



BEECHWOOD & EMMA

# COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

JANUARY 2024



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Connected Communities

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# Same Vision Renewed Plan

*As we work together to stabilize housing, increase resident confidence, and improve the image of our neighborhoods, this plan is our guide, and unity is our anchor.*

It's hard to believe that three years have passed since the original Beechwood and EMMA Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan was completed. The Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan (CNP) was launched in 2020 during tremendous upheaval, uncertainty, and collective loss. The pandemic also showed how strong these communities are. By working together, we have accomplished many things, across the pillars of our work: Housing, Community Wellness, Education and Economic Empowerment.



Residents want their community to grow equitably and affordably and with a commitment to preservation so that EMMA and Beechwood remain the home of the residents who live here today. They want a community that is open and welcoming to them and new neighbors of tomorrow.

## Shared Vision

Together, we envision a tight-knit and diverse community, home to neighbors of all ages who know each other, care for each other, and work together to preserve community culture, protect against displacement, and embrace EMMA and Beechwood's full promise and potential.

# CNP Victories

Amidst a global pandemic, we were able to celebrate many accomplishments of the Beechwood and EMMA CNP, together with residents and partners. Among those achievements are:

## Mixed-Income Housing



- When housing became an urgent crisis, we shifted to meet the needs of residents. We were the place residents came for the County-wide Eviction Prevention Pilot Initiative (EPPI). Through this program, we distributed more than \$2M into the community to keep neighborhood resident in their homes.
- Deep engagement with residents and relentless advocacy resulted in the successful rezoning for the new Beechwood Family Apartments scattered site project; this will be a vital development in the mixed-income housing plan for the neighborhood.
- The completion of the Rochester Housing Authority's Federal Street Redevelopment Project is another bright spot in this plan's accomplishments.

## Education



- We established School #33, the neighborhood elementary school as a Community School, hiring the first Community School Site Coordinator and bringing dozens of community partners together to support students and families.
- We co-led annual door-to-door school recruitment campaigns for both schools, resulting in a neighborhood enrollment increase for East EPO of 5% to over 30% in just a few years.

## Community Wellness



- We advocated for the city to fund the East Main Streetscape Project so that residents can enjoy bike lanes and improved walkable streets.
- Completion of the phase one and two environmental site assessments of the former McLaurie Quarry (Goodman Plaza site).
- We partnered with the City of Rochester and Common Ground Health to redesign Grand Avenue Park adding an adventure course. We engaged hundreds of residents and continue to activate this community space through our annual Fall Extravaganza.

## Economic Empowerment



- Connected Communities acquired several community assets that will enable the implementation of The Greenwood Project. This project will create opportunity for individual investing and support entrepreneurs and business owners in the neighborhood.

# The CNP Revision Project

## Guiding Principles:

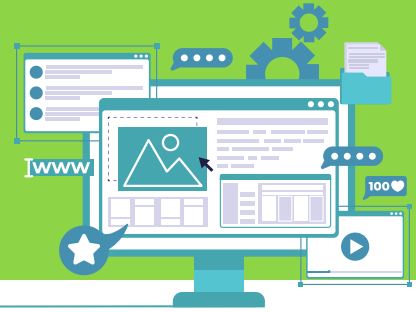
- *“Nothing about us, without us”*. This idea guides our work with the community. We practice two-way and regular communication with residents. Our Resident Ambassador Program grows local leaders and values their expertise as most important in this work.
- We commit to involving young people in our work wherever and whenever possible.
- We practice continuous, clear, and honest communication with residents and partners throughout our work.



## Why Revise The Plan?

Much has changed since 2020. The CNP was always intended to be a living document. After three years of work, we had much to celebrate and more to achieve. At the beginning of 2023, we started the year-long process to engage neighborhood residents and update the Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan. This gave us the chance to check in with residents on what is important to them, highlight the plan's accomplishments, and update the recommendations and strategies that will guide our next few years of work. The CNP 2024 contains 44 updated strategies across four pillars of community revitalization.

# Community Engagement Timeline



## January/February



Connected Communities staff and volunteers of the organization reviewed the pillars of the plan, taking a focused look into what had been accomplished, where new priorities had emerged, and what no longer seemed relevant.

