

Town of Warrenton
Response to Request for Information on Affordable Housing
Submitted by Hero's Bridge

1. Name of Submitting Organization and address of Submitting Organization

Hero's Bridge
98 Alexandria Pike, Suite 41
Warrenton, Virginia 20186

Housing Site located at:
341 Church Street
Warrenton, VA 20186

2. Point of Contact, Phone and Email

Molly Brooks
(540) 993-6386
mbrooks@herosbridge.org

3. Organization Overview: Describe your organization: mission, purpose, size and expertise.

Mission - Hero's Bridge is the only 501(c)(3) organization in Virginia (and in the country) dedicated to serving aging veterans, 65 and older. We are also the only non-profit organization providing rapid and direct hands-on assistance to aging veterans who are estimated to be about 25% of the senior population.. We serve, stand by and honor our aging veterans through four distinct programs. These programs include access to food, home repair for safe and adequate housing, and socialization to offset isolation in addition to assisting with access to VA and other benefits. These services are available to our heroes whenever they call home, at no expense to them or their families. In 2022, we provided the following tangible services to area seniors:

540 Battle Buddy Visits
11 seniors provided emergency financial support for utilities, rent, heating oil, electric
47 Home Front home repairs
194 rides to appointments
503 home delivered ready-to-eat meals
60 weeks of senior technology tablets in homes
69 Paw Patrol visits
193 care packages
58 new volunteers
2,101 volunteer hours

Hero's Bridge was founded and is still led by Molly Brooks. As a Gerontological nurse with 30 years of experience, from a medical perspective, she embodies all of the qualifications necessary to care for our aging veterans. Molly is uniquely positioned to continue guiding this organization into the successful and impactful community resource it is today. Supporting Molly is a strong board of directors with more than 50 years of military experience. Her staff of 5 full time and 3 part time team members are all veteran centric individuals dedicated to fulfilling any veteran need with their diverse backgrounds in nursing, journalism and an above average understanding of the military and its culture. Last, but certainly not least, is our resourceful and energetic volunteer base of 392 individuals.

4. History in Warrenton and Fauquier County: Describe if you have done or done any business or non-profit work related to housing in the Town of Warrenton and Fauquier County.

Hero's Bridge was founded seven years ago to address social determinants of health in aging veterans. Because of the work we had been doing on the ground as health care workers, we knew some of our seniors were living in substandard living conditions. To be honest, we were not expecting to see the problem rapidly become the #2 problem for which we received referrals. Very quickly, we began receiving requests to assist areal veterans with major home repairs and modifications. We consistently receive referrals to help senior veterans find more affordable rentals and find emergency lodging for homeless veterans. One important accomplishment we achieved in the first two years was identifying funding and to better collaborate with other nonprofits in the housing space. Funders and housing repair nonprofits appreciate our special ability to connect and build trust with the seniors who previously would reject efforts to remediate their substandard living conditions. In 2022, we provided 47 home repairs and modifications.

5. Concept: Describe your concept for increasing affordable housing in Warrenton.

It is vital that we diversify the housing stock in our area. The most recent in depth Regional Housing Study performed by the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission indicated that about 90% of existing housing in our region are larger single-family homes not affordable nor livable for our seniors. The study stresses the need for senior housing, particularly apartments, small cottages and single-story units that are accessible to the changing mobility needs of an older population, and with less overall home maintenance.

To help solve this problem, the Hero's Bridge Village will consist of 44 rental units which are approximately 560 square feet. The units are L-shaped duplexes placed together in a U-shaped fashion to maximize socialization. The units have a kitchen, living area, bedroom and full bath. As rentals they will come completely furnished including appliances, furniture and linens in order to provide a low barrier to entry. It will have pedestrian-only walkways to encourage activity and interaction within the community. The community will be walkable and zero step entry. We plan to bundle water, electric, trash service into the price of the rent. Please see attached site layout, unit floor plans and elevations.

We also looked closely at the supports built into the Hero's Bridge Village because housing only solves part of the issue, it is crucial that all the Villagers' social needs are addressed as well. Our pocket neighborhood will have a community center to promote socialization and provide vital supportive services. Communities used to struggle to figure out how to get seniors to vital services. Covid caused some positive disruption in these services and it is much more feasible to bring the services to the seniors. Groceries and medications can be ordered online and delivered easily. Many medical and counseling visits can occur via telehealth. Our organization already provides extensive transportation assistance to our rural veterans and looks forward to continuing this service to our Villagers. With intention, we plan to house a diverse mix of senior veterans. There will be a mix of senior veterans of differing abilities and talents and they will be invited to be a vital part of the thriving community. We are certain that this innovative model of pocket communities is the perfect solution to caring for our 'missing middle' seniors.

