



MODEL CITIES

# Strategic Plan

2021 - 2023



ModelCities



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**"I arrive every day energized by our mission. With passion and professional acumen, we're helping our clients become more resilient, prosperous, and secure."**

**—Kizzy Downie, CEO**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We feel a strong sense of urgency and an equally fierce optimism.

The work Model Cities has been doing for 53 years has never been more urgent. With the discrepant dangers of Covid-19 and systemic racism laid bare, this moment calls for transformational change.

### 3-year goals

Over the next three years, we will explore new opportunities that will help us accomplish these key goals:

- Create transformational, community-driven opportunities that address root causes of racial and socioeconomic inequities so local communities thrive.
- Build capacity by making the best use of our resources, improve efficiency, and pursue strategic growth to better support the needs of those we serve.
- Cultivate long-term organizational sustainability to increase access for those with the greatest barriers.

### Strategies

With purposeful discipline, we will improve our efficacy and outcomes.

- Strengthen our operations
- Narrow our focus
- Expand our revenue sources

### Desired outcomes

We aim to develop a robust organizational capacity from which to pursue our mission, including these measures of success:

- A focus on racial equity within agency practices
- A stronger financial infrastructure to support growing needs
- Enhanced HR systems
- Improved organizational efficiency
- Greater community-driven actions
- Expanded revenue diversity

### Financial investment

To make this strategic plan a success, we will invest \$1,500,000 over the next three years.

## ABOUT MODEL CITIES

# We believe communities thrive when people thrive.

We build equity by creating opportunities for all community members facing barriers, including people of color who experience acute disparity. As a community developer and human services provider, our interconnected programs support youth, individuals, families, and business owners. And as a neighbor, we address challenges from every angle with respect, empathy, and a human-centered approach. Let's work to lift up those who need it most.

### SERVICE AREAS

**Supportive Housing**

**Safe Space Shelter**

**Crisis Intervention for Children, Youth, and Families**

**Real Estate Development**

**Affordable Housing**

**Property Management**

**Home Ownership Programs**

**Financial Literacy Programs**

### Frogtown focus

If you live in the Frogtown/Rondo community, chances are good you already know us. As your neighbor, we're able to identify real community problems and work to solve them with you every step of the way, every day.

### Real perspective

For over 50 years, we've been an African American, woman-led nonprofit that understands the challenges in our community. The diversity of our staff and clients keeps us connected and guides us to work with heart, soul, and a belief in a better world for all.

### Continuum of services

The community's evolving needs shape our offerings. That's because we serve people all along their life paths, offering interconnected programs of support delivered with care and respect.

## OUR MISSION

**Our mission is to promote social and economic prosperity by providing access to opportunities that stabilize and develop families and communities.**

## OUR VISION

**We envision an equitable community where all people have access to housing, economic opportunities, and culturally responsive services that help them thrive.**

## OUR BRAND VALUES

### Creating opportunity

We aim to make hope concrete by helping people achieve throughout their path in life.

### Respecting others

This is the fundamental grounding of how we treat one another and those we serve.

### Building community

It drives who we serve, where we serve, and why we serve.

### Providing stability

Our goal is to develop the means to be more adaptable and sustainable as an organization to better meet the community's needs.

### Driving equity

We harness the diversity of people, thoughts, and approaches, to holistically and equitably address the changing needs of our community.



# Minnesota's racial equity gap is in the global spotlight.

As an organization whose existence is rooted in addressing the poor conditions of our nation's least served urban communities, we continue to stand in solidarity with our community as the landscape of our work changes around us.

## Black Minnesotans matter

The current national conversation around racism found its spark here in our community. As a Black-led organization, we have experienced firsthand the injustices of structural racism and continue to stand in solidarity with all those who fight for a more just Minnesota.

Since the inception of Model Cities in the 1960s, we have sought to support marginalized communities to achieve success and stability in the face of systemic oppression. We will continue to advance the priorities of our communities and work with other local leaders to dismantle those systems that hold us back and uplift those practices that redress historical trauma.

