Together, we are changing how our community finds solutions to our most pressing issues.
Residents of the Beloved Community Village build community and more positive futures.

Tiny But Beloved

The Barton Institute has partnered with the Colorado Village Collaborative (CVC) to test out a new way of providing homes for people who need them, but who are not well-served by the traditional shelter system. As the CVC built its first self-governed small home community in Denver’s RiNo neighborhood, the Barton Institute and its donors helped with construction costs and paid for an evaluation of the model. Promising early results are pointing to the possibility of success for these homes that are affordable, quick and easy to build, and community-based.

It started with a simple idea... build small structures with beds and doors that lock around shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Do it quickly, with volunteers and crowd-sourced funding. Give the residents themselves the power to organize their own community, and to select who will be part of it. Support them with resources to find jobs and return to school. With this recipe, Beloved Community Village was born, and to date, fourteen people have found their way home.

The overburdened shelter system that serves people experiencing homelessness doesn’t work for everyone — not for couples or people with pets, not for trans people or people with certain mental illnesses. The Beloved Community Village of eleven tiny homes at the corner of 38th and Blake Streets helps fill this gap.

The Barton Institute provided funding to the Village and hired the Burnes Center on Poverty and Homelessness in DU’s Graduate School of Social Work to evaluate its first year. The results showed that the Village was a definite success — all residents of the Village were either working or in school (with one person enrolled on disability); three people had left the Village for permanent housing; the clear majority of neighbors were either neutral or positive about the Village; and crime went down in the immediate vicinity.

Now the Barton Institute is helping the Colorado Village Collaborative to open its second village, and to move the first village to a longer-term location. The next step? Expand the idea to additional locations, in partnership with the City of Denver and a cadre of funders, bolstered by continued research conducted by the Burnes Center. It’s a simple idea that is worth testing, for the benefit of the many people challenged with finding and keeping homes in today’s economy.

What we have accomplished at Colorado Village Collaborative would not have been possible without the support and guidance from the Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise.”

Cole Chandler
Executive Director, Colorado Village Collaborative

Progress Report
When a student struggles in school and is referred for discipline to the school administration, educators are clearer than ever that suspension is not the answer. Educators are increasingly using what are called “restorative practices” or “restorative justice” as strategies to address the harm the student has caused, while keeping that student in school and learning.

In Denver Public Schools (DPS), dedicated teachers and staff have a goal—help more kids to graduate. This can prove increasingly difficult if a child has problems with behavior and can’t find a way to get comfortable in the school setting.

Fortunately, DPS has invested in developing “restorative practices.” These practices include an emphasis on building relationships versus doling out punishment. For example, at Joe Shoemaker School, staff and volunteers have created a Peace and Wellness Spot (PAWS) to give children the opportunity to cool down and decide how they will cope with the consequences of their actions.

The Barton Institute partnered with DPS to take these restorative practices to the next level—leveraging research done by Dr. Yolanda Anyon from DU’s Graduate School of Social Work. In its first year, fifteen schools applied these practices and results were encouraging. They saw a 45% decrease in overall out-of-school suspensions, with even higher percentages for black students (60%) and students with disabilities (80%).

This year, the Barton Institute is joined by the Nord Family Foundation in funding increased staffing for DPS in the area of restorative practices and training to build on these results district-wide.

Barton Institute Works with Denver Public Schools on Restorative Practices
We have to think differently about this work. We must insist upon thoughtful, community-informed solutions. We must work together toward a better world that we all know is possible.”

Dr. Lydia Prado

The Dahlia Campus for Health and Well-Being is a hive of activity, including an urban farm, a greenhouse growing fish and vegetables, a dental clinic, an early childhood center, a gymnasium, a community kitchen, and a full array of mental health services.

Dr. Lydia Prado, then with the Mental Health Center of Denver, created this award-winning development in partnership with the residents in the surrounding neighborhood. Working with the Barton Institute, Dr. Prado and her team are looking at opportunities to build a Dahlia Campus-inspired community center in Southwest Denver, tailored to that community’s needs. To this end, they have conducted dozens of meetings with residents in seven different languages and dialects including Vietnamese and Somali. “We ask people what they love about their neighborhood, and how they hope to see it grow,” says Lydia. “They have shared dreams of better education for their children, space to start businesses, and access to health care. We are working to make these dreams a reality.”

A Focus on Community Partnerships

Many Metro Denver neighborhoods are comprised of people from diverse backgrounds and experiences, coming together to build their lives. The Barton Institute is helping to incubate the work of Dr. Lydia Prado and her team as they seek to understand what people need for their communities, and to conceive of creative plans to provide for those needs.
The Colorado Lab’s mission is to improve the lives of Colorado residents by partnering with state and local governments to strengthen coordinated and efficient person-centered services.

How are we accomplishing this goal? The Lab has launched more than 20 research projects in areas as diverse as child welfare, corrections, and employment. We have created the Colorado Applied Research and Action Network (CARAN), which brings outstanding researchers together with state government officials. And we are building data-sharing agreements between and among numerous state agencies.

“The idea,” says Lab Director Kristin Klopfenstein, “is to harness the power of data to improve the lives of people in our state.”

To learn more, visit: www.coloradolab.org

“The idea is to harness the power of data to improve the lives of people in our state.”

Dr. Kristin Klopfenstein
Director, Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab
QF Social Enterprise Fellows

Take Action

The Quarterly Forum (QF) Social Enterprise Fellowship Program provides DU graduate students with the knowledge and experience they need to work with successful social enterprises.

Now in its second year, the QF Social Enterprise Fellowship brings together DU graduate students across disciplines to take action on social and economic problems through social enterprise. Students in every division at the University are seeking ways to put their expertise to work for social good, and this Fellowship offers them access to projects in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

The Fellows earn a stipend and get specific training in social enterprise through a fall quarter seminar, then spend the winter and spring quarters working with host organizations in the community.

A few examples of their work in the program’s first year:

• Fellows created marketing materials for a corporate art program at Access Gallery on Santa Fe Drive, which represents artists with disabilities.
• Fellows developed a business plan to move the barbershop and salon at Emily Griffith Foundation to a street front location in downtown Denver.
• Fellows worked with The Denver Foundation and Social Venture Partners-Denver to conduct research on the use of impact investments by social enterprises in Colorado.

I don’t think social enterprise is some kind of magic bullet solution...but if it can be used as one tool in a system of collaboration, compassion, and solidarity, to provide a way to empower communities and people to reach their own potential, this is what I am fighting for.

Summer Downs
QF Social Enterprise Fellow (2018-19)
Growing Our Philanthropic Impact

Convening leaders from across Colorado and the country, the Barton Institute believes that progress in addressing major social issues can best be achieved when the private, public, and nonprofit sectors work together.

The Barton Institute uses the power of convening to bring together leading minds in philanthropy, education, nonprofit, government, and the private sector.

During the last two years the Barton Institute has convened numerous public events. These events have addressed issues including the future of philanthropy, equity in grantmaking, and the role of research in determining how best to serve the needs of community members.

By The Numbers

In our first years, the Barton Institute has helped:

- Build 11 tiny homes with more on the way
- Reduce out-of-school suspensions by 45% in cohort of 15 Denver Public Schools, keeping more kids in school and learning
- Start more than 20 studies of state government programs through the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab
- Host community conversations in 7 languages in Southwest Denver
- Connect 24 QF Social Enterprise Fellows with real-world opportunities to make change

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