Constituency: Describe what housing constituency your concept will help. For example, does your concept help those who are chronically homeless? Does it help those at the 80% AMI?

The Hero's Bridge Village will be open to veterans aged 65 and older, therefore it offers 44 units of affordable housing for five of the Town's target populations- **seniors, veterans, disabled, income challenged and homeless**. Any veteran aged 65 or older will be eligible to live at the Village and rents will be on a sliding scale basis according to their AMI category. Priority will be given to veterans who are:

Living in social isolation
Very low income
Currently living in unsafe or unsanitary conditions
From our local area

The Hero's Bridge Village would serve veteran senior citizens who often fall through the cracks of a fragmented social care system. Unfortunately, many of our veterans' issues are so severe that their situations cannot be remediated where they are. Many are "elder

orphans” with no living family to help them as they get older. They need what we call the “missing middle” level of care. Able bodied enough to not qualify for institutional care but not well enough to be completely on their own. These seniors also fall in an unfortunate financial middle, making just enough in social security to not qualify for the safety net programs but certainly not enough to afford assisted care which ranges \$3,000 to \$8,000 per month in our area. Fauquier County’s safety net senior housing currently has a two-year wait list. We must increase the housing stock available to our seniors.

6. Dependencies: Define any critical dependencies for your concept to come to reality. Examples include zoning changes, financing, and infrastructure.

We will be requesting a rezoning from R-10 to R-PUD. We will also be requesting exceptions within the R-PUD zoning such as acreage requirements and the requirement to place each unit on individual lots. Flexibility in these exceptions will be crucial to bringing this innovative pocket community to fruition.

Fast tracking of the rezoning process will also be very helpful. Projects of this size inevitably hit unexpected complications and the more nimble we can be while still following all steps with integrity and transparency will help create safe, affordable units as soon as possible.

Consideration in reducing construction costs by waiving water and sewer hookup fees will be greatly appreciated and contribute to the effort to keep rents deeply affordable. Consideration of waiving real estate taxes on the property would also contribute to affordable rents.

Lastly, allocation of any portion of the remaining ARPA funds would be very helpful as we move from the feasibility phase to pre-development.

7. Outcomes: Describe the outcomes and benefits of your concept.

The most obvious outcome is the creation of 44 affordable housing rental units with permanent supportive services for seniors that served our country. Projects that focus on rehabbing or creating 1-4 units are not unimportant but will not move the needle on the housing crisis we are facing.

A less obvious benefit is that the creation of 44 units to the area housing stock will serve as a pressure relief valve on the local housing market. Because preference will be given to local veterans, we can assume that many of these senior veterans will be vacating single family homes that they can no longer maintain which can then be bought or rented by the workforce population. They may also vacate senior apartments that can now be available to other non-veteran seniors.

Lastly, this project is an innovation that we feel will be an example of a community working together to address affordable housing issues. With its pocket community concepts, aging in place considerations and supportive services it will be a community the Town of Warrenton can be proud of and display as an example to other communities.

