



May 19, 2022

The Honorable Sandra Ung
Council Member
20th Council District, Queens
153-27 38th Avenue, Suite 388
Flushing, NY 11354

Dear Council Member Ung:

We are writing to affirm AAFE and URI's commitment to work in partnership together and with AAPI-serving nonprofit social service providers in Flushing and surrounding communities in Queens, to reduce barriers for the placement of eligible AAPI families with children at Magnolia Gardens, the 90-unit transitional housing facility for families with children that will be developed at 133-04 39th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11354. While we recognize that the facility will be open to all homeless families, we understand that working to prioritize those from Community District 7 is consistent with efforts by the Department of Homeless Services.

To help ensure that housing insecure and homeless families with children from CD7 have both priority and equitable access to Magnolia Gardens, AAFE and URI will be prepared to implement key activities before the facility is open for placements, including the establishment of an innovative **Housing Services & Retention Collaborative**. The collaborative will be composed of a locally based interdisciplinary group of providers and community partners who will endeavor to use their collective expertise to facilitate access to culturally competent services that support families with children who have historically been under-served, including AAPI families with children. Members of this Collaborative will also work together to promote access to, and retention of affordable permanent housing.

Based on the current project timeline, we anticipate construction completion in Fall 2024, and the facility opening for service in Winter 2024. During the two-year period before the facility opens, AAFE and URI commits to the "Pre-Opening Activities" described below:

Pre-Opening Activities

1. Housing Services & Retention Collaborative formation (in progress)

AAFE and URI are meeting with local AAPI-serving nonprofit service providers and other community partners to establish linkage agreements for client referrals. These efforts are geared to ensure that Flushing-area families in need of transitional housing are aware of the services, supported during the DHS intake and placement process, and throughout their temporary residency at Magnolia Gardens, and after they find a permanent home so that they do not fall back into homelessness. This partnership-building will continue with the goal of establishing a collaborative of AAPI and other nonprofit service providers in Flushing, CD7, and

surrounding communities in Queens to provide the ongoing services and support that are critical for increasing housing stability. Collaborative members will work together with city and state agencies to improve how historically under-served families with children, including AAPI families with children, enter and navigate the system for accessing transitional housing and support services.

2. *Recruitment and hiring of Magnolia Gardens program staff and AAFE program staff (9 months before the Magnolia Gardens opens):*

AAFE and URI affirms the commitment made during the community meetings to prioritize local hiring from Flushing and Community District 7 of bilingual and culturally competent staff who reflect the community's racial and ethnic diversity to fill supervisor and front-line positions for providing wraparound, stabilization services at Magnolia Gardens. We will prepare and send job descriptions in English, Chinese, Korean, Bengali, Urdu, and Spanish to the Collaborative and other nonprofit providers for distribution in their network. We will also partner with the Collaborative, your offices, and the Community Board to hold job fairs in multiple locations in Flushing and CD7 to recruit local candidates. These job fairs will be marketed through the Collaborative members' distribution channels and ethnic media, including radio, newspapers, and WeChat. It is noted that community-based job fairs are consistent with URI's way of operating to ensure there is representation from the communities in which it operates.

In addition, AAFE commits to funding (2) staff positions that will be based at AAFE's One Flushing Community Center. One full-time position will be responsible for conducting outreach and education, as well as coordinating the participation of Collaborative partners in making client referrals and providing client navigation and wraparound stabilization and retention services. A second full-time position will be responsible for providing client navigation support during the DHS intake and placement process, to ensure AAPI families with children seeking shelter do not fall through the cracks.

3. *Community outreach and education about the DHS intake and placement process (6 months before Magnolia Gardens opens)*

AAFE and URI will conduct outreach to institutions in Flushing and CD7 that serve AAPI families with children, to make them aware of the project and the DHS intake process, and to establish client referral processes. These institutions include schools (in particular, school liaisons to students living in temporary housing and PTAs), hospitals and health care providers including Charles B. Wang Community Health Center, and faith-based groups serving AAPI families with children.