# 1

# 2

## March

We held our first quarter CNP community update session at the Ryan R-Center to share the plan's progress with residents and begin gathering input to learn from community members about new interests and priorities.



# 3

## June

We hosted the second quarter CNP community update at the new Beechwood Neighborhood Hub. This session focused on gathering detailed input from residents on two of the CNP's pillars, Education and Community Wellness.



## June/July

# 5

## September

Our third quarter CNP community update session was held. This input session (and second online survey) focused on resident input on the Housing and Economic Empowerment pillars.



# 4

We launched an online survey to allow residents to share feedback even if they couldn't attend our community sessions.



## November

Connected Communities staff and committees gathered to talk about what was heard through surveys and in-person sessions, identifying common themes across pillars, noting areas of emphasis, and begin drafting updates to the recommendations and strategies.

# 6



# 8

## March 2024

Official unveil of The CNP 2024.

# 7

## December

For the final quarter update, we produced a video sharing the process, preliminary findings from our community input, and where we're heading.



# The CNP Framework

The Beechwood and EMMA CNP is a living document. It provides a community-built road map for investments in housing, education, economic empowerment, and community wellness. It also gives us, a framework of goals and values to be used to evaluate opportunities to respond to community needs as they arise. As we continue to work to revitalize our communities, we know there will be new and exciting ways to implement the plan’s recommendations and adapt and evolve in the spirit of what community members want.



## Pillars:

The four pillars of the CNP are the areas that make up the plan of holistic revitalization for the EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods. The four pillars guide our collective efforts, funding, and resources where they matter most for the people who live here.

## Goals:

Each pillar has high-level goals. The goals were established in the original CNP as a summary of residents’ desires and values that align with the pillar. The CNP pillar goals are essential to fulfilling the shared vision for this community.



## Recommendations:

Each pillar contains three high-level recommendations. These are proposed suggestions our collective should work on together, investing our resources to benefit our neighborhoods. These recommendations respond to challenges and opportunities in our community and are based on input from residents, on-the-ground data collection, and coordination with community partners.

## Strategies:

Strategies are identified actions or projects that are necessary to achieve a recommendation. These strategies will require the help of working groups, partners, and residents, and adequate resources over time. Each strategy is assigned a time frame (ongoing, short-term, middle-term, or long-term).



# Pillars

We follow the proven principles of the Purpose Built Communities Model; a holistic approach to community development. We coordinate resources across four pillars so that residents can live, play, and work here.



## Mixed-Income Housing

Quality housing is essential for the stability of the neighborhood. It helps to ensure that Beechwood and EMMA remain places where new residents have good options and can age in place. All residents should have access to safe and quality housing options; this includes a mix of newly built and rehabbed affordable housing, home improvement opportunities, and housing-related support for both homeowners and renters.



## Cradle-to-Career Education

A quality education is a stepping stone for upward mobility, and every child deserves this opportunity. A neighborhood-based educational pathway creates a strong and life-changing experience, inspiring youth in our community to want to live, play, and grow here. A cradle-to-career pipeline starts from early childhood and extends beyond high school, ensuring our youth are fully prepared for college and/or rewarding career opportunities. When authentic educational partnerships exist, and families are engaged, innovative educational and enrichment opportunities flourish.



## Community Wellness

Community Wellness is about individuals being supported in various conditions that they believe are important to their quality of life. When we have community wellness, individuals feel healthy, happy, safe, and proud to be residents of the EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods. This brings people together – residents, service providers, neighborhood leaders, local government, and other human services organizations – to improve community wellness by leveraging resources. Residents deserve access to medical care, nutritious foods, and programs and services that promote wellness and make our neighborhoods a great place for everyone.



## Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty and building wealth in black and brown communities. When we focus on this, residents and business owners are provided the tools and opportunities to control and improve their financial situation. We achieve this through training, resources, and connections that help residents start or grow their businesses, find better jobs, and make informed financial decisions. It also includes supporting businesses in our neighborhoods that align with community goals and ensure the EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods receive the government and private investments we need and deserve.





