



NEIGHBORHOOD  
BIRTH CENTER

2022  
IMPACT REPORT



## Table of Contents



*Freestanding birth centers, with their exemplary maternal and infant outcomes, lower costs and high levels of maternal satisfaction, are a model of maternity care that needs to be adopted throughout the country. **Neighborhood Birth Center** will not only serve the Boston community, but become a national model for respectful, community based, integrated care for people from all backgrounds.*

*– Eugene Declercq, PhD  
BU School of Public Health*



- 03 A Letter From Our Executive Director
- 05 Vision
- 05 By the Numbers
- 06 Organizational Milestones
- 07 Activities
- 08 Fundraising Throughout the Year
- 10 The Path to a More Sustainable Model

## A Letter From Our Executive Director



In June, I sat on the porch of a historic property in upstate New York, low-key recruiting a phenomenal California midwife to imagine their future working at Neighborhood Birth Center. With a deep wisdom, and a sincere longing for this birth center to sustain over time, they shared a vision for midwives to have paid restorative time so they can process and recover after a birth. They shared a vision for a teaching program and housing for midwifery students. They said, **“make it a place where the midwives thrive.”**

I love (like really, really adore) midwives, but I am not a midwife. Because of this, I have periodically questioned my role in this work. I am a facilitator, however. And over the course of this project, I've gotten increasingly clear that my role is to get the right people in the room at the right time so the magic can happen. Facilitating the process is my sacred contribution. So, I reconvened our team in a mid-summer retreat to map out our wildest vision and the abundance of financial resources and political will we can leverage. We stopped internalizing the deficits in our business plan as a shortcoming of our leadership, but as a

result of healthcare capitalism. It was time that our liberated care model met a liberated economic model!

This shift also brought us clarity that we need to invest in our capacity to shift the policy landscape to better favor birth centers and community midwives. We added the role of Policy Director, and brought Katherine Rushfirth into a permanent position. After years of operating on a volunteer basis, we now have three staff and a powerhouse board of directors.

We have raised over \$1.4M over the last year of our capital campaign and have a growing number of foundations supporting our operating expenses and community building programming. And after a year of looking at property, we finally found our future home in Nubian Square, Roxbury! As the year comes to a close, we are busy meeting with abutters, city leaders, and architects about our plans. Can you feel the momentum? It's time! Boston will have a birth center!

I recently got pushback about calling Neighborhood Birth Center “Boston’s

first birth center” and was reminded that ancestor midwives and healers who caught babies in their homes arguably ran the first birth centers on this land. So, as I integrate this feedback, I am drawn to the idea that we are integrating lessons from across time and space to build the first-of-its-kind birth center in Boston – a nonprofit, place committed to reproductive justice, where midwives thrive, co-located in the heart of Boston’s Black community with other activists and healers.

We are unapologetic in our commitment to equitably expanding access to community birth and we are honored by the community that is swelling around this project. I hope as you experience this report, you feel the love, energy, and possibility that is buoying this project right now. Thank you for midwifing this vision with us.

In solidarity,

Nashira Baril  
Executive Director, Neighborhood Birth Center





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Addressing the maternal health crisis - and its particular impact on Black, brown, and indigenous women - demands solutions rooted deeply in community. **Neighborhood Birth Center** is just that. It is a model for the future of community-based care that promises to make the experience of pregnancy and birth safer and more supportive for pregnant people and families across Boston. I am grateful for the efforts of all those who have contributed to this transformative center, and share their vision that everyone deserves safe and powerful birth experiences.

– Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (MA-07)

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## Vision

Grounded in equity, racial and social justice Neighborhood Birth Center's mission is to offer comprehensive midwifery care throughout pregnancy, birthing and postpartum (fourth trimester) in communities most impacted by poor maternal and infant outcomes.

Our vision is that birth experiences and outcomes improve for all through the integration of a community birth center in Boston. We believe that people living in and around Boston should have access to a full range of pregnancy care and birthing options. Birth is a sacred process, and when the pregnant person is centered, the experience has the power to transform and heal individuals, families, and communities.

