As I sit here and reflect on the past year, I am filled with a sense of pride and awe.

In the wake of a global pandemic, while businesses were shuttering and nonprofits were struggling to survive, CASS Housing stayed the course and pushed through a very tough year. CASS is built around family, inclusion, togetherness, and being present in the moment; ideas that didn’t align with a global pandemic. In the midst of this turmoil, CASS never wavered and turned inward to deepen relationships, grow connections, and navigate forward.

In 2020, three Core Members were able to move into their forever home and two additional houses broke ground. CASS Gardens started to take root and is now highly anticipated to provide employment opportunities and healthier eating habits to our Core Members and community at large. None of this would have been possible without the dedication of the staff and our intensely loyal foundations, corporations, and individual donors. A heartfelt “Thank You” to all for a year of staying the course, moving us forward, and believing that what CASS is doing is bigger than any one of us!

CASS is on a path of excellence. I’m proud to be part of the community we are forming.

Kevin Chandler
Board Chair
HIGHLIGHTS

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Only a year ago, House 2 was still under construction and we were ramping up community gatherings. Weekly bowling was a highlight for many, small arts and craft groups were meeting, and regular game nights were all happening. And while there was good momentum, we did not have a clear path forward to House 3.

And then we all became all too familiar with terms like coronavirus, social distancing, and saying, “You’re muted!” more times than we could have ever imagined. Everyone, including CASS, was deeply impacted. Thankfully, PPP funds were secured and our Board of Directors led the charge in raising over $20,000 on the Community Foundation’s Giving Tuesday Now challenge. Once things stabilized, we were able to really focus on the rest of the year.

And my goodness, the second half of 2020 was storybook. We are excited to share some of the highlights from 2020. None of this would have been possible without you by our side! CASS is only as strong as the people who are committed to the mission and vision of the organization. I couldn’t imagine a better crew to make it happen.

Building Together,
David Buuck

1. HOUSE #2 COMPLETED AND OPENED IN JUNE 2020

“I was a little worried about moving my things, but it was fun. I was excited about moving in with friends and living next door to everybody. I was happy after I had moved in and everything was there.”

One of the greatest benefits for Melissa was the fact that she could bring her dog along for the ride. In fact, all three Core Members have pets of their own, making House 2 an exciting place where humans and animals live together to make the most of each day.

2. BREAKING GROUND

Funding from The James Foundation, The AEP Foundation, the Regional Development Authority, and Impact Investing from our families allowed us to break ground on Houses 3 & 4 in June.

3. DEMOLITION

In October of 2020, demolition work began on four plots of land to make room for the build of Houses 5 & 6.

4. FUTURE COMMUNITY

We secured 6.5 acres of land for our next community on Homewood Drive, near the intersection of Coldwater and Washington Center. This will create space for future development of 12 new homes.

5. CASS GARDENS

Donors came forward to help us launch our newest initiative: CASS Gardens. This program will start as two hydroponic gardens on our property and be farmed by our staff and Core Members. The produce that we grow will provide food for our healthy eating initiative and be sold locally, with the proceeds being reinvested into the organization to help create sustainable revenue.
This past fall, seven Core Members participated in our first weekly Money Matters program in partnership with 3Rivers Federal Credit Union. This eight-week program focused on setting short and long-term goals, menu math for real-life money management skills, and wants vs. needs. Each Core Member showed growth in this area, with one mother reaching out to tell us that for the first time she could remember, she was able to enjoy shopping with her daughter. Her daughter would usually beg her mother to buy purses for her, but during their most recent shopping trip, her daughter showed her mother a purse she liked and then put it back without the usual demand of purchase.

During our cooking program, we worked with the ladies of House #2 to find healthy recipes that could be made independently in their home. In addition to cooking skills, the ladies worked on stovetop safety, food handling, cleaning, and so much more! The ladies would come up with recipes, and one week the request was for taco salad. After thinking about a short-term goal made in Money Matters, a Core Member requested we make taco salad for our cooking class instead of eating at the restaurant down the road. This would save her $15, her short-term goal. After making the salad, she exclaimed that it was better than the restaurant and something she could make on her own!

“Kristy has dreamed of living on her own since she was a teenager. We have set goals each year for her to work on. She has worked very hard to gain this independence doing laundry, housekeeping, preparing meals and arranging for transportation. As parents, we still have concerns about safe independent living and these are addressed with the CASS independent living model. The steward adds a safety net and the housemates give her the opportunities to interact with friends on a daily basis.”

**MONEY MATTERS**

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CASS Housing saw tremendous growth in the middle of an extremely difficult financial time for our city and our nation. We are very grateful for everyone who gave and continued to walk alongside us and this mission.