

Seven Years of **Impact**

2015-2022



Connected
Communities:
EMMA & BEECHWOOD

Table of Content

| | |
|-----------|---|
| i | List of contents |
| 1 | Letter from the Executive Director |
| 2 | Vision & Mission |
| 3 | 2015: The inception of Connected Communities |
| 4 | 2015 continued |
| 5 | 2016: The year of many "firsts" |
| 6 | 2016 continued |
| 7 | 2017: Educational advances |
| 8 | 2018: Housing wins for the community |
| 9 | 2018 continued |
| 10 | 2019: New beginnings |
| 11 | 2019 continued |
| 12 | 2020: Triumph in the midst of a pandemic |
| 13 | 2020 continued |
| 14 | 2021: Community results |
| 15 | 2022: Great expansion |
| 16 | Financial Review |
| 17 | Ways you can help |

Letter from the Executive Director Dr. LaShunda Leslie-Smith



For seven years, Connected Communities has worked to build more equitable neighborhoods where everyone can provide for their basic human needs and live safe and healthy lives. We are still striving to accomplish this because the road to equity is steep. We recognize that pursuing a more just community is a collective effort, and we would not be where we are today without the many partners who have joined in this effort and the many neighbors who were doing this work long before Connected Communities emerged.

Thank you to our funders, staff, and community partners for supporting our critical efforts to advance our mission to partner with Beechwood and EMMA residents to break the cycle of poverty through antiracist community revitalization and equitable resource coordination. This annual report celebrates Connected Communities' evolution over the past seven years.

Looking to the future and building on the work we have done in the housing, education, and health and wellness pillar, we are now in a position to activate our economic development pillar. Through an eight-parcel acquisition, we will launch the Greenwood Project using neighborhoods as economic ecosystems to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

This project will seed neighborhood-based minority-owned businesses and provide investment opportunities for neighborhood residents who usually would not have the resources to invest and grow their money. The Greenwood Project will focus on removing systemic barriers that hinder BIPOC entrepreneurs' efforts to start and sustain businesses.

Through partnerships with economic and business development experts, our neighborhood-based entrepreneurs will not have to fumble through ideation, financing, and start-up. Our collective partners will provide a menu of readily accessible support services delivered right at our Neighborhood Hub, creating easy access to these services.

The Greenwood Project is radical and innovative. It can change how economists and local governments see and use neighborhoods to address some of the country's most challenging problems related to economic inequality. We are excited about this new project and hope you will continue to partner with us to see it through. There is much work ahead of us, and it will take a village to complete.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "L. Smith".



Vision & Mission

Vision

“

EMMA and Beechwood are thriving neighborhoods with educational excellence, quality affordable housing, community wellness, and increased economic opportunity for all.

”

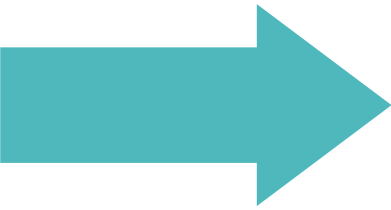
Mission

We partner with Beechwood and EMMA residents to break the cycle of poverty through antiracist community revitalization and equitable resource coordination.

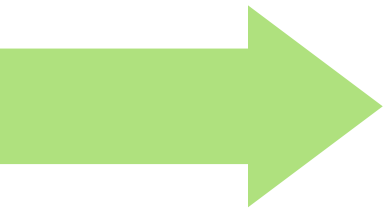
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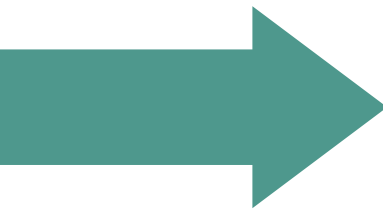
In 2015, community leaders and residents came together to better their community. With their attention on two specific neighborhoods, EMMA and Beechwood, focus groups on housing, education, wellness, and economic development were conducted to understand the neighborhoods' needs better.



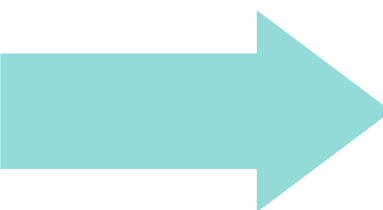
IBM Smarter Cities Challenge guides the decision about the need for change at the neighborhood level.



The Steering committee forms with residents and community partners.



Purpose Built Communities framework explored.