Our work is guided by the belief that the world we want to live in—from a healthy family to a healthy planet—requires the reimagination of healthcare and the equitable redistribution of capital. To birth a just and bright future, and change course on maternal health, birth centers, especially those led by people of color, must be invested in at scale. Neighborhood Birth Center is about people at the margins redesigning healthcare in ways that improve experiences and outcomes for all.

## By the Numbers

### BIRTH CENTER IMPACT

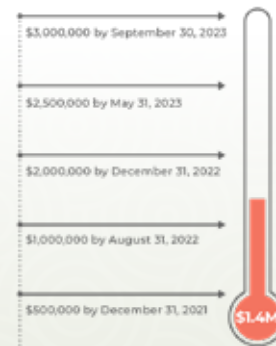
- ▶ Neighborhood Birth Center plans to register 300+ patients in our first year and attend 100 births
- ▶ Birth center care shows\*
  - **40% reduction** in cesarean section rates
  - **26% reduction** in preterm birth rates
  - **21% reduction** in health care costs

### FUTURE UTILIZATION

YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5
▶ 300 pregnant clients	▶ 400 pregnant clients	▶ 450 pregnant clients	▶ 500 pregnant clients	▶ 550 pregnant clients
▶ 50 clinic clients	▶ 75 clinic clients	▶ 110 clinic clients	▶ 160 clinic clients	▶ 200 clinic clients
▶ 100 babies born at birth center	▶ 210 babies born at birth center	▶ 230 babies born at birth center	▶ 250 babies born at birth center	▶ 285 babies born at birth center

### CAPITAL FUND NEEDS

#### CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TIMELINE



Total giving as of October 31, 2022

In the first year of our capital campaign we raised over a million dollars with 87% of the gifts from individual and family donors. Hundreds of our supporters have stepped up and committed to this project, Boston's first birth center. As we look to 2023, the last year of our campaign, we are looking for partners that are ready to invest in this project at scale and open doors to new resources.

- Does your company offer matches to employee giving or give community grants?
- Do you have connections to foundations that fund maternal health, reproductive health, BIPOC leadership, or generally invest in Boston organizations?
- Do you have a network of family, friends, and colleagues who are invested in changing systems of racial inequity and birth justice?

If your answer is yes (or maybe) to any of the questions above, we would love to connect with you. Please contact our campaign manager Alison Yoder at [alison@neighborhoodbirthcenter.org](mailto:alison@neighborhoodbirthcenter.org).

\*Strong Start Study: <https://www.nationalpartnership.org/our-work/resources/health-care/maternity/spotlight-on-success.pdf>



## Organizational Milestones



*The evidence is clear that integrating birth centers into our maternity care system improves maternal and newborn health while also reducing health care costs, but most importantly for the individuals receiving the care is the way that birth center midwives support the birth process and bodily autonomy. Boston has never before had anything like **Neighborhood Birth Center**, a resource for midwifery care and community birth accessible to all.*

*– Emily Anesta,  
Bay State Coalition*



▶ Hired 3 midwifery consultants with expertise in birth center development, health equity advocacy, and community engagement

▶ Attended retreats with building partners and architects from MASS Design to begin designing the space

▶ Our staff co-authored major reports on birth center and health equity.

▶ We testified in front of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health during a hearing on the closure of North Shore Birth Center.

▶ We secured \$100,000 in state funding for Neighborhood Birth Center with support from Rep. Liz Miranda and Rep. Brandy Fluker-Oakley.

▶ The Boston Globe, Chronicle of Philanthropy, and Dorchester Reporter featured us in their articles

▶ Hired 2 summer interns to support fundraising events, social media strategy, and database management

▶ Dr. Aviva Romm and Woke AF featured us in their podcasts

▶ Successfully secured Transfer Agreement with Boston Medical Center

▶ Signed purchase and sale agreement for property in Roxbury

# Activities

## BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS:

### WINTER

Fireside chat series part 1  
Possibility, power, and healing: On navigating and experiencing home birth

Fireside chat series part 2  
Perspective: Partners on the journey to out-of-hospital birth, surprises, and joys

### SPRING

Fireside chat series part 3  
Finding our own skin in the game: White people and collective liberation