## A global pandemic

### Effects of Covid-19

Any efforts by us to improve the condition of the communities we serve will be significantly impacted by the current global pandemic. The full effects of the coronavirus have yet to be felt as we are still experiencing the outbreak. Based on historical precedent and pre-existing statewide inequities, we expect communities of color to be disproportionately affected by the virus, resulting in higher unemployment, an increased risk of homelessness, and a deepening of the wealth gap.

We will remain adaptable to the needs of those we serve and adjust our services to respond to the rapid changes caused by the pandemic. As we examine the underlying factors impacting our communities, we must evaluate them through the lens of this uncertainty.

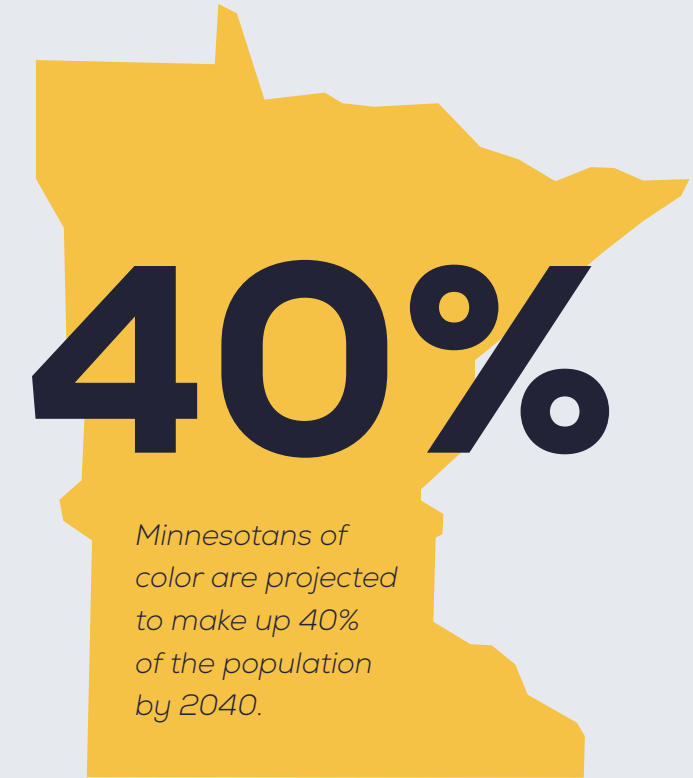
## Who are we serving?

### Sustaining small businesses

A critical focus will be supporting minority-owned businesses to survive the impacts of the coronavirus. These businesses are a cornerstone of our economic development work as they drive wealth generation for Minnesotans of color.

The pandemic has increased the risk of closure for several small businesses we support at the BROWNstone due to economic uncertainty and depressed commercial activity.

The loss of these businesses would drastically impact our services through lost rental income and community destabilization. We will continue to find avenues to preserve these businesses and ensure their long-term survival.



### Population shift

Reflecting similar trends across the country, Minnesota is undergoing a profound demographic shift toward an older but more diverse population. While elder Minnesotans (over 65) make up the fastest-growing segment of the population, young Minnesotans reflect a state that is rapidly diversifying, with Minnesotans of color projected to make up 40% of the population by 2040.

Young Minnesotans of color face significant challenges in securing affordable housing, finding gainful employment, and achieving healthy outcomes due to the systemic inequities that plague our state.

## Systemic disparities

The effects of structural racism and systemic inequities in employment, housing, and healthcare have hampered the success of the communities we serve. These barriers are highly interconnected, requiring holistic services that support Minnesotans of color throughout their personal journey.

# 41%

41% of African Americans in Minnesota are either unemployed or have been dissuaded from participating in the labor force.

### Employment challenges

Minnesotans of color are two to three times more likely to be unemployed compared to white Minnesotans and make significantly less than the statewide average. With 41% of African Americans in Minnesota either unemployed or underemployed, this represents a huge economic opportunity for Minnesota not now being nurtured.

Job opportunities are greatest outside of population centers, leaving individuals and families who require low-income housing and public transportation with limited access to employment.