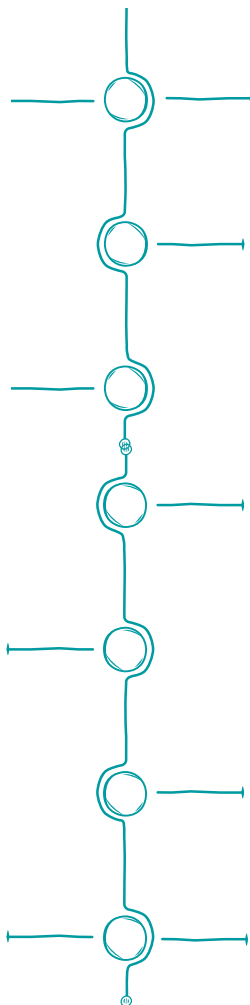


First public meetings with EMMA and Beechwood residents take place and frequent neighborhood walks.

2015 continued...



As data was collected and the needs became apparent, the Purpose Built community framework of holistic neighborhood revitalization was further explored. Soon after, a nonprofit corporation was formed, and Connected Communities was birthed.



Focus groups on housing, education, streets, and community revitalization begin.

The East Main Corridor revitalization studies begin.

Connected Communities, Inc. becomes the community Quarterback in Rochester: a single-purpose non-profit under the leadership of a strong, visionary team capable of bringing diverse entities together to work effectively and collaboratively towards a common goal.

Connected Communities is established at 410 Atlantic Ave. Hillside offers Connected Communities one in-kind office.

The University of Rochester establishes East High EPO.

2016

The founding board of directors is established

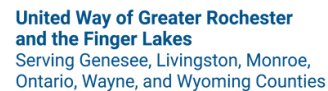
Joe Wesley
Shaun Nelms

Hollis Budd
Kyle Crandall
Alison Bottone

Henry Fitts
Peter Robinson
Leonard Brock

Jeremy Cooney
Kimberly Russell
George Moses

Key funders joined to support the establishment of the enterprise:



The founding Executive Director is hired

Dr. LaShunda Leslie-Smith

Neighborhood Residents, Associations, and Institutions joined to support this effort from the ground up:



2016

The Year of Many "First"

1. AmeriCorps VISTA

First AmeriCorps VISTA starts a year of service (2016-2019).

2. MOU

First MOU draft created and shared with RCSD administrators.

3. Neighborhood Enrollment

Neighborhood enrollment campaign began: East High, school choice door-to-door outreach.

4. Canvassing

Canvassing began with the support of St. John Fisher University capstone students, catapulting us into the type of engagement we do now.





Advocacy with RCSD for School #33 to become a Community School.



CC Hosts AmeriCorps program. Residents matched community to local organizations.



Formal partnership between East EPO, School #33, and RCSD is established. RCSD approved feeder pattern partnership between East and School #33.



The first annual job fair is held at East EPO.

2018



The Citywide Housing Market Study is conducted- According to the study, residential blocks in EMMA and Beechwood exist in weak- to middle-market areas, with the strongest real estate market conditions located in the northeast corner of Beechwood.

Warfield Square opens - 72 units of affordable housing in the EMMA neighborhood.



Transit Supportive Corridors Study- a study of major streets across the City to determine which have the best potential for denser, “transit-supportive development” in Rochester.

Environment and housing are intimately linked. In Beechwood and EMMA, close to 60% of households are housing cost-burdened. Warfield Square was built to address this issue and welcomed new neighbors in 2018 with 72 units of affordable housing in the EMMA neighborhood.

2018



Connected Communities secures a four-year grant totaling \$634,000 from the Konar Foundation to hire a full-time Community School Site Coordinator at School #33 to help implement the Community Schools Framework.

East Main street scores the highest out of the twelve corridors evaluated. Development along East Main increases population and employment densities along the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods.



Parent Ambassador program hires four neighborhood parents with children at East and School #33 to work on parent engagement and support.



MOU with RCSD passes to establish School #33 as a community school with Connected Communities being the lead organization.