# Mixed-Income Housing

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## Goals of this pillar

- 1 Work with partners to reactivate vacant lots, rehabilitate vacant homes, and renovate existing homes** to increase housing choice, improve housing quality, and stabilize blocks.
- 2 We must commit to development without displacement.** New development should improve the quality of life of current residents, encouraging them to stay in the community.
- 3 Make EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods where residents can age in place,** remaining an intergenerational community that is safe and welcoming for all ages.
- 4 Provide a balance between growth and preservation.** It is important to hold on to the culture and community that characterize the neighborhoods today while still thinking big and taking bold action.

## Resident priorities

- Using rehab for housing preservation
- New construction for growth
- Advocacy to support tenant rights
- First-time homebuyer support

# Mixed-Income Housing

## Recommendations & Strategies

### Recommendation 1

Reinvest in existing homes to benefit neighborhood homeowners, renters, and local landlords

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Evaluate vacant homes and work with partners to rehab existing structures where feasible.
- 1.2 Offer a local rehab resource program to complement existing City programs.
- 1.3 Engage code enforcement and existing landlords to increase housing quality standards.
- 1.4 Where necessary, work with the City to advocate for the selective demolition of unsafe vacant buildings.

### Recommendation 2

Build new homes, for sale and for rent, that are affordable for people of different incomes

#### Strategies

- 2.1 Work with the City on the disposition of publicly-owned vacant properties in accordance with this plan's land use recommendations.
- 2.2 Foster quality, new, affordable rental apartments.
- 2.3 Involve residents in appropriate and effective community engagement related to new residential construction.

### Recommendation 3

Improve affordability to foster new and sustained homeownership

#### Strategies

- 3.1 Connect residents to available programs, grants, and other financial assistance and housing counseling resources.
- 3.2 Develop ongoing education designed to support homeownership.
- 3.3 Explore innovative approaches to increase community control of land and permanently affordable housing.
- 3.4 Assess housing affordability on an ongoing basis.
- 3.5 Advocate for tax assessment changes that help combat gentrification.



# Cradle-to-Career Education

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## Goals of this pillar

- 1** Every child in Beechwood and EMMA should have the **opportunity to attend a high-quality school in their neighborhood** that provides an excellent education and quality services.
- 2** **Local children, families, and adults should have access to ongoing educational opportunities** and services in a central, welcoming location within the neighborhood.

## Resident priorities

- Early childhood education
- A commitment to the community school model
- Programming for children and youth after school and in the summertime
- Lifelong learning opportunities for all residents

# Cradle-to-Career Education

## Recommendations & Strategies



### Recommendation 1

Support the success of School #33 and East Upper and Lower Schools by fostering robust parent engagement

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Partner with School Leaders to identify opportunities for family engagement and measure engagement on an ongoing basis.
- 1.2 Develop a Parent Advocacy plan to promote family-to-family support and student success.
- 1.3 Develop a communication plan for families that includes school success stories and opportunities for parent leadership.
- 1.4 Serve as a convener of stronger connections between the community and School 33 and East.

### Recommendation 2

Support the success of neighborhood youth in school and beyond

#### Strategies

- 2.1 Increase awareness of and access to paid job opportunities for young people in the neighborhood.
- 2.2 Connect young people with resources for obtaining job training or high school equivalency.
- 2.3 Seek opportunities to expand after-school and summer programming for neighborhood youth.
- 2.4 Ensure access to quality early childhood education so neighborhood kindergartners arrive at school ready to thrive.

### Recommendation 3

Connect neighborhood adults with programs that encourage lifelong learning.

#### Strategies

- 3.1 Develop a community education curriculum driven by resident needs and interests.
- 3.2 Build ongoing partnerships to deliver quality community education at the Neighborhood HUB and other neighborhood spaces.



# Community Wellness

## Goals of this pillar

- 1** Make residents partners in the process of achieving all Community Wellness recommendations.
- 2** Residents should have access to high-quality health services and community facilities at a central location in the neighborhood. Services and programs should respond to resident needs and priorities.
- 3** The larger neighborhood should support safe, healthy, and enjoyable choices for adults and children. Streets, parks, gardens, and other public spaces should be designed and used to encourage safety, health, and wellness.

## Resident priorities

- Neighborhood HUB usage
- Neighborhood safety efforts
- Commercial spaces for community use
- Activation of Grand Avenue Park
- Programming for underutilized spaces and encouraging outdoor activity

# Community Wellness

## Recommendations & Strategies

### Recommendation 1

Increase resident access to healthy food

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Educate residents on growing their own food, taking advantage of existing community gardens, and accessing healthy food options.
- 1.2 Relaunch the greenhouse at the Neighborhood HUB as a space to get experience and education on growing food.
- 1.3 Build strong partnerships with the public market and other food vendors to increase how much residents benefit from the services in our neighborhoods.

