



ModelCities



ANNUAL  
REPORT  
SPRING  
2026

# Grounded & Growing



**Creating structures and supports for stable, affordable housing and stronger, more equitable communities.**

# A message from the CEO and board chair

Dear Friends,

Model Cities is grounded and growing—rooted in the voices, experiences, and resilience of our community while building supports needed for stability, opportunity, and belonging. Even as we've navigated uncertainty with federal and state funding, our focus remained on showing up for people in practical, community-driven ways. "We believe communities thrive when people thrive" is our mantra for action (and care), anchoring us and giving us room to stretch and innovate.

Together, we piloted seven-day bed reservations at Safe Space, offering dignified options for shelter guests balancing work and appointments. We secured funding for our Homeownership Accelerator pilot to expand pathways to homeownership for BIPOC households. We strengthened how we connect through a new, more accessible website and deeper neighborhood partnerships.

As we approach our 60th anniversary in 2027, we are honoring our history while building a future with more equitable communities. A future that we will continue creating together.



**Kizzy L. Downie**  
CEO



**Osborne Strickland**  
Board Chair

## 2025 BOARD MEMBERS

Osborne Strickland,  
Chair  
Amy Schwabe,  
Vice Chair

Jonathan Cooper,  
Treasurer  
Kizzy Downie, Secretary  
(Ex-officio) & CEO

Judith Aminmentse  
Brenda Bolar-Ford  
Heidi Leise  
Marilyn Porter

Brenda Bailey  
Tiffany Phillips

## 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

## In memory



Mrs. Brenda Bolar-Ford joined our board in April 2015, helping to guide the organization during a period of growth and transformation. Her commitment to community-driven development and service to those facing the greatest barriers left a lasting impact.

**"Brenda had a huge heart and a deep willingness to be a helper. If you called, she would be there; she was our unsung hero!"**

—Dr. Beverley Hawkins

## Audited financial statement:

Our 2025 financials demonstrate our capacity to meet challenges head-on while deepening the quality of our services.

### Statement of financial position:

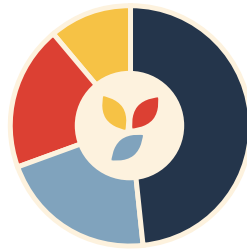
Current Assets	\$ 1,943,364
Total Assets	\$ 18,274,157
Current Liabilities	\$3,095,333
Total Liabilities	\$15,721,483
Total Net Assets	\$ 2,552,674

### Statement of activities:

Total Support & Revenue	\$ 3,919,772
Total Operating Expenses	\$4,229,079
Total Non-operating Expenses	\$ 662,249
Change in Net Assets, Excluding Non-operating Expenses	\$ 352,942

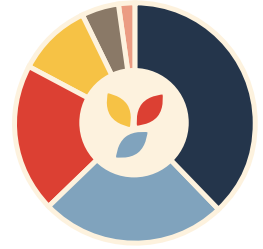
#### SUPPORT & REVENUE

- 49% Government Agencies
- 21% Earned Income
- 19% Foundations & Corporations
- 11% Other Income



#### EXPENSES

- 38% Facilities & Properties Management
- 25% Shelter Services
- 20% Management & General Administration
- 10% Client Services
- 5% Community Development
- 2% Fundraising



**2,324**

Individuals served  
in 2025 across  
all programs

**544**

People got financial  
education and  
homeownership advising

**50**

Households advised  
by Economic Services  
became homeowners

**1,598**

Unhoused adults  
served at  
Safe Space Shelter

# Seeding the Future

## Introducing our Homeownership Accelerator

In 2026 we'll take a fresh approach to dismantling systemic barriers to homebuying. The six-month program goes beyond traditional financial wellness, supporting generational healing to build generational wealth. Classes meet biweekly to build a cohort led by our Economic Services team, in partnership with Rondo Community Land Trust and West Side Community Organization.

Participants will receive \$6,500 with access to additional funds in 0% interest credit opportunity loans to clear financial obstacles. By focusing on adults in the metro who identify as BIPOC and feel overwhelmed by the homeownership process, we're continuing 60 years of directly addressing disparities affecting our neighbors.