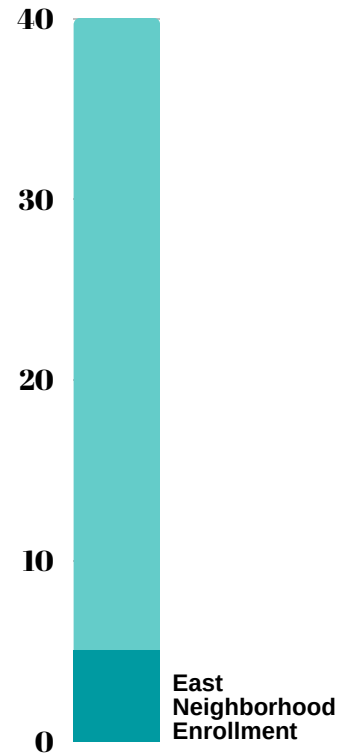


More wins for education! Scan the QR code to learn more about School #33 and it's Community School Model.

2019



Connected Communities hired the School #33 Community School's Site Coordinator. East neighborhood enrollment increases from 5 to 35%.



City Council officially adopted the Rochester 2034 Comprehensive Plan in November 2019

A shared vision and action plan to shape Rochester's growth and development over the next 15 years. It was developed with extensive public input from residents across the city and impacted our work in EMMA and Beechwood.

The Resident Ambassador Program starts!

Connected Communities hires 7 residents to serve as community organizers, gain professional skills, and manage their own projects for community improvement.



2019

Eviction Study

Eviction study with Dr. Stu Jordan's undergraduate class and Resident Ambassadors, which found housing quality, lack of affordability, and aging housing stock contributed significantly to displacement of residents.

Parcel-by-Parcel Analysis

252 vacant lots and structures were assessed through a parcel-by-parcel analysis, allowing us to identify opportunity areas through resident feedback and create targeted investment areas.

JPMorgan Chase Grant

Connected Communities was awarded the JPMorgan Chase PRO Neighborhoods grant to create an equitable neighborhood plan.

New Role Added

The Education Project Manager role was added to strengthen our work in the Education Pillar. As the work grew, the staff grew with it, and more space was needed to accommodate a growing organization.

Connected Communities makes a huge impact

Triumph in the midst of a pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic showed the critical importance of our mission to partner with the Beechwood and EMMA neighborhoods to break the cycle of poverty through antiracist community revitalization and equitable resource coordination. Connected Communities' rapid response to these unprecedented events helped keep our community mission and vision alive.



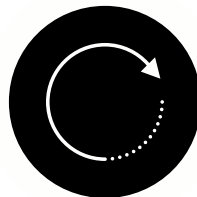
Connected Communities moves to 1337 East Main St. with 9 offices.



The Beechwood and EMMA Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan is unveiled during the virtual town hall.



The Associate Director role is added.



Community School advocacy and support continue through the pandemic. School #33 Comprehensive needs assessment completed.

Triumph in the midst of a pandemic continued...



School #33 Community Schools Implementation Evaluation released, annual neighborhood enrollment campaigns continue.

The Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan is completed and adopted by the Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition.



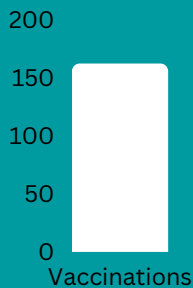
Pop-ups were created in response to the Pandemic.

The Eviction Prevention Pilot Initiative (EPPI) Program begins: a Monroe County program funded by CARES Act dollars that helps families impacted by COVID.



1

Connected Communities brought Covid-19 vaccines to the community.



2

The Engagement Team expands to accommodate the increased amount of engagement Connected Communities is required to do to ensure full implementation of the Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan.

3

The first Fall Extravaganza takes place at The Adventure Playground at the Grand Ave Park Grand Opening.

4

Connected Communities' partnership with 441 Ministries helps finalize the development of their Coffee Roastery. Connected Communities invests \$25k in the neighborhood Coffee Roastery.

5

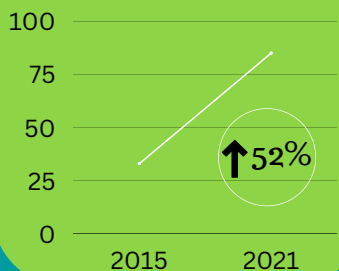
employed Beechwood residents

3

employed Beechwood youth

East High School Stats:

Graduation Rate: 85%



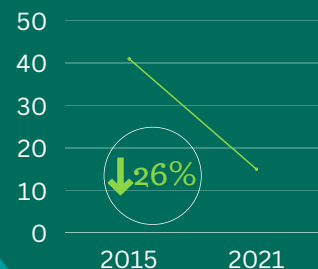
Attendance Rate: 90%



Neighborhood Enrollment: over 30%



Dropout Rate: 15%



2022



The 441 Ministries roastery is complete.



