



Umoja Village

827 Hayne Avenue, SW * Aiken, SC 29801 * 803-226-0150 * www.umojavillage.com

UMOJA=UNITY

May 2023

To: South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and the South Carolina Legislature

UMOJA VILLAGE FUNDING JUSTIFICATION

Umoja Village is a well-established 501(c)3 organization in good standing founded by longtime Aiken, South Carolina residents and 25-year married couple/community leaders Don and Donna Wesby. Umoja Village is governed by a strong 14-member board of directors and currently employs four staff and represents roughly 5,000 concerned citizens. Umoja Village is a duly registered South Carolina charity through the South Carolina Secretary of State.

Umoja Village is a resource management and advocacy organization established to connect the underserved and underrepresented communities with available resources (and to bridge any gaps) in order to create positive outcomes in the lives of citizens to enrich Aiken and surrounding communities through:

- the reduction of violent crime in our towns
- an increased emphasis and support toward clients' educational goals and youth development
- leadership development
- connecting individuals interested in starting or maintaining small businesses to training/funding
- connecting the unemployed and underemployed with employment opportunities
- establishment of plans for clients to become more independent and less reliant on governmental assistance as a lifestyle.

All of the above provided by Umoja Village impacts economic development by establishing safe communities where citizens can be educated and empowered to live productive lives (law-abiding and tax-paying), and they can contribute to the overall betterment of our town where our communities are attractive for new business/industry and those interested in relocating to this area.

Because of its unique mission of holding itself accountable for change in addition to elected officials and community leaders by not re-creating the wheel of services, Umoja Village helps area organizations, businesses, churches, agencies, etc., to be more effective and efficient by serving as a hub to direct its clients to the proper resources and by helping to facilitate collaborations and partnerships with an emphasis on inclusivity and equity.

Umoja Village operates the Umoja Village Resource Center, which is located in Aiken, South Carolina. Its operation is governed by the Umoja Village Action Plan and the Umoja Village Rebuilding the Foundation Crime Prevention Plan, which are both located on the website.

(see page two, Budget)



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BUDGET: To fully fund the entire Umoja Village mission and strategic plan would be \$1.2 million annually. Request from the South Carolina legislature for the 2023-2024 budget is \$250,000.00.

\$80,000.00 Umoja Village Resource Center (rent, utilities, staff)

\$75,000.00 Umoja Village Rebuilding The Foundation Crime Prevention Plan initiatives (plan listed on our website) – The plan is our response to Aiken Public Safety’s plea for more community engagement and self-accountability towards crime prevention and reduction programs.

\$50,000.00 Housing Assistance for the homeless/housing insecure children and families in Aiken. Umoja Village has seen a disturbing rise in homelessness since the pandemic due to staggering increases in rental housing and fewer available properties for rent. Umoja Village is currently partnering with a local “Christ Central Mission Station” to help open a new emergency shelter/transitional center to help deal with this growing issue.

\$45,000.00 Umoja Village Project Bounce Back establishes individual comprehensive life action plans to transition clients from dependence to independence (includes job training classes, leadership training, entrepreneurship and self-development training, transportation, educational enrollment assistance)

EXISTING COLLABORATIONS/PARTNERSHIPS AND STAKEHOLDERS:

- Umoja Village provided almost \$40,000 in grants to the following youth mentorship organizations through our crime prevention actions (SuccessTeam; Hankinson Boxing Gym; Choices: A Lifetime Development, Inc.; Education Matters; Aiken County NAACP Youth Council; The Carolina Vipers AAU Athletic Program; The Carolina Grizzlies AAU Athletic Program; The Aiken Warriors AAU Athletic Program; The South Carolina Titans Elite AAU Athletic Program; The Vision Youth 2020 Foundation)
- City of Aiken
- Aiken Public Safety
- Greater Faith Fellowship of Aiken
- Area Churches Together Serving in Aiken
- Nurture Home of Aiken
- Aiken County Board of Education
- The Imani Group
- Education Matters Nonprofit Corporation
- The Links of Aiken
- Wesby’s Products & Services, LLC
- Unite-Us
- Several area United Way agencies, local small businesses, churches, fraternities and sororities

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