



Keeping the Lights On

When the Community Needs it Most

While trends vary across the state, homes are becoming less affordable and harder to find in Maine due to several drivers, including the COVID-19 pandemic, a declining workforce, low housing production, and more. Maine needs to construct at least 76,000 homes by 2030 to accommodate all current and future residents, according to a 2023 state study.

Enter Fair Tide, a Kittery-based nonprofit, serving Maine and New Hampshire's seacoast region in developing affordable housing and providing supportive services so that individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness can find long-term stability.

Due to the severe housing shortage, there is often not an immediate opportunity for those in need. In this case, Fair Tide may direct those individuals to an emergency shelter, or other resources, while working on a long-term solution.

To better serve those in need, Fair Tide, Footprints Food Pantry, and other social service partners in the area, are working together to construct Mainspring, a 'one-stop shop,' resource hub to improve the way that such services are delivered and accessed by individuals in need.

Mainspring will house Fair Tide, the Footprints Food Pantry, and other partners and services, marking a significant improvement in how individuals in need access social services. In addition, it will unify all partners to work under one roof, resulting in centralized efforts and improved collaboration.

The building is expected to be completed by late 2024 or early 2025. Once completed, it will involve a centralized intake of individuals who will only need to fill out one form and complete one assessment to determine their needs. In addition, shared data from all partners will be available in one central format to improve overall decision making.

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COVID-19's impact on Maine's housing market was identified in the 2022 Local Public Health Systems Assessment for the York Public Health District (York County, Maine).

Top photo: Emily Flinkstrom, Executive Director of Fair Tide (left) and Megan Shapiro-Ross, Executive Director of Footprints (right) break ground in Kittery, Maine.

Together, the partners of Mainspring received federal funds from the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention dedicated to addressing gaps in the public health system that contribute to health inequities and disparities uncovered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Mainspring used these funds to purchase the generator that will be needed to continue their important operations in the event of a power outage.

In addition, the generator guarantees that the building can serve as a daytime warming and cooling center for the community in case of a power outage, and refrigerated spaces can remain cool for food viability and vaccine storage, if a future public health crisis occurs.

“It’s a really good fit for this funding because it’s going to serve our entire community and be available for any of these future emergencies, which we will likely see more often,” said Emily Flinkstrom, executive director of Fair Tide. “This is going to be a game changer for so many people, and it is a model that’s being looked at throughout the state of Maine.”

There are around 3,000 households in the York County area facing a level of financial hardships and could benefit from Mainspring. As operations begin, the center expects to see households from other parts of the region, with its impact rippling far beyond its walls.

“We’re extremely grateful for the support,” Emily said. “It’s been incredible to see the diversity of supporters that came together for this project and to have the generator be covered through the grant allows us to take our services to another level.”

As Mainspring takes shape, hope shines brighter for those navigating Maine’s challenging housing landscape.



Emily Flinkstrom. Photo courtesy of Fair Tide.

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- [Learn about Mainspring](#)
- [Learn about the York District Public Health Council](#)

Right: Architectural rendering of Mainspring facility. Photo courtesy of Fair Tide.

