

navigating challenges



ModelCities



Turning resilience,
creativity, and hard work
into opportunities for
equity and community.

ANNUAL REPORT
SPRING 2025

A message from the CEO and board chair



Kizzy L. Downie
CEO



Osborne Strickland
Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Model Cities is holding fast to our vision of an equitable community where all our neighbors have what they need to thrive. Many of us are feeling the seismic shifts all around us reverberating nationally and right in our backyard. We remain grounded in our core values to navigate these challenges together.

In 2024, we completed an internal compensation study leading to changes in salary and benefits for staff. We will continue to build stability from the inside out to provide the highest quality services we can. Externally, we continue to reach back further for those on a longer road to success, cheering them on through partnerships, supportive services, resources, and education. It's what we do, and we do it well.

Our resilience and the resilience of our shared community shine through even in the darkest of times. We are grateful for your continued partnership through challenges—and triumphs.

2024 BOARD MEMBERS

Osborne Strickland,
Chair
Brenda Bailey, Treasurer
Kizzy Downie, Secretary
& CEO

Judith Aminmentse
Brenda Bolar-Ford
Jonathan Cooper
Heidi Leise
Marilyn Porter
Amy Schwabe

Our mission

To promote social and economic prosperity by providing access to opportunities that stabilize and develop families and communities.

Our brand values

Our brand values guide our work and frame how we serve our community.

CREATING OPPORTUNITY
RESPECTING OTHERS
BUILDING COMMUNITY
PROVIDING STABILITY
DRIVING EQUITY



Pilgrimage

An update on the journey of Safe Space

We believe shelter is more than providing a bed, it's dignity and hospitality for everyone. Last year, our staff and partners were tasked with the relocation of Safe Space. Moving from its downtown location where we'd served guests since 2019 proved challenging. Through persistence and creativity Safe Space reopened last fall at Central Baptist Church.

Safe Space serves community members who are often unseen. For them, the journey to stability is longer, a road we're honored to walk with them. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Saint Paul City Council and Mayor's office, Ramsey County Board of Commissioners,



Ramsey County Housing Stability Department, Union Park District Council, community, and partners for their unwavering support throughout this journey. Because of you, Safe Space will continue its vital work in 2025.

AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

Our 2024 financial results represent how we navigate needs and challenges in our community as we fulfill our mission.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION:

Current Assets	\$ 1,773,943
Total Assets	\$ 17,045,957
Current Liabilities	\$ 796,241
Total Liabilities	\$ 14,183,976
Total Net Assets	\$ 2,861,981

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES:

Total Support & Revenue	\$ 4,553,812
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 4,081,706
Total Non-operating Expenses	\$ 666,515
Change in Net Assets, Excluding Non-operating Expenses	\$ 1,118,621

SUPPORT & REVENUE

- 48% Government Agencies
- 23% Earned Income
- 17% Foundations & Corporations
- 12% Other Income



EXPENSES

- 40.7% Facilities & Properties Management
- 24.4% Shelter Services
- 22.8% Management & General Administration
- 8.4% Client Services
- 2.2% Community Development
- 1.4% Fundraising



FROM UNCERTAINTY TO STABILITY

While needs are growing and concerns are rising, Model Cities creates structures and supports for stable, affordable housing and stronger, more equitable communities.

70% | 48

70% of individuals served identified as BIPOC with 48 families successfully purchasing homes after participating in our homeownership education and advising services.

Perserverance

Building a bridge to generational wealth

Charnita Williams has a vision of homeownership for her family. She recently reached a major milestone by closing on her first home just a few blocks from where she raised three of her four children. The four-bedroom, two-bath house is full of light, houseplants, family photos, and possibilities. Charnita wants this home to be a multi-generational hub for the whole family.