### Housing issues

A record low-vacancy rate and significant shortfall in affordable and available housing stock have led to a high housing-cost burden for low-income families. Homeownership rates for communities of color are far lower than white Minnesotans, with only 18% of African Americans owning their own homes.

### Homelessness

The number of homeless individuals has increased in Minnesota, with an overrepresentation of Minnesotans of color. Data from Model Cities' Safe Space Shelter in downtown St. Paul reflects this trend, with African Americans representing 44% of individuals served. Homeless Minnesotans also experience high rates of mental and behavioral health issues, as reflected in the Safe Space data, with 40% of individuals served reporting a mental illness.

Lack of available space in shelters, high rates of mental and physical health issues, and increases in women fleeing domestic violence create a demand for wraparound services that can address the trauma and holistic needs of those experiencing homelessness.

### Health and well-being

The impacts of historical trauma and personal experiences with racism have significantly affected the mental and physical well-being of Minnesotans of color. Our communities experience higher rates of chronic conditions and poorer mental well-being, which often go unaddressed due to structural barriers.

The incorporation of trauma-informed practices is necessary to support the well-being of communities of color and to begin the processes of healing.

When surveyed, the majority of our clients support and affirm the effectiveness of our services.

## 85%

Among clients who participated in a financial literacy workshop, 85% felt more confident about their financial decisions.

## 93%

93% of workshop participants said they were able to improve their household budgets.

## 80%

80% of residents reported their homes were well maintained by Model Cities and that their rents were affordable.

## 69%

69% of questionnaire respondents reported satisfaction with their case management support; however, Covid-19 reduced overall response rates.

## Where do we go from here?

The trust Model Cities has built and our commitment to evolve to meet the emerging needs of our community make us a uniquely positioned provider and partner.

### Monitoring County-level efforts

Though housing support services are decentralized, a coordinated entry process has improved the effectiveness and efficiency of programs. Model Cities' work closely dovetails with Ramsey County, which is creating a housing office that will align funding and act as a hub for housing and homelessness. As a collaborator, we're at the forefront of the county's delivery systems.

### Advocating culturally tailored approaches

As a statewide leader in providing culturally relevant services, we reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. The lived experiences of our staff inform and improve the services we provide to those most in need. This knowledge combines with our skills to deliver high-quality supportive services.

### Anticipating tomorrow's pressing needs

The need for our services is growing as the conditions in our communities continue to change. The impacts of a younger, more diverse population will enhance demand on the culturally relevant housing and financial literacy support we provide.

We must play a key role in safeguarding our communities from the potential damage of the coronavirus pandemic, which could lead to increasing rates of unemployment and homelessness in our state. Our skillful use of trauma-informed practices will be necessary to support families in crisis, as we must not only provide resources to stabilize them but also engage them in ways that promote psychological healing.



HOW WE RESPOND

With so many competing needs, it's critical for us to refocus and refine.

This strategic plan is our roadmap, channeling our efforts and forward momentum with clarity and purpose. Our strategies are interconnected with a holistic approach, making us uniquely capable of delivering on our promises and transforming our energy and passion into solid, measurable, human-focused outcomes.