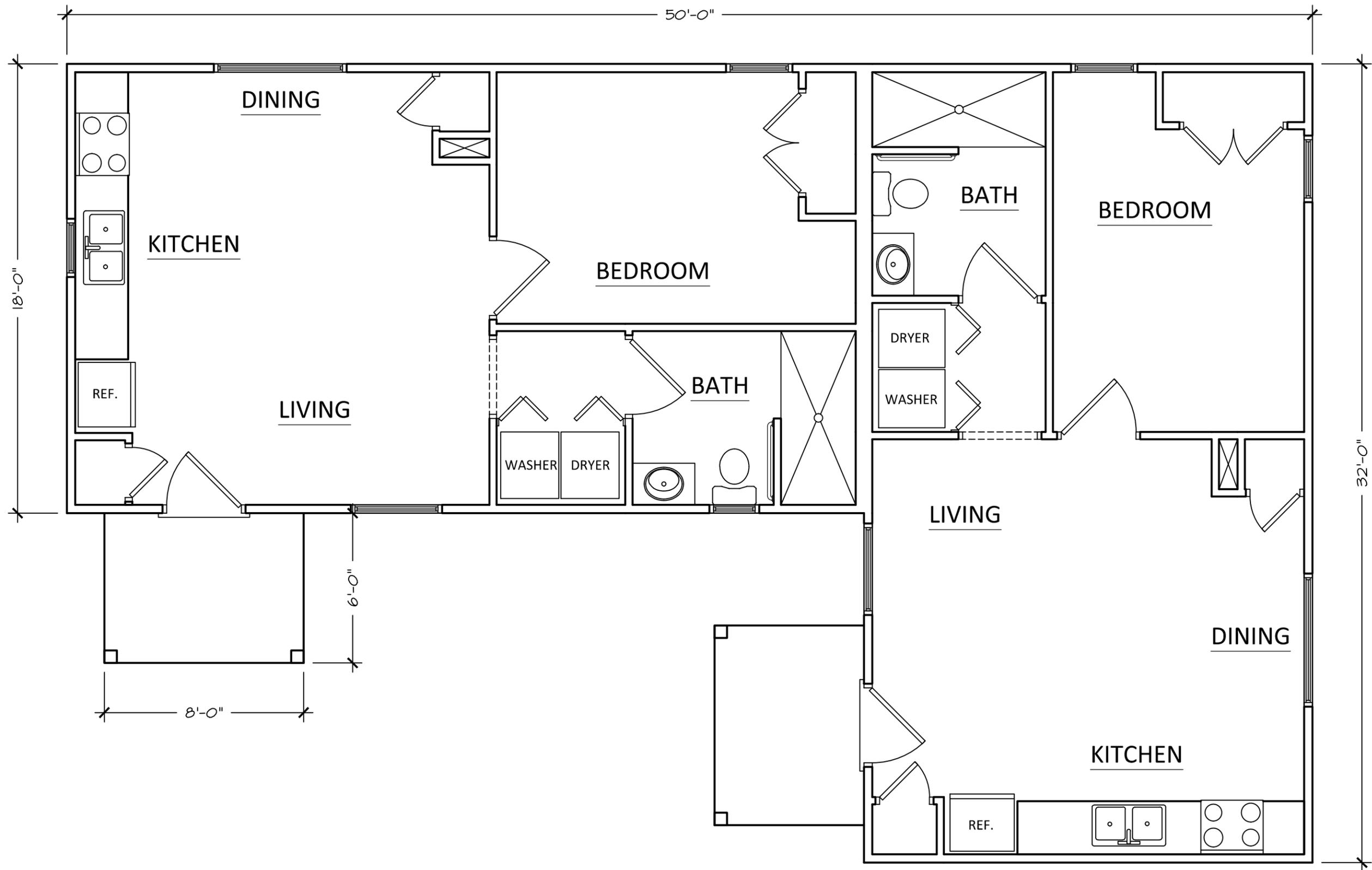
8. Financing: Describe how your concept would be financed.

The current estimate of the cost of the Hero's Bridge Village project is \$6 million. Below is a table of donors and commitments already secured.

FY24 Community Project Funding	\$1,000,000 (In process)
Commonwealth of Virginia	\$250,000
Fauquier County BOS	\$250,000 (Committed)
Businesses & Organizations	\$51,000
Individuals	<u>\$13,800</u>
Total	\$1,564,800

Other funders have expressed interest in this important project including the PATH Foundation, Home Depot and Bank of America. These entities with capacity to contribute significantly are following the project closely but are awaiting the outcome of the rezoning request.

Although to keep rents deeply affordable, our goal is to raise the necessary funds 100% via philanthropy, we do realize there will likely need to be some financing involved. We plan to work with local lenders and financial institutions when we reach this step.



WARRENTON UMC
HOUSING UNITS
PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"
 NOVEMBER 28, 2022



architecture + interiors
 131 South Loudoun Street Winchester, VA 22601
 Phone: (540) 722-7247; Fax: (540) 722-7248
 architect@1designconcepts.com



WARRENTON UMC

PROPOSED HOUSING ELEVATION

MARCH 16, 2023



architecture + interiors

131 South Loudoun Street Winchester, VA 22601

Phone: (540) 722-7247; Fax: (540) 722-7248

architect@1designconcepts.com