

2026 Design Charrettes Program Request for Proposals

A design charrette is an intensive, hands-on pre-development workshop that brings people from different disciplines and backgrounds together to explore architectural and development options for a particular area or site. Housing Colorado and the University of Colorado Denver College of Architecture and Planning began the Design Charrettes Program in 2010 and are seeking project proposals for 2026.

The Design Charrettes Program provides non-profit housing developers, housing authorities, and municipalities with pro bono pre-development services for an affordable housing project. Over the course of two or two and-a-half days, a team of graduate students working with volunteer professionals including architects, urban planners, landscape architects, and municipal staff members, as well as finance, development, and construction professionals, will work with your organization to create affordable housing concepts for an identified program, budget, and site in your community. Previous participants in the Design Charrettes Program have been able to take this pre-design work successfully forward for funding and development.

We invite your organization to submit a project and site for the 2026 Design Charrettes Program!



The Design Charrette will take place at a location determined in coordination with the site sponsor.



Benefits of the Design Charrette for your Organization and your Community

- Expanding your vision of design concepts and project phasing ideas that may be used for pre-development and planning grant applications and activities;
- Exposure to Colorado's best design and development minds;
- Exploring initial feasibility and design options that can shave months off the pre-development and planning process;
- Expanding your project team's working knowledge of project development, entitlement and code issues;
- Generating design ideas applicable to multiple projects;
- Identifying many of the critical issues associated with your project;
- Developing a common purpose among multiple interested parties;
- Building consensus and support for affordable housing and identifying new community champions for your project and organization;
- Gaining a greater understanding of how finance, design and project sustainability are interrelated.

Upon completion of the charrette, your organization will be given the design boards and presentation materials for use in your community engagement, fundraising, and planning processes.

***All Charrette Program projects will be presented at the
2026 Housing Colorado Conference in Keystone, Colorado on October 16th.***

Goals and Priorities for the Design Charrettes

As you prepare your application for the 2026 Design Charrette, please be aware of the following priorities, definitions, and project options.

- Focus on Extremely Low-Income, Very Low-Income and Low-Income Households. Preference will be given to projects that propose a majority of housing for households earning 80% of area median income or less, with priority given to projects that include some or all units for households earning below 50% of AMI. Permanent housing, supportive housing and temporary housing projects and programs are eligible.
- Rental and ownership project eligibility. Projects may include rental or ownership units, or a combination of both.
- Mixed use and mixed income. Mixed-use and mixed-income projects and programs are eligible, though preference will be given to projects in which a majority of housing is targeted for households earning less than 80% of AMI.



Application Process and Selection Criteria

Housing Colorado's Design Charrettes Program Committee is composed of design, development, and finance professionals and University of Colorado Denver faculty members. In making their project selections, this Committee will review all projects against the goals and priorities noted above as well as the following selection criteria:

- Site Sponsor is to be either a nonprofit housing developer, housing authority, or local government.
- Site Sponsor agrees to actively participate in the charrette process.
- Site Sponsor must own or have site control in the form of an option agreement for the proposed development site.
- The Site Sponsor intends to pursue affordable housing development on this site and the charrette is not a feasibility/exploration study.
- Site Sponsor is to be open to alternative development options, with no commitments to a specific outcome.
- Site Sponsor must not have engaged a design professional or developer for the project and must only have done minimal predevelopment or other formal planning activities; however, bringing volunteer design or developer professionals to the charrette is encouraged.
- Site Sponsor is encouraged to engage residents of affordable housing or resident representatives in the charrette process.
- Site Sponsor commits to having at least one management-level representative from their organization participate in the charrette event.
- Site Sponsor agrees to arrange for local municipal planning, engineering, and/or public officials to participate as necessary in the charrette process.
- Site Sponsor agrees to provide detailed, relevant information about the project site (maps, surveys, environmental studies, etc.), the proposed program, and population to be served.
- The project site must be fully provided with infrastructure (streets, water, sewer, utilities, etc.) or have immediate access to that infrastructure.
- Site Sponsor is a current member of Housing Colorado.
- Site Sponsor is willing to document and share how the design charrette benefitted their organization and community.
- Site Sponsor agrees to provide funds to support the Design Charrettes Program (see below).
- Site Sponsor agrees to provide the space to conduct the charrette event.
- Representative from the Site Sponsor organization agrees to be available for the 2026 Housing Colorado Conference presentation to be held in Keystone, Colorado. **The presentation will be held on October 16, 2026.**
- The application for the 2026 Design Charrettes Program is shown on the following two pages. Please complete this form by **Friday, July 31 at 5:00 pm Mountain Time** and e-mail it to Andrew Chapin, Charrettes Coordinator, at andrew.chapin4@gmail.com to be considered for selection.



