The following project proposal was created by a community partner of the Upstate Institute to describe the way they would like to engage with a Colgate student this summer. The research project proposed will be a full-time research project conducted by a Field School Fellow this summer. Below, the partner describes their organization and the research project, as well as a statement of benefit derived by the community for this project. The proposal also mentions logistical considerations and required skills for a student interested in doing this work.

Housing in Madison County

Madison County Department of Social Services, Michael A. Fitzgerald, Commissioner and Patricia Platt, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Assistance are proposing a follow up research project on housing and homelessness. Recently, students in ENST 390: Community-based Study of Environmental Issues completed a report titled Meeting the “Rural Upstate Flavor”: A Peer County Review of Supportive Housing for Madison County. Colgate University Seniors Naomi Philhower ‘19, Faith McDonald ‘19, and Emmy Watkins ‘19 made short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations to provide supportive housing for those in need in Madison County.

Short-Term Recommendations

- Create Partnerships for Long-Term Development
- Work to create partnerships with local supportive services and housing developers
- Conduct a Formal Gap Analysis
- A formal gap analysis of the needs in Madison County will be necessary for grant funding applications
- Engage with Community Early
- Engage community members to decrease stereotypes and combat opposition
- Collaborate to Develop Goals and Priorities
- Ensure equity in the end housing product by including individuals in need throughout the process
- Map Sites for Potential Long-Term Development
- Find and evaluate potential housing sites based on proximity to supportive services, zoning laws, and costs
- Taking old, unused buildings into account as potential sites

Mid-Term Recommendations

- Convert Existing Rental Stock
- Convert unused homes to scattered-site supportive housing
- Use existing supportive networks for services (Liberty Resources, CAP, etc.)
- Build Tiny Homes
- If possible, buy land for siting
- Seek donated contracting work
- Leverage college students for research, fundraising, and labor

Continue Long-Term Planning: Funding
- Determine which funding grants are most applicable for project and requirements
- Appoint a grant manager
- Decide what agency(ies) will be the applicant

Project Description: Of the short and mid-term recommendations, what are the steps that can be taken to move the project to the long-term recommendation of building a supportive housing development? Who are the partners in developing the project? What goals and priorities are the top priority? What sites are available (for both short-term builds like tiny homes and longer-term for multi-use, multi-tenant, supportive housing)? Are there current structures that could be converted to scattered site development? Is there land that could be used to build ‘tiny houses’ and are there resources available to minimize any costs?

Statement of Purpose: This summer research project would build upon the two previous ENST 390 class research projects that have advanced the goal of building long-term supportive housing in Madison County. This would enhance the availability of housing for homeless families and individuals in Madison County where there is no emergency shelter. Supportive housing would stabilize the health and well-being of Madison County residents by giving them a place to live while they address the reasons they became homeless (i.e., mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, detachment from family/friends/employment, etc.).

Logistical Considerations: The student would be working full-time on this project. Project work includes:
- Meeting with local agencies to gain a better understanding of the role they play in housing and where partnerships can be formed and strengthened;
- Meeting with developers to gain insight into the application for funding decision and to prioritize goals;
- Speaking with County, City and Town leaders to research zoning laws and restrictions and map potential build sites;
- Touring various localities to determine suitability for siting housing options; and
- A continuation of researching other successful projects in communities like Madison County.

Training & Skills: Students engaged in this project will be able to apply research to real world solutions to end homelessness in Madison County. They will build upon the recommendations already offered and prioritize those short and mid-term goals to move Madison County to building supportive housing for a long-term solutions. Students will be given access to a variety of local housing providers and advocacy groups, meet with local officials to understand site selection, discuss with housing development professionals to understand what goals and priorities make a successful application for funding and visit potential sites that could be replicated within Madison County.