Fireside chat series part 4  
Birth, policy, and potential: On what is possible to advance racial justice in birthing

Release of "You Were Welcomed With Love" video which shares how one family and the city of Boston are transformed by the presence of the birth center

Kickoff of #ReimagineBirth campaign and Black Maternal Health Week activities

Designing Motherhood Press Day at MassArt Art Museum

Pottery Night Fundraiser for Neighborhood Birth Center

Reproductive Health Trivia Night: Part 1 at Dorchester Brewing Company

Labor, love, and leadership: Making good on the promise of birth equity; Boston University School of Public Health panel

Community Juneteenth celebrations in Hyde Park and Dorchester

### SUMMER

Midsummer gathering celebrating Massachusetts midwives

Night at MassArt Art Museum with Michelle Millar Fisher of Designing Motherhood

Reproductive Health Trivia Night Part 2 at Trident Booksellers and Cafe

Our first block party!

Reproductive Health Trivia Night Part 3 at Aeronaut Brewing Company

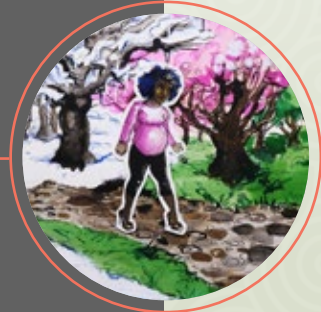
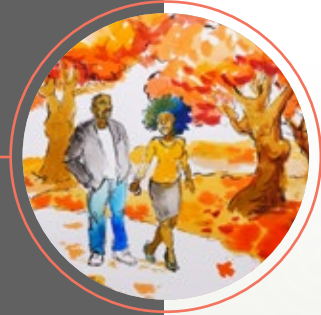
Soul City Yoga community fundraiser

### FALL

New England Maternal Health Summit; US Department of Health and Human Services panel

The intersection between innovation and clinical advancement in the women's health space; LabCentral panel

All My Babies: Reproductive justice for the 21st century; MassArt Art Museum and Designing Motherhood panel





# Fundraising Throughout the Year

## HOW WE RAISED OUR FIRST 1.4 MILLION

In the first year of the capital campaign:

- ▶ Our donors held **6 house parties, 2 baby showers, 3 virtual fundraisers** across the region (and the country—thank you Zoom!)
- ▶ Our supporters created **23 fundraising pages** to spread the word and raise funds from our supporters' networks
- ▶ We held **7 community fundraising events** which brought our community and new supporters together to play trivia, make pottery, and care for our bodies through yoga and pilates

As we raised capital and resources over the last year, we built and centered our whole community. We also celebrated donations of all sizes and created opportunities to engage and appreciate all our supporters.

Together, our efforts introduced Neighborhood Birth Center to **over 900 new donors** since summer 2021. Thank you to all our donors, volunteers, and supporters. Thank you for joining us in this movement to advance birth equity and to build the first birth center of its kind in Boston.

## FOUNDATION SUPPORT

Since 2020, we have formed **11 new foundation partnerships** to support the campaign and our general operations. Thank you to all our foundation partners (new and ongoing) partners for your generous support to our general operations:

- ▶ The Boston Foundation
- ▶ Boston Women's Fund
- ▶ Ms. Foundation for Women
- ▶ New Commonwealth Fund
- ▶ E. M. Lang Foundation
- ▶ Haymarket People's Fund
- ▶ Social Equity Access Fund
- ▶ Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
- ▶ Trefler Foundation
- ▶ Beck Foundation
- ▶ Common Counsel Foundation
- ▶ Birth Center Equity

Total foundation giving since 2020 (general operations): \$1,067,000

Total foundation giving for 2022 (general operations): \$615,000







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*My partner and I have thought a lot in the years since our child's birth about what a privilege it was to experience the kind of prenatal, birth, and postpartum care that we did. We've wondered, if that kind of care were the norm rather than the exception, how it might begin to address persistent, unacceptable inequities in birth outcomes for parents and babies in our city, and how that might heal and transform us all in ways we can't even imagine yet. That wondering is how we came to connect with **Neighborhood Birth Center**, which is answering those questions with incredible vision, inspiration, integrity, and heart.*