Staying the course

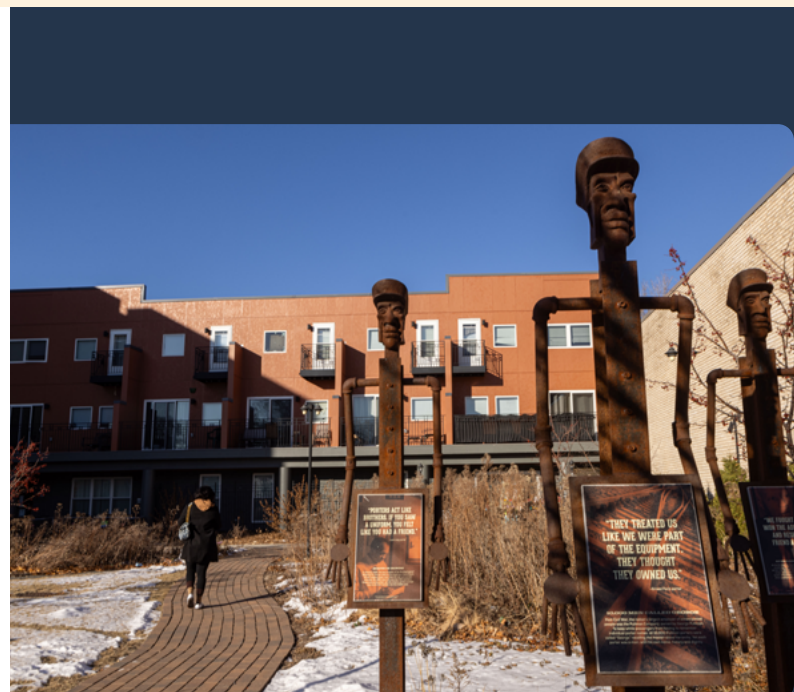
The journey wasn't easy, but the steps became clear: build credit, increase savings, and learn everything she could about the process. Charnita is an alum of The People's Fellowship, a program from Model Cities partner Saint Paul Promise. The fellowship connected her with us and to her advisor, Eboni Williams.

"I came into this not wanting to buy a house; I didn't want the door slammed in my face," Charnita shared about the 16-month process, "but Eboni was my cheerleader." Working with her advisor in 1:1 coaching and participating in our Fiscally Fit series, Charnita gained knowledge to keep pushing forward and discovered she was closer to homeownership than she'd first imagined.



729

729 individuals received homebuyer education, 1:1 advising, and financial wellness services. Model Cities provides pathways toward wealth creation and financial stability.





Our Fiscally Fit workshops encourage participants to build financial wellness skills. Started by Camphor United Methodist Church, the program moved to Model Cities in 2018. These workshops and other services built the bridge to connect Charnita to nearly \$100,000 in down payment and entry assistance.

Future goals and projects

Charnita's got big plans for the future! Originally from Saint Paul's historic Rondo neighborhood, Charnita's family relocated to Burnsville when she was younger.

She wanted to raise her youngest child in the area that had been home for so long. "My goal is to get some good equity in this home and to make sure I can pass this home to my children and keep the generational wealth going."

She intends to use her home's equity to add an addition where all of her family can live under one roof. This journey has been an inspiration to her older children, who now feel that it's within reach for them. Charnita hopes in doing so, they can "keep the circle going."

Preservation

Repairing and preserving an affordable housing asset

When inspecting a vacant unit at 833 University, we learned of an issue requiring immediate, comprehensive response. Unseen water damage had spread throughout the building's exterior. The building features two- and three-bedroom units, a necessary resource for larger families when affordable housing is in short supply. Our primary goal was to complete the work efficiently without displacing current residents.

\$670K

We completed \$670,000 in renovations to address significant water infiltration. 833 University provides six permanent supportive residential units for low-income families.

Making the repairs provided a perfect opportunity to collaborate with partners and local contractors. To minimize inconveniences to families during the 18-month process, we prioritized clear and consistent communication. Full remediation was completed in 2024, making 833 University a safe place to live for years to come!

Partnership

The story of Sherburne Collective

Sherburne Collective, a group created to redevelop 652 Sherburne Avenue, showcases the power of partnership.

Frogtown Neighborhood Association approached Model Cities in 2020 for help in preserving the property without displacing existing community members. With expected completion in late 2025, 652 Sherburne will first rent to households at 30% AMI (area median income), later transitioning to a community ownership model, where residents can own and manage the property long-term.

Dean Carlson, our Director of Community Development, said the project's unique design was created to prevent gentrification and build community wealth. "Their motto is *development without displacement*; this was a way it could be developed for the neighborhood," Carlson said. "No one had ever done something like this."

Sherburne Collective is a partnership between Model Cities, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Hope Community Inc, Housing Justice Center, Historic St. Paul, and Rondo Community Land Trust.



9 We partnered with 9 community-based organizations in 2024, increasing cross-sector collaboration, expanding our reach, and deepening impact across the housing continuum.

People



Our volunteers are vital to our success

There were many moments in 2024, big and small, where volunteers made their mark at Model Cities, embodying compassion and strength of community to support our neighbors. Their support shined brightest when relocating Safe Space last fall. Over 25 community volunteers along with Model Cities staff spent two days preparing the new location at Central Baptist Church for (re)opening day.

Safe Space reached full capacity in December and continues providing overnight shelter in 2025.

