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers (HCV) and 1,884 under public housing.⁷ Consequently, wait lists are lengthy and at times stagnant. Furthermore, little to none of these programs offer the Two-Generation (2Gen) Model Approach that may impact economic mobility to improve familial quality of life.

Despite the consistent efforts of Hidalgo County and the Texas Housing Association, the current number of public housing units have not been sufficient to cover all the

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<https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-well-being-in-single-parent-families#:~:text=Socioeconomic%20Disadvantage%20and%20its%20Impact,the%20federally%20defined%20poverty%20line.>

⁵ <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/publications/Worst-Case-Housing-Needs-2023-Executive-Summary.html>

⁶ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty%20in%20Hidalgo%20County,%20Texas>
https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/home-datasets/files/HOME_IncomeLmts_State_TX_2023.pdf

⁷ <https://www.txtha.org/index.php/by-county/>

needs of the most vulnerable population. For this reason, Precinct 2 and The RGV Inclusive Inc plan on creating a system that will meet familial basic needs and foster a community of learning. According to the CDC's National Health Initiatives, "Fulfilling people's cultural, linguistic, psychological, behavioral, and safety needs contributes to happy, healthy, and thriving lives. Physical and mental well-being starts with access to fresh air and water, nutritious food, and a stable home."⁸ To that end, investing in affordable housing by dedicating an eight plex to low income, single parent families and providing needs-based services, education and career training, and counseling will support overall family well-being.

Justification of a Capital Expenditure

In order to prevent the continuous cycle of poverty among children of single-parent households, Annie E. Casey Foundation recommends implementing programming and policy strategies to support families in need and to reduce socioeconomic inequities in their environment. The foundation highlights the following strategies: 1) affordable housing options can reduce instability and parental stress; 2) offering parental education can help parents to develop skills and knowledge they need to raise their children; and 3) counseling services can help improve both the parent and child's health. Moreover, maximizing two-generation community development strategies which aim to address the needs of both the parent and child simultaneously can equip families with essential skills and help reduce the number of families living in poverty.⁹

In order to better assist the County's most vulnerable residents, Hidalgo County Precinct 2 intends to collaborate with the RGV Inclusive Inc, a non-profit organization that helps single parents and their children in order to provide housing assistance, support services, and resources to families in need. Through the Christian Manor Affordable Housing Development Project, Precinct 2 and RGV Inclusive aim to mitigate housing insecurity and its related public health issues by providing families in need with essential services and resources. Along with affordable housing, RGV Inclusive Inc will incorporate the Two-generation (2Gen) Model Approach to connect families with needs-based services and programs to maximize positive outcomes.¹⁰

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<https://health.gov/our-work/national-health-initiatives/equitable-long-term-recovery-and-resilience/framework/basic-needs-health-and-safety#:~:text=Fulfilling%20people's%20cultural%2C%20linguistic%2C%20psychological.food%2C%20and%20a%20stable%20home>.

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<https://www.aecf.org/blog/child-well-being-in-single-parent-families#:~:text=Socioeconomic%20Disadvantage%20and%20Its%20Impact,the%20federally%2Ddefined%20poverty%20line>.

<https://www.aecf.org/topics/two-generation-approaches>

¹⁰ <https://ascend.aspeninstitute.org/2gen-approach/>

These housing units will also provide easy access to educational opportunities and everyday essential amenities which include but are not limited to a close proximity to South Texas College for parents, schools for their children, a grocery store, and recreational parks and trails. Through the initiatives of Hidalgo County Precinct 2 and of the RGV Inclusive, the County's most vulnerable population will have access to affordable high-quality living units and will aid in breaking the cycle of poverty for parent and child.

The RGV Inclusive Inc has been successful with their systemic approach of affordable housing and the 2Gen Model. Currently, residential facilities under Christian's Manor in San Juan Texas are strategically located in close proximity to IDEA and PSJA ISD schools, the Boys and Girls Club of San Juan Texas, and the Hidalgo County Advancement Center.¹¹ Program eligibility for applicants includes being classified at below poverty level, a willingness to visit the Christians Manor office twice a month for mental health, academic coaching and budget planning and must be returning to college within the next 4 months. Families pay no more than 30% of their income for rent with a maximum of \$500, allowing the parent more financial freedom to pursue post-secondary education. This criteria has been set forth by the organization in order to best assist the most at need population concurrent with their "Four Pillar Plan" which focuses on empowerment & family coaching, career track college education, and career placement.¹² Through the collective efforts of Christians Manor, single-parent families gain essential life skills and lead more financially stable lives. The new proposed location, 3700 La Vista Ave., McAllen, TX, 78501, is strategically situated in a low to moderate income area and is in close proximity to essential educational institutions such as IDEA Public Schools, Mcallen ISD schools, the Boys and Girls Club of McAllen and South Texas College. By providing easy access to educational opportunities and after-school programs, the family unit is given the opportunity to remain steadfast in their educational journey, and are provided with the tools for academic achievement. These approaches take the whole family's needs into consideration to inform alignment with goals, services and programs to maximize long-term positive impacts for families and the community.