It is noted that URI has already engaged DHS representatives at the PATH intake center and initiated discussions about client accompaniment possibilities, in an effort to reduce access barriers and support AAPI families as they enter the homeless service system. URI and AAFE will continue these conversations as we move towards site opening.

4. *Community Advisory Board formation and launch (2 months before Magnolia Gardens opens)*

URI will form and convene a Community Advisory Board (CAB) comprised of Flushing and CD7 stakeholders – residents (renters and homeowners), small business owners, nonprofit service providers including AAFE, and elected officials - to keep the Flushing community informed about the project's operations, security measures,

and utilization by families with children - and to address any operational and safety impacts on the surrounding community. URI is committed to meeting with the CAB monthly in the first year of operation, and no less than quarterly in subsequent years based on CAB input. A CAB operational manual will be developed by URI and shared with the collaborative for input prior to initiating its formation and will serve as a guide for the CAB's roles and responsibilities.

Post-Opening Services

5. Initial intake and placement in transitional housing

AAFE staff will arrange for transportation and chaperone AAPI families with children seeking transitional housing to the PATH intake center in the Bronx. AAFE staff will remain in contact with the families during the period when DHS performs the required due diligence to determine eligibility for placement, including when families are placed temporarily in emergency shelter. If a family is unable to be placed in transitional housing at Magnolia Gardens or at another facility, AAFE staff will support the family's reapplication for transitional housing or support the family's return to housing that DHS has deemed a feasible alternative to transitional housing. If a family is determined eligible for placement at Magnolia Gardens, DHS will provide transportation, or if preferred, AAFE staff will arrange for transportation to Magnolia Gardens.

We note that once applicants apply for temporary housing at PATH Family Intake, they are interviewed and then offered placement. Placement for transitional housing will be prioritized based on children's school and/or previous residence in CD7. DHS will also offer a transfer to Magnolia Gardens for clients from this community who already reside in a facility. Placement is contingent on availability of an appropriately sized unit within the facility, but the opportunity to transfer into Magnolia Gardens once capacity allows will be offered.

6. On-site stabilization, skills-building, and economic empowerment

URI staff, including bilingual staff hired through coordinated recruitment efforts with Collaborative members and local job fairs, will provide wraparound services to families with children placed at Magnolia Gardens. URI will connect families to AAFE and/or other Collaborative members and nonprofit service providers, in the event the families need additional support that is not available on-site. Additional support might include immigration counseling, ESOL classes, and financial coaching. URI proposes upon funding identification to initiate a FAB lab for use by youth residing within Magnolia Gardens, as well as parents interested in participating in economic empowerment services. In the event that funding is secured for this space and programming, URI will also work to ensure that youth in the community have access to the FAB lab at pre-arranged times to ensure priority is given to residents of the facility.

7. Placement and retention in permanent housing

URI staff will be responsible for providing the housing assistance and additional supports necessary for all families residing temporarily at Magnolia Gardens to find and stay in a permanent home. This includes completing a housing needs assessment, helping to secure a housing voucher, additional rental assistance, entitlement benefits, and child care for families to have the housing stability, employment, income, and health care necessary to stay permanently housed. URI will have the support of AAFE and the Collaborative members to provide case management support for at least a year after AAPI families have been placed in permanent

housing, and to help with additional crisis intervention and stabilization if needed. Families who have participated in URI's transitional facilities also will have access to ongoing support through the organization's economic empowerment center centrally located in Manhattan. Services are currently provided in person and also offered virtually to participants. These services are designed to reinforce a family's ability to sustain permanent housing by increasing levels of financial independence.

Both AAFE and URI remain committed to developing a transitional facility supported by an innovative compliment of services. Our work together thus far, combined with our desire to impact the way in which the needs of underserved families are addressed, will be bolstered by the development of a strong, community-based collaborative. We strongly believe in our ability to facilitate access to transitional housing in a way that reduces barriers for AAPI families with children in need of additional support for achieving housing stability and financial wellbeing.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to realize the full potential of Magnolia Gardens becoming a valued resource for AAPI families in CD7 who deserve to live with dignity, safety, and stability.

Sincerely,

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