# Finding Steady Ground

## Working together to support our neighbors

Model Cities staff works steadily to ensure that our community is centered and supported, but we don't do this work alone! We exist in an ecosystem of care with partners making an impact throughout Minnesota. These partnerships make our continuum of services stronger and sustainable.

## Sanneh sends SNAP relief

Over 400,000 Minnesotans receive SNAP benefits; among them are neighbors who access Model Cities' services. Last November, families who rely on supplemental food support were stunned to learn those benefits would be interrupted. In response to a seismic shift in food access, the Sanneh Foundation stepped up to the plate for our supportive housing residents. Microwavable meals made from scratch by Golden Thyme were hand-delivered for eight weeks to Families First and Sankofa. Each family received two meals per person, with the remaining meals given to Safe Space for guests. Nearly 2,300 meals were provided during the time frame.

## Partners made it possible

Other partnerships in 2025 ranged from sponsorship for Homestretch workshops to holiday gifts from Scoular Foundation, where supportive housing families saw their wish lists fulfilled. Saint Paul Promise, partnered with us to connect residents with their Thrive by Five and Project Bold programs, and Target provided a super-sized set of housing supplies. Ramsey County Veterans Services joined our shelter advocates at Safe Space to connect unhoused veterans with additional services. Central Baptist Church held a winter clothing drive benefiting shelter guests, while Dorcas Circle organized essential needs items and sandwiches. We're grateful to all our partners past and present for helping to build a brighter future for our neighbors!

## Model Cities moves the needle

-  Safe Space piloted seven-day bed reservations, reducing daily access barriers for shelter guests and supporting work and appointment schedules.
-  Our Homeownership Accelerator found funding fuel to expand homebuyer readiness for BIPOC households in the metro.
-  We launched a new agency website designed to improve user experience and accessibility, connecting community to programs, resources, and impact.
-  Our team increased local (and national) awareness of Model Cities through community events and media engagement while deepening nearby partnerships.





**Sanneh sends SNAP support**

Changes to SNAP benefits in 2025 brought food access challenges for many Minnesotans. In response, Sanneh Foundation held food distribution events in Saint Paul including 2,000+ meals over eight weeks delivered to our residents.

**Rondo Block Party honors history**

Model Cities staff spent time in community at the Rondo Block Party which celebrates the rich history of the Rondo neighborhood, honoring the past, celebrating the present, and connecting the threads of our shared story.



**Model Cities named GTCUW Community Investment Partner**

As a 2025-2028 program partner with Greater Twin Cities United Way we will work alongside 90+ Twin Cities nonprofits to create a region where all families have the resources they need to thrive.

# Nurturing Our Community



**Dorcas Circle gives back**

Thank you to the Dorcas Circle group from Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church in Saint Paul for donating lunch bags, hygiene kits, and winter garments for our Safe Space shelter guests.

**In-kind giving that makes a big impact**

Kelly created care bags; Katia brought pillows and jackets; StreetWorks donated socks; You Matter gave face masks, gloves, and sanitizer wipes; Sande and the Central Baptist Church organized a coat drive for shelter guests.



**Lending a hand at Hallie Q. Brown**

We modeled the power of partnership by volunteering with the 97-year-old neighboring organization. Our staff pitched in to organize donations, paint the welcome area, recover art from storage to brighten up the space, and more!

# Lifting Up Voices

## Midway Grocery & Deli

Faisal Yusuf has years of experience working in grocery stores, which inspired the opening of this anchor for the BROWNstone commercial in 2018. Midway is more than just a place to buy halal groceries, snacks, and East African style take-out; it is a resource hub for the community.

“People come to us with questions and sometimes language assistance, and we help them in that aspect as well,” Faisal reports. With immigration enforcement creating deep uncertainty for many communities, keeping the doors open felt like an impossible task, but Midway staff made it happen. Faisal wants his store to remain a welcoming and safe space for all who come to shop. Shopping small helps local economies, and at Midway, shopping local opens up a world of cultures and community.

“People come to us with questions, even language assistance, and we help them in that aspect as well.”

—Faisal Yusuf, Midway Grocery & Deli owner



“We curate more than products. We preserve creativity, individuality, and the narrative of streetwear within our community.”

