Introduction

The last twelve months have been transformational for the West Side Catholic Center. In 2017, after an intensive internal and external audit and assessment process, we became fully certified by CARF International, an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services. In September 2017, we said goodbye (and thank you) to Anita Cook, who served WSCC and its clients so well for six years as Executive Director, and welcomed her successor, John Litten, who has already demonstrated the same passion for our clients that Anita had. In March 2018, we completed the purchase of a two-story building on Lorain Avenue adjacent to our Zacchaeus building, giving us additional space on our campus to expand the various programming and services we provide to our clients. And on June 22, 2018, we cut the ribbon on our newly-expanded and renovated Resource Center, the culmination of over three years of planning and a $2 million capital campaign.

All this exciting change would be for naught, however, if we did not simultaneously step back from the flurry of activity, ensure that everything we are doing is fully aligned with the Center’s mission and our clients’ interests, and then thoughtfully and purposefully map a concrete path forward into the future. Cognizant of this, at the beginning of 2018, WSCC embarked upon a strategic planning process to ensure that we are fulfilling the goals of our last plan (developed in 2012), and to examine our strategic priorities in light of changing economic times, the evolution of our programs, and the opportunities presented by the expansion of our physical campus.

During the process, we reaffirmed our organizational values and the mission statement that was developed and adopted during the last strategic planning process: **Grounded in faith, hope, love and respect for those we serve, the West Side Catholic Center assists all who come in need of food, clothing, shelter, advocacy and a path to self-sufficiency.**

Consistent with this mission, our goal every day at the Center is to meet our clients where they are. Each client is different and has different needs that can change on a daily basis. For some clients, meeting them where they are means satisfying their immediate needs that day - a meal, temporary shelter, a warm sweatshirt or, as our founder Sister Kathleen Kilbane once observed, a place to just “be.” For other clients, meeting them where they are means guiding and assisting them as they travel on their own personal path to self-sufficiency, by providing case management and family services, access to housing, adult education, financial literacy training or employment counseling.

Because of the diverse needs of our clients and the diverse range of our programs and services, our planning process focused on confirming that our structure and delivery of these services are designed to serve our clients efficiently, in a manner fully aligned with our mission and values, and with an eye towards the ability to deliver these services for as far into the future as they are needed.

The WSCC staff and Board of Directors worked closely together throughout this process, and were deeply engaged. By no means, however, did we do this alone. A plan for the future that centered solely on the vision of the WSCC staff and Board risked missing out on the creative insights of the broader community, so we sought input from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. We learned so much about ourselves and our community – areas where we perform well, and areas where we need to improve – from our discussions with our clients, volunteers, employees, donors and funders, and the other key stakeholders in our community who are responsible for and so invested in our success. For those insights, we express deep appreciation to those who took their time to help us plot our future.

This plan is merely the first step. Our next task is to take this roadmap and develop an action plan of concrete steps that the Board and WSCC staff will implement collaboratively over the next several years. We intend to discuss and measure our progress regularly at Board and staff meetings to ensure that we continue to stay true to our mission.

We hope you share the excitement of our Board and staff as we rise to the challenge of implementing this vision. From the first day of the Center’s founding in 1977, we have been focused on meeting the needs of whoever walks through our doors, on any given day, in need of assistance. Our strategic plan is designed to make sure that we are positioned to continue to do so as long as there are people who need our help.

With deep appreciation,

Christopher Koehler
Chair, Board of Directors

John Litten
Executive Director
Mission
Grounded in faith, hope, love and respect for those we serve, the West Side Catholic Center assists all who come in need of food, clothing, shelter, advocacy, and a path to self-sufficiency.

Values
Respect: We believe in the dignity of all people, value the worth and potential of each person we serve, and strive to meet our clients where they are.

Integrity: We maintain the highest ethical standards and are guided by trust, candor, and honesty in all of our relationships.

Compassion: We respond to the needs of others, providing safe and caring hospitality for those we serve.

Collaboration: We work as a team to provide services to those we serve, cooperating with each other and enhancing our mission through strategic partnerships.

Inclusiveness: We appreciate and understand the rich culture and diversity of all those we serve.

Excellence: We deliver outstanding programs and services with an unwavering commitment to quality, and we constantly seek opportunities to improve.
After intensive self-examination in which we solicited input from a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, common themes emerged that drove us towards the following goals:

Ensuring that we continue to provide high quality programs and services, and continually measure and evaluate our performance.

Ensuring that we live our organization’s values and maintain our culture in every aspect of the way our board, staff and volunteers interact with our clients and one another.

Ensuring that we continue to develop the funding sources necessary to maintain a firm financial foundation well into the future.

Ensuring that we collaborate with other agencies and take advantage of partnership opportunities so that we are using the community’s finite resources in the way that best meets our clients’ needs.
The West Side Catholic Center was very pleased to partner with Strategy Design Partner (SDP) as its consultant to lead us through this intensive process of investigation, discernment and formation of our strategic plan. The process began early in 2018, when we developed a Steering Committee, chaired by Chris Koehler, Chair of the Center’s Board of Directors, and comprised of five staff members and seven board members representing all facets of the organization, including programming, financing, marketing and advancement, and governance.

The Steering Committee met regularly over a period of six months and, led by SDP, developed the process we would follow, determined whose external and internal input and insight would be solicited, analyzed the results of surveys and interviews, led discussions of the Board of Directors, and drafted the plan. The Steering Committee believed it was important to solicit not only internal feedback regarding WSCC, but to obtain external feedback from community stakeholders, even those with whom we do not directly work.

