

Mercy Housing Opens New Affordable Housing and Co-Located Childcare Center Serving East Colfax Community

*City, private and nonprofit foundations collaborated to support families
with affordable housing and to stem neighborhood gentrification*

DENVER—(Jan. 24, 2024)—Mercy Housing, Inc., a leading national affordable housing nonprofit headquartered in Denver that every day serves tens of thousands of people across the U.S. with low incomes, Mile High United Way and Mile High Early Learning announced today the grand opening of the Rose on Colfax affordable housing community with a co-located childcare center on the corner of East Colfax and Valentia Street in the East Colfax neighborhood. This new, mixed-use development has 82 affordable homes, and the Mile High United Way Early Childhood Education Center, operated by Mile High Early Learning, has space to serve the learning needs of 48 babies, toddlers and preschoolers.

Recognizing that residents in the neighborhood were becoming increasingly vulnerable due to a significant lack of affordable housing and childcare in addition to increasing gentrification in the area, the City and County of Denver, Mercy Housing Mountain Plains, Mile High United Way, Mile High Early Learning, the Colorado Division of Housing and a variety of private foundations invested in the Rose on Colfax development. The City of Denver purchased the site and then awarded it to Mercy Housing Mountain Plains in 2019 through a competitive RFP process for re-development into affordable housing.

“The new Rose on Colfax is a great example of a public and private partnership that will help make Denver more affordable to residents, including making sure hardworking families who need access to childcare can get access right on site,” Mayor Mike Johnston said. “These are the kinds of projects we want more of to reach our goal of 3,000 units of permanently affordable housing each year.”

The new five-story, 119,000-square-foot complex features affordable one-, two-, three- and four-bedroom apartments that are all income-restricted to those making between 30% through 70% of the [area median income](#). For a family of four, that would be between \$31,450 and a little over \$68,120. With more than 55% of renters in the East Colfax neighborhood paying more than [30% of income on rent](#) and many facing homelessness, helping make the dream of affordable housing a reality is needed more than ever, as stable housing leads to more positive outcomes in key areas such as health and education. A land use restriction on the property ensures affordability for 99 years. The building is currently fully leased and occupied, and all households also received RTD NECO passes for free public transit.

Childcare access is a social determinant of health that is closely tied to a family's physical and mental well-being, and it also contributes to disparities in wage-earning potential, according to the 2021 Colorado Health Access Survey (CHAS). In Colorado, nearly one in 10 (9%) parents/guardians with a child 17 or younger reported that there was at least one week in the past 12 months when they needed but could not get childcare.

"The Rose on Colfax is part of Mercy Housing's unique focus on providing affordable housing and childcare services that bring stability for vulnerable families and individuals, ultimately helping them succeed," said Shelly Marquez, president of Mercy Housing Mountain Plains. "Mercy Housing is seeing several positive impacts for residents at our other developments across the country that provide similar childcare accessibility, including Decatur Place in Denver, and we hope to build more affordable communities with co-located childcare in the future."

Mile High Early Learning will operate the new, 5,600-square-foot Mile High United Way Early Childhood Education Center, located on the first level of the building, and provide comprehensive education, health and family support services for children ages six weeks through four years through Head Start and Early Head Start. The early childhood education center will also include a 2,400-square-foot outdoor play area. Funding for the center was made possible through Mile High United Way donors, Mile High Early Learning and the investment of philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott, who announced a \$20 million investment in Mile High United Way in 2021.

"This part of Denver is considered a childcare desert, which means either there's no childcare or there's more than three children needing a spot for every licensed spot available," said Dr. Pamela Harris, president and CEO of Mile High Early Learning. "Many of the families we serve experience housing instability along with challenges of accessing quality, affordable early care and education. The Rose on Colfax will support families by meeting these two critical needs. We're excited to have this amazing partnership with Mercy Housing."

"We are so honored to be part of the Rose on Colfax through the creation of the Mile High United Way Early Childhood Education Center. As both Mercy Housing and Mile High Early Learning have done for decades, they will create a community here that will give countless families a warm, safe, affordable home and an environment of learning and love for children," said Christine Benero, president and CEO of Mile High United Way.

The property will have onsite resident services, including health navigation assistance, behavioral health services, financial literacy training, job training, resume assistance, after-school and youth programming, and food and nutrition education. Mercy Housing will survey residents to understand the additional services it can provide onsite to support them. For more than 40 years, Mercy Housing has integrated health and community services with many of the 350 affordable housing properties that it owns and

operates in 21 states. This has proven to help stabilize and support individuals transitioning from homelessness and to help low-income families to thrive.

A member of the East Colfax neighborhood committee suggested the name for the Rose on Colfax after the Tupac Shakur poem "[The Rose That Grew From Concrete](#)." Community spaces throughout the building, like a fitness center, a community room and an outdoor courtyard, help support mental and physical health, and are places where residents can meet neighbors, play or find solitude.

About Mercy Housing

Mercy Housing, Inc. is a leading national affordable housing nonprofit headquartered in Denver. Established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1981 and in operation in 41 states, MHI has more than 40 years' experience developing, preserving, managing and financing affordable housing. MHI supplements much of its housing with Resident Services, programs that help residents build stable lives. MHI serves tens of thousands of people with low incomes, including families, seniors, veterans, people who have experienced homelessness and people with disabilities.

Mercy Housing Mountain Plains owns and operates 3,123 affordable apartments across 42 properties primarily located in Colorado, Arizona and Nebraska. Learn more at mercyhousing.org.

About Mile High Early Learning

Mile High Early Learning ensures all children thrive by cultivating every child's potential, engaging families and championing the early learning workforce. Mile High Early Learning's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is deeply embedded in their work with a vision that children, families and staff of all racial, cultural, economic and social backgrounds are joyfully welcomed into a learning community that prioritizes equity and finds strength in diversity. Learn more at milehighearlylearning.org.

About Mile High United Way

Working side by side with the community, Mile High United Way takes on critical human services issues facing our seven-county footprint, including the Metro Denver, Boulder and Broomfield communities. Our united approach changes the odds for all children, families and individuals in our community, so that we all have the opportunity to succeed. Learn more at unitedwaydenver.org and follow us on social media @UnitedWayDenver.

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