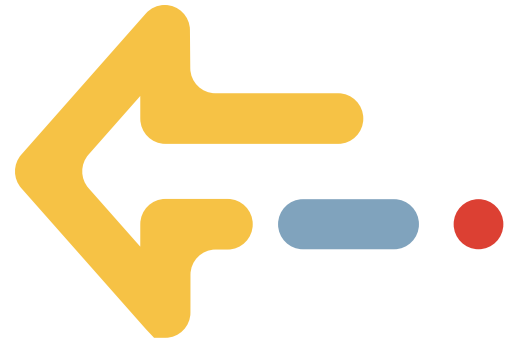


This would not have been possible with the dedication and service of our volunteers. We're grateful to everyone who gave their time and talent, increasing our people power for the year.



Thank you!

Together, we're finding more ways to work through challenges facing us now to create change for today, and future days. Thank you to each of you, donors, partners, advocates, allies, volunteers and community—you help us stay the course.



CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS

Allianz Life
Amherst H Wilder Foundation
c/o Saint Paul Promise
Neighborhood (SPPN)
Associated Bank
Bell Bank
Blaze Credit Union Foundation
Bob and Diane Corderre
Family Fund
Bremer Bank
Build Wealth Minnesota
C.H. Robinson Foundation
Corporation for
Supportive Housing
Edina Reality Foundation
F.R. Bigelow Foundation
Greater Twin Cities United Way
H. B. Fuller Foundation
Hardenbergh Foundation
Joseph C & Lillian A Duke
Foundation
McKnight Foundation
Minnesota Waste Wise
Foundation
Neighborhood Development
Center Inc.
Old National Bank
Omaha Community Foundation/
Scoular Foundation
Our Change Foundation

Pohlad Family Foundation
Propel Nonprofits
Richard M. Schulze
Family Foundation
Saint Paul & Minnesota
Foundation
Target Foundation
The Patrick and Aimee Butler
Family Foundation
The Snedeker Foundation
Turner Family Foundation

GOVERNMENT

City of Saint Paul
Local Initiatives Support
Corporation (LISC)
Metropolitan Council, LCDA-TOD
Minnesota Department
of Human Services
Minnesota Homeownership
Center
Minnesota Housing
Ramsey County, Housing
Redevelopment Authority
Ramsey County, Housing
Stability Department
Saint Paul Public Housing Agency
U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development
U.S. Department of Housing
and Urban Development
Housing Counseling Program

INDIVIDUALS

Anonymous (15)
Judith Aminmentse
Brenda Bailey
Brenda Bolar Ford
William Bronn
Susan Brown
Joseph & Nancy Burkhardt
William Delaney
Faith Dietz
Paul Drees
Jamey Flannery
Hilde Flynn
Beverley Hawkins
Aaron Keniski
Andy Kramer
Mike LaFave
Steven Landberg
Heidi Leise
Diana Lillicrap
Hilbert Lindo
Katia (Kathleen) McDonough
John Moen
John Nymoen
Dennis Prchal
Andrew Ranallo
Hillary Reeves
Melanie A. Ruda
Wendy Ruyle
Fumiko Salone
Stephanie Schultz

INDIVIDUALS continued

Amy Schwabe
Karen and Bill Snedeker
James & Ruth Stevens
Osborne Strickland
Herschel Tisdle
Babette Varner
Allen Verbrugge
Charles Williams III
Della Zurick

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Central Baptist Church
Central Community Services
Chipotle
Drawer
Famous Dave's of America
Generational Wealth
Accounting Services, LLC
Girl Scout Troop 57908 (In-kind)
Health Systems
Cooperative Laundries

Menage LLC
National Association of Real
Estate Brokers, Twin Cities
Palisade Asset Management
Pilgrim Lutheran Church
Priomh Security Inc.
Second Story Church
Twin Cities Mobile Loaves
You Matter

Participate

**Our work needs many hands and hearts to get it done.
We seek advocates, neighbors, volunteers, community
partners, and committed allies to join us in creating
the world we want to see.**

Donate

Invest in impact that transforms individual lives, builds economic opportunity, and strengthens communities that need it most. Donors of any scale help us further our mission and fuel our accomplishments.

Volunteer

We're always looking for enthusiastic people with a variety of skills. Check out our website to put your talents and passions to use.

Advocate

We celebrate advocates willing to articulate our value to community groups, civic organizations, private, foundational, and corporate funders, and the Legislature. Reach out to us if you want to use your voice to make a difference in one of these arenas.

Join & Share

Inspired to do more? Join our social networks, attend one of our events, make a referral, or show up in whatever way works for you.



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