During the process, we engaged governmental and neighborhood leaders, representatives of foundations that provide funding to the Center (and even those that do not), leaders of other social service agencies and other community representatives. Externally, we also sought feedback through anonymous surveys, which generated over 200 responses. These surveys provided opinions on an array of topics related specifically to the services of the Center and generally to the needs of the community that we serve. Internally, the staff, volunteers, clients and Board of Directors were all engaged in the planning process. SDP solicited input of staff and volunteers through multiple focus groups and interviews, through meetings and through their participation in anonymous surveys.

The Steering Committee also led a retreat in May 2018, at which the full Board of Directors undertook a very self-critical analysis of what WSCC does well and, as importantly, where we can improve, innovate, and lead. At that retreat, the Board, together with key staff members, cycled through a series of small group discussion sessions at which each Board Member could weigh in on what the future priorities of WSCC should be, and what we need to do to achieve those goals. The analysis in which the Steering Committee and Board engaged was based largely on the results of internal and external environmental scans, one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, employee focus groups, conversations with our clients and the broadly circulated surveys. The retreat culminated in a full-group discussion in which the Board identified the organization’s goals for the next four years.

**ULTIMATELY, AFTER THE RETREAT AND FURTHER MEETINGS TO DISCUSS DRAFTS OF THE PLAN, THE STEERING COMMITTEE PRESENTED A DRAFT PLAN TO THE BOARD. THE BOARD DISCUSSED THE DRAFT IN DEPTH AT ITS JULY 2018 MEETING, AND VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO IMPROVE AND IMPLEMENT THE PLAN.**

Because of the wide net that was cast to obtain feedback regarding the Center’s current delivery of services and its path for the future, we are confident that the plan reflects the needs of the community we serve and the realities of the world in which we live. Though mindful of our strengths as an organization, we also were very cognizant of the areas in which we need to improve and the concrete measurable steps we must take to ensure that we adapt to fit the current economic climate facing our clients and the social service agencies who serve them.
Programs, Services, and Facilities Strategies

Perform Ongoing Program Evaluation & Adjustments

• Gather and utilize information and data in client tracking software to inform programs/services with help from academic community

• Set measurable, annual (at least), and accountable goals that are program specific and regularly reported out on to internal and external audiences

• Empower and engage Program Committee to review program metrics with staff leadership

Analyze and Implement Highest and Best Use of Facilities and Campus

• Form ad hoc board / staff task force to assess quality and use of space and new / expanded facilities in depth

• Explore options for new space: veterans housing; social enterprise; market rate; storage; expanded programming; etc.

• Address feasibility and funding and other factors aligned with highest mission impact

Improve Communications and Awareness of Our Work and Mission

• Develop and implement internal and external communications plans that reach and engage all stakeholders

• Ensure regular cross-departmental communications to break through silos

• Consistently address and clarify misperceptions regarding mission, affiliation, client base, support, programs, etc.
Structure and Culture Strategies

Clearly Define and Establish the WSCC Culture with Board, Staff, Volunteers, and Clients

- Review, redefine, and consistently communicate and demand an embrace of organizational values
- Incorporate culture into annual performance reviews of both board and staff
- Ensure consistent engagement and appreciation of volunteers
- Continuously engage staff in feedback to measure attitudes and satisfaction

Align Staff Structure and Approach to Ensure Program Delivery and Professionalism

- Refresh organizational chart to align staff with program evolution, admin. needs, and overall organizational growth over time
- Review and update job descriptions to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expected outcomes
- Perform compensation and benchmarking analysis in the market and align salaries
- Review, update, and implement staff recognition plan

Build the Board and Leadership

- Review committee structure and update as needed to address key issues (e.g. culture, volunteers, communications, HR, etc.)
- Review and update as needed core governance functions: e.g. bylaws, board recruiting, onboarding, evaluation, personnel
- Focus on board diversity on multiple levels
- Update succession plan and annual evaluation standards (Staff and Board) to ensure depth in leadership
**Funding and Support Strategies**

**Diversify Revenue and Seek New Sources of Support**
- Expand the endowment to decrease reliance on outside support and vagaries of the funding cycle
- Explore new revenue streams and determine feasibility
- Build and leverage Parish / Schools / Interfaith / Community (Ohio City) relationships to drive new support
- Cultivate the next generation of volunteers to ensure fiscal sustainability and maintain spirit of charity

**Align Funding with Mission and Values**
- Assess effect of funding program requirements
- Determine future of funds based on impact on mission / values and potential to work better with funder(s)

**Engage the Board and Clarify Expectations**
- Clarify expectations for engagement, support, and accountability
- Define future role of the advisory board and how to engage members in support
Partnerships and Collaboration Strategies

Be Open to Opportunities that Advance the Mission
• Clarify programmatic / mission-centric benefits and priorities
• Explore a range of partners and models
• Empower staff to cultivate programmatic partnerships

Form a Task Force to Explore Feasibility and Impact of Major Partnerships
• Define geography, identify opportunities
• Clarify and communicate deal-breakers
• Perform thorough due diligence
Steering Committee Members

Timothy Atkinson  
Board Member, Chair of Programming Committee

Michael Bernot  
Director of Advancement

Korby Collins  
Board Member, Chair of Finance Committee

Rick Gucwa  
Director of Finance

Mary Kapferer  
Board Member, Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors, Finance Committee Member

Judy Kern  
Director of Programming

Christopher Koehler  
Board Member, President of the Board of Directors

Kevin Lenhard  
Board Member, Program Committee Member

John Litten  
Executive Director

Christina Schmitz  
Board Member, Secretary of the Board of Directors, Advancement Committee Member

Julia Sieck  
Board Member, Chair of Governance Committee

Marc Walrod  
Board Member, Chair of Advancement Committee