– Sutton Kiplinger, Donor

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# The Path to a More Sustainable Model

Neighborhood Birth Center's goal is to be a full scope community birth center that is accessible and responsive to all. Our values are safety, abundance, and equity. We are radically reimagining a new economic model for our community. Across the country, and particularly here in Massachusetts, birth centers are vulnerable to outdated regulations and reimbursement practices that advantage obstetrics over the midwifery model of care. With just one community birth center in MA, and recent birth center closures, it is clear that despite community demand, structural barriers leave the majority of the Commonwealth without access to birth centers.

We have been listening intently to birth center leaders from across the country and are disheartened to see how undervalued midwifery is. In spite of all our best efforts, we could not get our financial model to break even.

- ▶ It seemed that if we wanted to pay the midwives well, we couldn't accept insurance, or at least not Medicaid, for the reimbursement is too low.
- ▶ If we wanted to accept all insurance, we would need to see more clients, and that meant increasing shifts for the midwives.
- ▶ If we honored a livable schedule for midwives, we might need to rely on cash only in order to cover costs.

We realized that no manner of savvy financing or spreadsheet manipulation was going to correct for the ways that colonization and capitalism shape the current healthcare system. With an explicit commitment to safety, equity, and abundance, we decided that we absolutely are not going to look to midwives or clients to shoulder the costs. Instead, we are addressing the policy issues head on, and in the meantime, we are fundraising for the resources to create a place where midwives and community thrive.

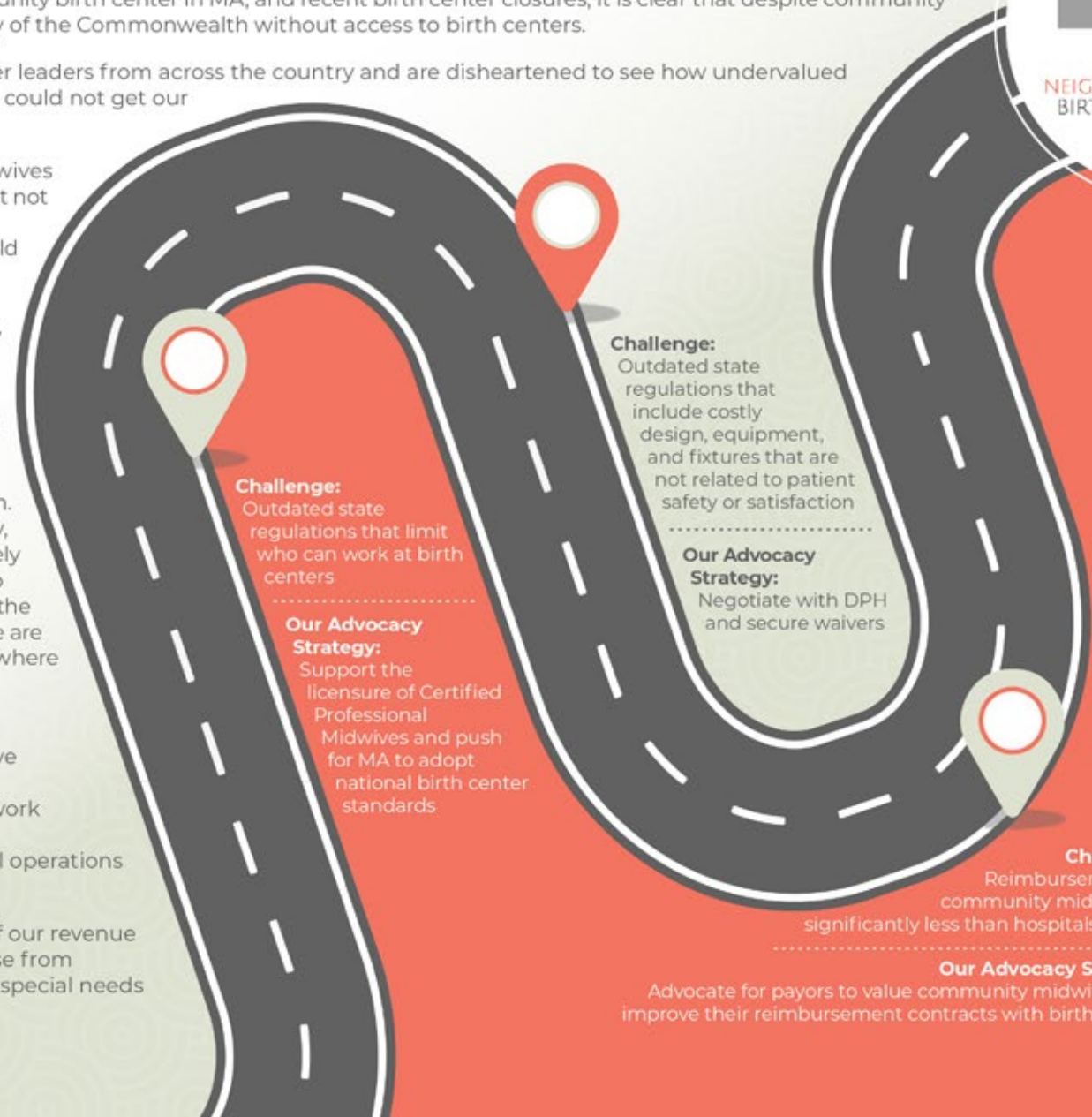
With the support of philanthropy we will:

- ▶ Commit that >50% of our client load will have MassHealth
- ▶ Offer competitive salaries and sustainable work schedules for midwives
- ▶ Build without debt so as to not strap clinical operations with added costs

When we are fully operational, the majority of our revenue will be from insurance payouts. Funds we raise from philanthropy will cover operational costs and special needs not covered by other revenue sources.



NEIGHBORHOOD  
BIRTH CENTER



**Challenge:**  
Outdated state regulations that limit who can work at birth centers

**Our Advocacy Strategy:**  
Support the licensure of Certified Professional Midwives and push for MA to adopt national birth center standards

**Challenge:**  
Outdated state regulations that include costly design, equipment, and fixtures that are not related to patient safety or satisfaction

**Our Advocacy Strategy:**  
Negotiate with DPH and secure waivers

**Challenge:**  
Reimbursement for community midwifery is significantly less than hospitals receive

**Our Advocacy Strategy:**  
Advocate for payors to value community midwifery and improve their reimbursement contracts with birth centers





*In **Neighborhood Birth Center** we can all recognize the holy need that we have to reproductive justice and reproductive sovereignty...the model that they create are one in which our holy needs are met and our children are free and well. And sitting in this paradox of it's not working for any of us. With reparations, the money wants to be like wildflower seeds. The energy of hoarding and fear causes people to hold onto money and the money is like these scared little automatons. Then you release it to fund a project that is about liberation, beauty, and the kind of world that we want to create. And the money gets to do what it actually wants to do, which is to go be wildflower seeds and fund beautiful things.*

*– Emma Thomas, Donor*



As we work on shifting the policy and regulatory landscape so that our birth center and others can open, our capital campaign closes the gap. Our capital campaign goal of \$3 million covers the purchase and renovation of our building. The robust birth center Boston needs would lead to:

- ▶ Better outcomes: fewer cesarean sections, lower rates preterm birth, lower rates of low birthweight, and increased rates of breastfeeding
- ▶ Cost savings to the healthcare system
- ▶ Accessible, culturally-reverent care to prevent experiences of trauma, mistreatment or racism
- ▶ Power shifting of resources to community

Additionally, the model we are creating can be replicated within our state and across the nation. When you join our campaign you are joining a movement to advance birth equity and birth the future.







*This year we took a deep dive into building community trust, forging collaborative relationships and transfer agreements with affiliate hospitals and building community partnerships. Consequently we are certain **Neighborhood Birth Center** will change the pregnancy care landscape in Boston by offering access to a full range of prenatal, birth care options and postpartum services.*

*– Jo-Anna L. Rorie, CNM, PhD*



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**NEIGHBORHOOD**  
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Give Today



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[neighborhoodbirthcenter.org](http://neighborhoodbirthcenter.org)