—Harris and Anthony, Brick by Brick co-owners

## Brick by Brick

Since June 2022, Brick by Brick has offered a curated collection of sneakers, art, and fashion, creating a space for culture to authentically thrive after the pandemic. “We curate more than products. We preserve creativity, individuality, and the narrative of streetwear within our community,” say co-owners Harris and Anthony.

Brick by Brick operates as a civic and cultural hub with an emphasis on collective care in the neighborhood. As soon as you walk in, you’re immersed in an environment where inspiration, belonging, and creative energy intersect. “We host food drives, back-to-school drives, turkey and toy giveaways, and even welcome families for visits from Santa Claus.” Model Cities provided business support that helped accelerate their growth, as they transformed their strong vision for community into a sustainable enterprise.

# Thanking Our Supporters

Thank you to our donors, partners, advocates, allies, volunteers, and community. Whether we're facing challenging times or finding time to appreciate the wins, we know that the way forward is together. Your support helps us weather it all!

## **CORPORATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS**

Allianz Life Insurance  
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation  
c/o Saint Paul Promise  
Neighborhood (SPPN)  
Andersen Corporate Foundation  
Arend Family Impact Fund  
Bob and Diane Corderre  
Family Fund  
Build Wealth Minnesota  
C.H. Robinson Foundation  
Elmer L. & Eleanor  
J. Andersen Foundation  
F.R. Bigelow Foundation  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
H. B. Fuller Foundation  
Joseph C. & Lillian  
A. Duke Foundation  
Margaret A. Cargill Foundation  
McKnight Foundation  
Neighborhood Development  
Center Inc.  
The Patrick and Aimee  
Butler Family Foundation  
Pohlad Family Foundation  
Propel Nonprofits  
Richard M. Schulze  
Family Foundation  
The Riverway Foundation  
Saint Paul & Minnesota  
Foundation

Scoular Foundation  
Snedeker Charitable Fund  
Target 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

## **INDIVIDUALS**

Anonymous (9)  
Kyle Adamson  
Mark Anderson  
Brenda & Robert Bailey  
Lynn Ball  
Tanya Boigenzahn Sowards  
William Bronn  
Susan Brown  
Kirstin Burch  
Joseph & Nancy Burkhardt  
William Delaney

Faith Dietz  
Kizzy Downie  
Skylar Farb  
Hilde Flynn  
Amanda Frayeh  
Jeru Gobeze  
Meg Grove  
Beverley Hawkins  
Jean Henjum & Gerry Flannery  
Babette Jamison Varner  
Steven Landberg  
Heidi Leise  
Diana Lillicrap  
Katie Marty  
Katia McDonough & Melanie Ruda  
John & Kristine Nymoer  
Marilyn Porter  
Andrew Ranallo  
Hillary Reeves  
Julie Richards  
Melanie A. Ruda  
Wendy Ruyle  
Fumiko Salone  
Stephanie Schultz  
Amy Schwabe  
Karen & Bill Snedeker  
James & Ruth Stevens  
Osborne Strickland  
Alex Westberg  
Linda White  
Charles Williams III  
Nancy Zingale

## PRIVATE BUSINESSES

Associated Bank  
Camphor Memorial  
United Methodist  
Church (Dorcas Circle)  
Central Baptist Church  
Central Community Services  
Devanadi Yoga  
Drawer

Garfinkel Immigration Law Firm  
Generational Wealth  
Accounting Services, LLC  
Menage LLC  
National Association of Real  
Estate Brokers, Twin Cities  
National United Church Ushers  
Association of America,  
LLC—Central Region

Old National Bank  
Palisade Asset Management  
Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
Priomh Security Inc.  
Resurrection City Church  
Standard Heating  
Twin Cities Mobile Loaves  
You Matter



# Planting What's Next

**Get involved with Model Cities to strengthen the roots of our community! We're looking for donors to plant seeds of generosity, volunteers to nurture community-centering services, and advocates to support this ecosystem of care.**

## 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

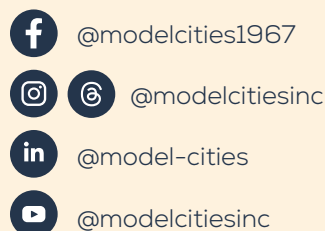
We're always looking for enthusiastic people with a variety of skills. Check out our website to put your talents and passions to use.

## 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.



ModelCities

[www.modelcities.org](http://www.modelcities.org)