Design Charrettes Program Site Sponsor Request for Proposal Application Form

ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

Name of Organization:

Address:

Website:

Briefly describe the
Sponsor Organization:

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Main Contact Person:

Title:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Address/Location:

Briefly Describe the Project:



PROJECT INFORMATION CONTINUED...

Project Size (acres or dimensions): _____

New Construction

Is it properly zoned?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Does the site need to be annexed

☐

YES

☐

NO

Rehabilitation

Retain existing use?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Adaptive re-use?

☐

YES

☐

NO

Anticipated number of units: _____

Anticipated unit mix: _____

Other important considerations
(i.e. historic buildings) for the
project: _____

Approximate percent or number of units in each Area Median Income category:

0-30% AMI

31-50% AMI

61-80% AMI

81-120% AMI

121% AMI

and higher

Is the project:

☐

Rental

☐

Ownership

☐

Combination

Any special needs populations?

☐

Veterans

☐

Seniors

☐

Disabled Persons

☐

Transitional Housing

☐

Unhoused Persons

☐

Other (please specify)



CONFIRMATIONS

Confirm that the Site Sponsor meets all the Design Charrettes Program prerequisites:

- ☐ Site Sponsor is a non-profit housing developer, housing authority, or local government.
- ☐ Site Sponsor is a member of Housing Colorado.
- ☐ Site Sponsor is open to alternative design ideas and has not contracted with a design team.
- ☐ Site Sponsor agrees to be actively involved in the charrette process, including before and specifically during the charrette event. At least one management-level representative from the organization will participate in the charrette event to represent Sponsor's vision and interests.
- ☐ Site Sponsor agrees to communicate with the jurisdiction in which the site is located and foster participation from the city or county officials.

Confirm that the project meets all the Design Charrettes Program prerequisites:

- ☐ Site is owned by Site Sponsor or there is a current option agreement.
- ☐ Site has a survey completed which includes topographic lines.
- ☐ Public infrastructure is provided to or accessible by the project site (i.e. paved street, water, sewer, gas, electric).
- ☐ Site Sponsor intends to pursue affordable housing development on this site and the charrette is not a feasibility/exploration study.
- ☐ Photographs of the site are available.

Are the following reports available to use for informational purposes?

- ☐ Environmental Phase 1
- ☐ Market study or needs assessment
- ☐ Zoning synopsis
- ☐ Information regarding the nearest public transportation (required for TOD sites)

Is the Site Sponsor able to commit up to \$2,000 towards the cost of this Charrette process (the value of all work produced for every sponsor by each volunteer team typically exceeds \$20,000)?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

Can the Site Sponsor secure a space at which to conduct the charrette event as well as provide breakfast and lunch for participants?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO



Can the Site Sponsor can arrange for a space at which to conduct the Charrette event. Considering logistics for volunteers and students often coming from the Denver area, please describe how the space location and the efforts of the Site Sponsor will contribute to a successful Design Charrette.

☐

YES

☐

NO

Statement of Interest. Please include a description of your interest in the Design Charrette and how this process will benefit your project and community.