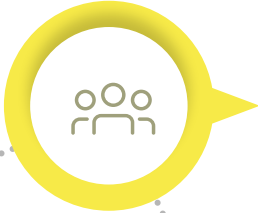
Connected Communities distributes a total of

\$2,332,597.60

to

567

Beechwood & EMMA families from April of 2020 until August 2022 through the Eviction Prevention Pilot Initiative Program.



Neighborhood Impact Survey canvassing begins.



The Neighborhood Hub Director role is added.



The Resident Ambassador third cohort begins.



The Neighborhood Hub launches and the engagement team continues to expand adding a Communications and a Data role.

Financial Review

Connected Communities is fortunate to be supported by mission-aligned funders. In 2021, COVID relief funds drove our revenue higher than usual. The revenue generated in 2022 is reflective and in alignment with activities that are consistent with our mission. We anticipate significant organizational growth in 2023 and are sure that future funding will reflect our growth effort.

Total Support
\$1,459,169

Donations/Grants
\$1,458,708

Total Expenses
\$1,231,209

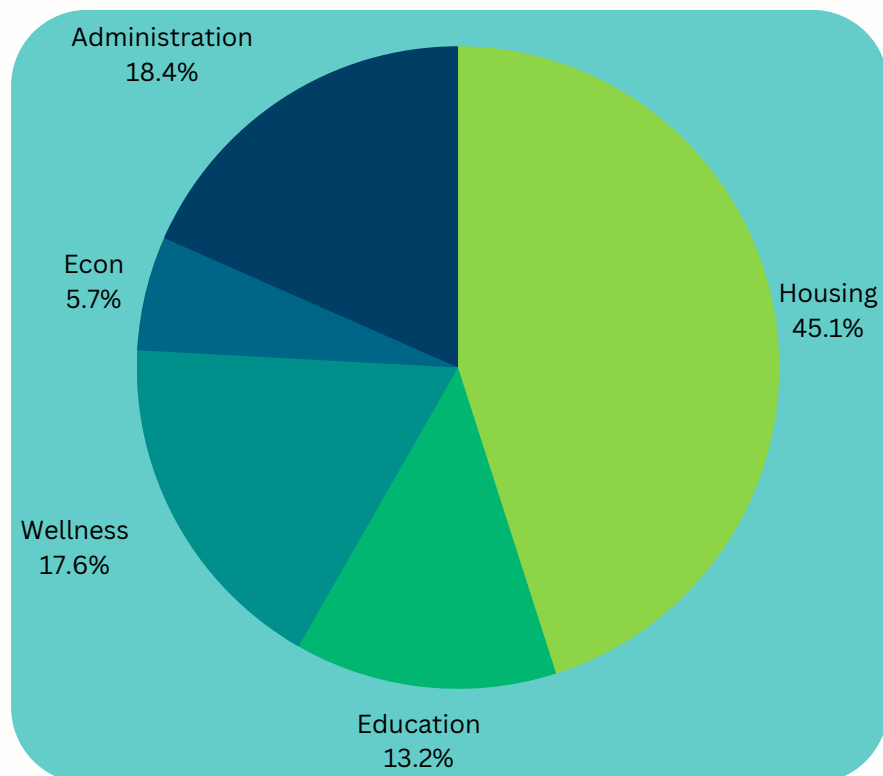
Economic Development
\$70,750

Education
\$162,605

Housing
\$554,811

Wellness
\$216,556

Administration
\$226,487



Ways you can help

Want to join our mailing list?

Contact Alicia Montalvo

Communications and Engagement Project Manager

alicia@connectedcommunitiesroc.org

Interested in serving on a committee?

Contact Dr. LaShunda Leslie-Smith

Executive Director

lashunda@connectedcommunitiesroc.org

Interested in becoming a Resident Ambassador?

Contact Atashia Walker

Neighborhood Hub Director

atashia@connectedcommunitiesroc.org

**If you want to give, you can do so by mailing a check to
Connected Communities or visiting us online.**

Connected Communities, Inc.

1337 East Main Street

Rochester, NY 14609

585-488-4880

www.connectedcommunitiesroc.org/donate

SEVEN YEARS OF IMPACT: 2015-2022

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Scan here to watch the *Connected Communities: 7 Years of Impact* documentary.