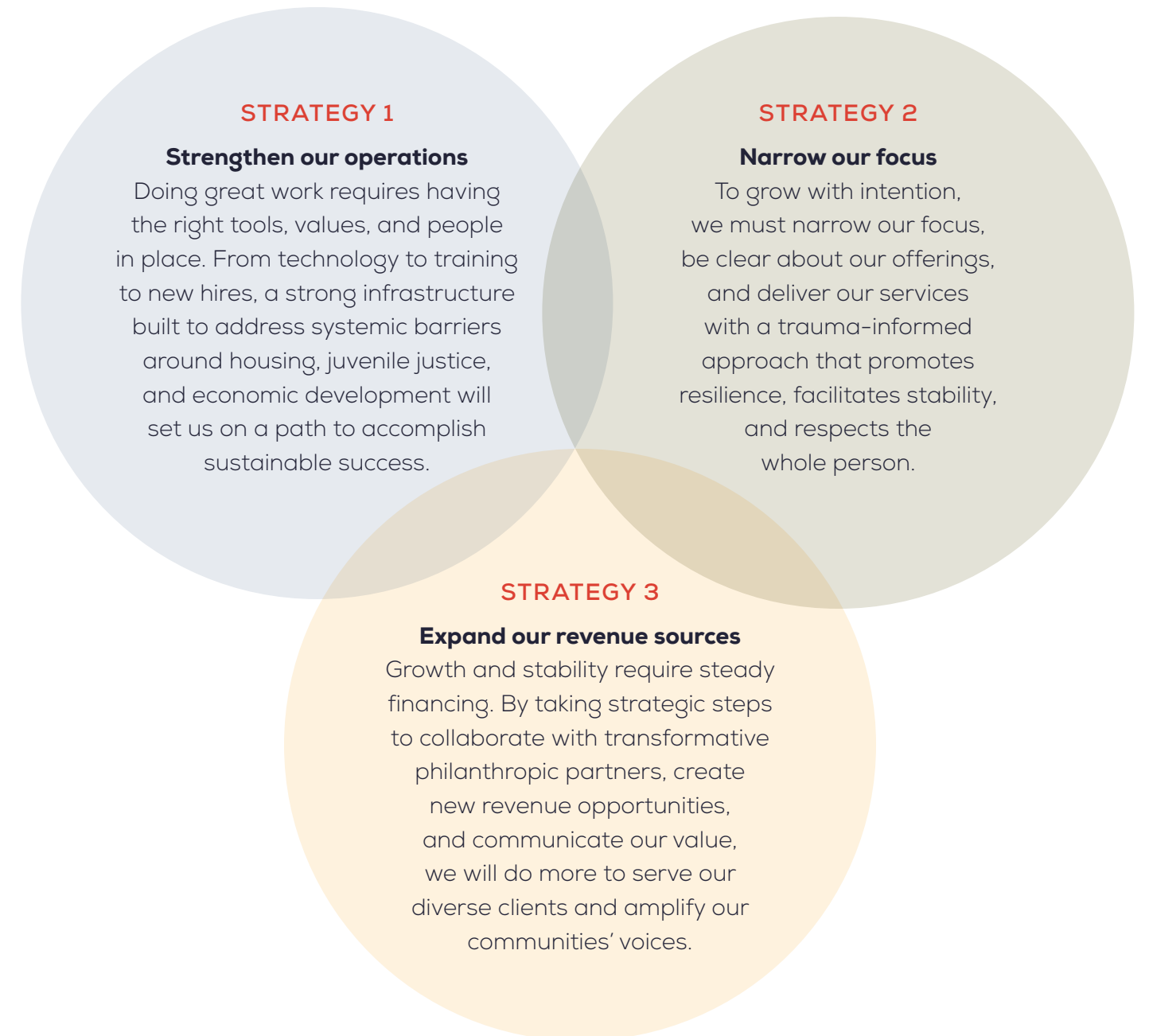
**"Our actions are rooted in deep intention: to transform our community into a place of opportunity where all people, especially people of color, can thrive."**

**—Brenda J. Bailey, Board Chair**



**3-YEAR GOALS** Over the next three years, we will explore new opportunities to help us accomplish these key goals:

- 1 Create transformational, community-driven opportunities that address root causes of racial and socioeconomic inequities so local communities thrive.
- 2 Build capacity by making the best use of our resources, improve efficiency, and pursue strategic growth to better support the needs of those we serve.
- 3 Cultivate long-term organizational sustainability to increase access for those with the greatest barriers.



STRATEGY 1

# Strengthen our operations.

Our first priority is to build up our infrastructure so we can be more efficient, effective, and productive.



