Seven Years of Impact
2015-2022

Connected Communities:
EMMA & BEECHWOOD
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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.
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.
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.
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.
The founding Executive Director is hired

Dr. LaShunda Leslie-Smith

Neighborhood Residents, Associations, and Institutions joined to support this effort from the ground up:
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.
Formal partnership between East EPO, School #33, and RCSD is established. RCSD approved feeder pattern partnership between East and School #33.

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

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

The first annual job fair is held at East EPO.
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.

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.
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.

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.

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

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

More wins for education! Scan the QR code to learn more about School #33 and it's Community School Model.
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.
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.
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.**
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.
Connected Communities' partnership with 441 Ministries helps finalize the development of their Coffee Roastery.

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.

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

Connected Communities brought Covid-19 vaccines to the community.

East High School Stats:

- Graduation Rate: 85%
  - 2015: 80%
  - 2021: 85%

- Attendance Rate: 90%
  - 2015: 87%
  - 2021: 90%

- Neighborhood Enrollment: over 30%
  - 2015: 25%
  - 2021: 30%

- Dropout Rate: 15%
  - 2015: 20%
  - 2021: 15%
The Neighborhood Hub launches and the engagement team continues to expand adding a Communications and a Data role.

The Resident Ambassador third cohort begins.

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.

The Neighborhood Hub Director role is added.

Neighborhood Impact Survey canvassing 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

Pie chart showing:

Housing 45.1%
Wellness 17.6%
Education 13.2%
Econ 5.7%
Administration 18.4%

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.