¹¹ <https://christiansmanor.org/about-us/>

¹² <https://christiansmanor.org/about-us/>

LMISD by Block Group: Block Group 1, Census Tract 207.26, Hidalgo County, Texas

Source	2015ACS
geoname	Block Group 1, Census Tract 207.26, Hidalgo County, Texas
Stuseb	TX
Countyname	Hidalgo County
State	48
County	215
Ttract	020726
Blckgrp	1
Low	2055
Lowmod	2915
Lmmi	3025
Lowmoduniv	3605
Lowmod_pct	80.86
uclowmod	
uclowmod_p	0.00
MOE_Lowmod	+/-16.81
MOE_uclowm	

Strategically positioning affordable housing in a location that allows for the implementation of the two-generation community development model will help address the needs of both the parent and child simultaneously and help to strengthen family unity through mutual support. These methods allow children to become involved in their family’s journey of breaking the cycle of poverty. In addition, this model assists children in developing essential life skills, both adaptive and positive, to effectively manage everyday challenges into adulthood.

US Treasury has determined that the development of affordable housing to increase the supply of affordable and high-quality living units is responsive to the needs of impacted populations and presumes that any projects eligible for funding under National Trust Fund (HTF) are eligible uses of SLFRF funds.¹³ As such, the Housing Trust Fund is funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs provides funds to finance, acquire, rehabilitate, and develop decent and safe affordable housing.¹⁴ This collaboration between the County of Hidalgo Precinct 2 and the RGV Inclusive Inc, to acquire the Christian Manor Affordable Housing development in a Low to Moderate Income Area, 3700 La Vista Ave., McAllen, TX, 78501, will provide income eligible families access to affordable housing units and other supplemental services. By assisting one of Hidalgo County’s most vulnerable populations, single-parent families may find the help they need to break the poverty cycle and develop a solid foundation for a better future for both them and their families.

¹³ Department of the Treasury. (2022). Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. *Federal Register*, 87(18), p. 4365

¹⁴ <https://www.tdhca.texas.gov/housing-trust-fund>

Comparison of the Proposed Capital Expenditure Against Alternatives

Hidalgo County Precinct 2 has reviewed the different options for the proposed affordable housing development project and has gathered data to compare and recommend the best option for this capital investment. In making the best decision, several options were taken into consideration including retrofitting, new construction, and finally purchasing. The most superior alternative will leverage costs and optimize long-term service outcomes.

To meet the needs of this underserved population, it is important to note that specifications for the eight plex are unique to the project's success and therefore, it is critical that single parent families are located in the same area to implement needs-based whole family unit services.

Retrofitting -

As per the Director of Facilities Management, the county currently does not have a facility that meets the needs for this project. (Attachment A)

New Construction -

To expeditiously implement this project, we reviewed several new construction options; however, there were not too many options available and the locations did not meet specifications to the project. To meet US Treasury guidelines, we used the listings below as the strongest matches to assist in our determination of the most superior alternative. (Attachment B)

- Listing 1 located at 3305 Whetstone Ave, McAllen, TX 78504, is listed at \$545,000.00.
- Listing 2 located at 12611 33rd Lane, McAllen, TX 78504, is listed at \$545,000.00.

Although the price may seem more cost efficient, these are four plexes and not eight plexes. They are not located close to the college or provide ease of transportation. There are corresponding Homeowners Association Fees which would be a perpetual cost for the program, and these locations are not situated in Low-to-Moderate Income Areas. For these reasons, new construction would not be the most appropriate selection.

Purchasing -

It was difficult to locate eight plex properties near schools and other amenities that would be ideal for holistic family project implementation. We found three four plex units to use as strongest matches for the purpose of this comparison. The costs ranged from \$499,000.00 to 829,000.00. (Attachments C)

- Listing 1 located at 5800 Nightingale Ave, McAllen, TX 78501 is listed at \$499,999.00.
- Listing 2 located at 5701 Ozark, McAllen, TX 78504 is similarly priced at \$500,000.00.
- Listing 3 located at 3010 S L Ln, McAllen, TX 78503 is priced at \$829,000.00.

Due to the limited units in each of these properties, two complexes would be required, and were not available in close proximity. If they were available, these costs would double and be cost prohibitive. The costs do not include repairs and retrofitting. Due to the varying locations of each property, occupants may not have the same access to amenities and educational opportunities nor vacancy availability.

RGV Inclusive Project, Inc already has a purchase offer for an eight plex that will align with the two generation model located in a Low to Moderate Income Area, 3700 La Vista Ave., McAllen, TX, 78501. (Attachment D) At \$1,245,000.00, purchasing would be the best option. These units will be strategically designed to meet the needs of single parent households participating in the two-generation model program whilst providing the peace of mind of affordable housing. This approach would provide the most consistent results for the families of Christian's Manor as they would have equal access to educational opportunities for both parent and child and access to essential local amenities. Construction would allow the organization to build units to desired specification in order to best fit the constituents that would live in them.

Based on the information presented, purchasing is the most superior alternative for long-term provision of services for affordable housing for single parent families concurrent with the 2Gen approach. This coordination of services that incorporates the whole family approach to a vulnerable population will support and improve academic and economic outcomes by building family resilience.