<p><b>Technology</b></p> <p>From accounting to HR to rent collection, we will make our technology more integrated, useful, and effective.</p>	<p><b>Action steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage IT firm</li> <li>• Assess tech</li> <li>• Create tech plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>Training</b></p> <p>With thoughtful refinement and staff guidance, we will be more knowledgeable and accountable to one another and to those we serve.</p>	<p><b>Action steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review practices</li> <li>• Modify process</li> <li>• Implement training</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff changes &amp; additions</b></p> <p>Through better alignment of roles, skills, and people, we will enhance our ability to serve.</p>	<p><b>Action steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review roles</li> <li>• Assess needs</li> <li>• Create restructure plan</li> <li>• Implement staff &amp; BROWNstone transition plans</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finance &amp; budgeting</b></p> <p>With clearer objectives, better financial systems, and enhanced monitoring, we will be able to confidently allocate resources.</p>	<p><b>Action steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and set goals</li> <li>• Create framework &amp; metrics</li> <li>• Align resources, track progress</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policies &amp; procedures</b></p> <p>We will make our organizational guidelines current, relevant, and accessible.</p>	<p><b>Action steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review existing policies &amp; practices</li> <li>• Make updates</li> <li>• Share tools</li> </ul>

**Brand communications**

With thoughtful intent and the right tools in place, we will engage with our community and communicate our value.

**Action steps**

- Hire consultant
- Define impact, profiles & positions; create messages & story
- Develop visual system with useful templates & tools
- Create marketing comm. plan
- Create external affairs committee
- Gather feedback

**Partnerships**

Using a racial equity lens with a focus on transformational outcomes, we will accomplish better collaboration and stronger alliances.

**Action steps**

- Explore partner opportunities
- Analyze policies & impact
- Expand partner & advocacy relationships

**MEASURES OF SUCCESS**

The specific outcomes for achieving this strategy include:

**A focus on racial equity within agency practices.** We will have measurable high standards and purposeful tactics to support mindful racial diversity in our staffing, partnerships, and investments. This focus will make us a force for change in leading conversations, actions, and outcomes that work to eradicate racial disparity for people of color.

**A stronger financial infrastructure to support growing needs.** We will be able to meet yearly budget projections with a 90% or better rate of accuracy. Better tools, tech, and reports will improve the day-to-day business operations and management of the organization.

**Enhanced HR systems.** We will have processes and systems to keep our policies and procedures updated and readily shared with employees. This structural clarity will improve our training methods and allow us to proactively keep pace with best practices and changes that are occurring around us.



# Narrow our focus.

By clarifying our strengths and honing our efforts, we will deliver strategic impact with more consistent outcomes.

## Trauma-informed approach

Creating practices that honor personal experiences and respect the impact of trauma will improve the quality and effectiveness of our work.

### Action steps

- Develop principles of practice
- Integrate new practices into service delivery and operational activities

## Outcomes assessment

With a focus on outcomes, we will make better decisions and remain relevant in the community.

### Action steps

- Hire consultant
- Conduct assessment
- Define refinements
- Build ongoing impact infrastructure
- Gather feedback, track results

## Gap analysis

Determining where there are unmet needs will guide us to be strategic in our operations and actions.

### Action steps

- Hire consultant
- Identify gaps

## Services & activities refinement

We will work to cultivate our existing programs to improve efficiency and deliver more value.

### Action steps

- Make plan for refinements
- Implement plan

## Services & activities consolidation

To avoid being overstretched or under utilized, we will determine opportunities to consolidate services where appropriate.

### Action steps

- Review existing policies & practices
- Make updates
- Share tools

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The specific outcomes for achieving this strategy include:

**Improved organizational efficiency.** We will have the data, tools, and processes in place to more easily gather and share information across our organization and guide our decisions. This efficiency will allow us to increase access, improve our services, and respond to change in a more timely manner.

**Greater community-driven actions.** We will be intentional about gathering valuable input from our clients, residents, and community. This dialogue will generate ongoing opportunities to collect and use ideas, strategies, and feedback to inform our decision-making and improve our services.



STRATEGY 3

# Expand our revenue sources.

Added revenue streams will support the mission-driven work we're here, and eager, to do.



## Leadership

We will sustainably fund an employee or consultant with development expertise and add fundraising support within our board or committee structures.

### Action steps

- Solicit & add new board member
- Hire a development staff person

## New revenue sources from development

Through goal setting and thoughtful planning, we will cultivate new revenue sources.

### Action steps

- Create plan
- Establish fundraising committee

## New revenue sources from housing

By exploring additional housing and commercial rent opportunities, we will identify income sources that align with our mission.

### Action steps

- Explore new opportunities
- Create a real estate project development plan

## Fundraisers & donors

Acting with intent, we will enhance our relationships with donors and funders and maximize the giving opportunities.

### Action steps

- Establish goals
- Improve tools & tech
- Cultivate new donors

## Events

Events provide us with access and occasions to foster new relationships and grow our network of advocates, donors, and strategic partners.

### Action steps

- Hire consultant
- Plan 55th anniversary events
- Implement anniversary events
- Increase visibility via ongoing events & activities

## MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The specific outcomes for achieving this strategy include:

**Expanded revenue diversity.** We will have a broader base of funding sources with the tools and tech in place to support ongoing development goals. This will improve our stability as an organization and strengthen the services we provide to the community.



IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

2021

2022

2023

Strengthen our operations												
<b>Technology</b>	Engage IT firm	Assess tech	Create tech plan									
<b>Staff</b>	Review roles	Assess needs	Create restructure plan	Implement staff & BROWNstone transition plans								
<b>Finance &amp; budgeting</b>		Review & set goals		Create framework and metrics			Align resource, track progress					
<b>Policies &amp; procedures</b>						Review existing policies & practices	Make updates	Share tools				
<b>Training</b>						Review practices	Modify process	Implement training				
<b>Brand communications</b>	Hire consultant	Define impact, profiles & positions; create messages & story	Develop visual system	Create templates, update tools		Create marketing comm. plan	Implement plan			Create external affairs committee		Gather feedback
<b>Partnerships</b>										Explore partner opportunities	Analyze policies & impact	Expand partner & advocacy relationships
Narrow our focus												
<b>Trauma-informed approach</b>		Develop principles of practice (POP)			Implement POP							
<b>Outcomes assessment</b>	Hire consultant	Conduct assessment	Define refinements	Build ongoing impact infrastructure				Gather feedback & track impact				
<b>Gap analysis</b>		Hire consultant	Identify gaps									
<b>Services &amp; activities refinement</b>						Make plan for refinements		Implement plan				
<b>Services &amp; activities consolidation</b>						Assess BROWNstone impact	Make plans for consolidation	Implement plan				
Expand our revenue sources												
<b>Leadership</b>	Hire development staff person and add new board member											
<b>Development</b>	Create plan		Establish fundraising committee			Implement timeline						
<b>Housing</b>						Explore new opportunities			Create plan			
<b>Fundraising</b>						Hire staff person	Establish goals and improve tools & tech				Cultivate new donors	
<b>Events</b>	Hire consultant	Plan 55th anniversary events			Implement anniversary events				Increase visibility via ongoing events & activities			

## INVESTMENT & NEXT STEPS

# This plan is just the beginning.

To make this strategy a reality, we need to deliver on the details. Here's how:

### Budget

Our total allocation for accomplishing our 3-year strategic plan is \$1,500,000. We are budgeting this investment as follows:

- **2021: \$450,000**
- **2022: \$755,000**
- **2023: \$297,000**

### Supporting documents

We are creating and will manage the implementation of strategic plan supplements, including:

- **Detailed work plan**
- **Comprehensive budget plans**
- **Information technology plan**
- **Community development plan**
- **Continuous quality improvement plan**
- **Community engagement plan**

## JOIN US

# Be part of our next step.

Ours is a march of allies. Success requires us all to be involved. Whether you're a neighbor, an advocate, community partner, or funder, join us for this next phase of Model Cities.

### Our tent is a big one.

**Join us in our important work. Because when we act together, we help others thrive together.**

### 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 accomplishment.

### Volunteer

We're always looking for passionate people with a variety of skills. Check out our website to see if your talents and passion are needed.

### Advocate

Our voices are louder when we sing together. We celebrate advocates willing to articulate our value to community groups, civic organizations, private, foundational, and corporate funders, and the Legislature.

### Join & Share

Inspired by what you've read and heard? Join our social networks and help share our story. Attend one of our events. Make a referral. However you want to show up, we welcome you.

To find out more about how you can help, contact us at:

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