### Recommendation 2

Secure partnerships to support community wellness programming in public gathering spaces and at the Neighborhood HUB

#### Strategies

- 2.1 Leverage opportunities for healthy movement at a variety of community spaces.
- 2.2 Create an engagement plan for Grand Avenue Park, promoting it as a quality recreation space.
- 2.3 Reactivate commercial spaces to serve as places that encourage healthy living.
- 2.4 Develop and implement a communication plan for use of the Neighborhood HUB.
- 2.5 Secure Neighborhood HUB partnerships that meet community needs for services.

### Recommendation 3

Support residents to identify and advocate for streetscape improvements that will increase public safety and build community pride.

#### Strategies

- 3.1 Train resident and block ambassadors, and interested residents to identify and advocate for street and safety improvements.
- 3.2 Strengthen relationships with appropriate City departments to support resident priorities and remove barriers related to streetscape improvements and neighborhood safety.
- 3.3 Develop a response to resident feedback on neighborhood safety and implement solutions when appropriate.
- 3.4 Undertake community-led beautification events such as clean-ups, tree planting days, or beautiful front porch or yard competitions.
- 3.5 Integrate public art in neighborhood spaces.

# Economic Empowerment

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## Goals of this pillar

- 1** Community members should have access to local resources that help residents improve their financial health, build wealth, and develop the skills and connections needed to succeed in the workforce.
- 2** The commercial corridors in EMMA and Beechwood should support local entrepreneurs' efforts to start businesses and succeed.
- 3** The community should be home to more and better businesses that both serve local residents and draw in new people.

## Resident priorities

- Shared workspaces
- Partnerships for business success
- Wealth building
- Support for existing community businesses
- Support for emerging entrepreneurs
- Local hiring and opportunities for youth
- East Main Street and North Goodman commercial corridors

# Economic Empowerment

## Recommendations & Strategies



### Recommendation 1

Leverage strong partnerships to offer financial empowerment services for residents in the EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods.

#### Strategies

- 1.1 Connect residents with organizations and institutions that provide financial services.
- 1.2 Connect residents, especially young people, with job opportunities.

### Recommendation 2

Develop partnerships to incubate existing businesses, emerging entrepreneurs, and small nonprofits in the neighborhoods.

#### Strategies

- 2.1 Identify budding and growing businesses or small nonprofits that respond to community needs.
- 2.2 Develop partnerships that can provide financial assistance and business coaching.
- 2.3 Develop an innovative hub with the space and resources to support entrepreneurs and nonprofits.

### Recommendation 3

Direct commercial investment in favor of local businesses and community goals with a special focus on neighborhood corridors.

#### Strategies

- 3.1 Identify and pursue federal, state, and local funding opportunities.
- 3.2 Work with the City to prioritize the business needs of EMMA and Beechwood neighborhoods.
- 3.3 Engage the local business community to encourage businesses to take advantage of funding opportunities.
- 3.4 Deepen partnerships with and between funders, businesses, and law enforcement to create a local ecosystem where commercial development can succeed.



# What's Next?

## More Ahead!

With 44 new strategies across four pillars, the work continues. Connected Communities is committed to partnering with Beechwood and EMMA residents to break the cycle of poverty through anti-racist community development and a constant focus on equity in all we do.

This plan will remain a living document and a guide for investment in these neighborhoods. We will keep the CNP alive by collaborating with residents on the plan's goals, recording our progress, updating the community regularly, and celebrating our success together.

As we begin planning and implementing the strategies of the CNP we acknowledge that the strength of this work can only continue through authentic and ongoing resident engagement.



## Residents Are Centered

At every stage of the development of the CNP, we considered the people who live here: the residents. It is their voice and interests that guided this plan and will guide its implementation. Over the years, we've engaged hundreds of residents, building lasting relationships and partnering with them as the experts on these communities.

We look forward to continuing these efforts "with" not "for" the residents of the Beechwood and EMMA neighborhoods.



### Janielle Crocker, MSOL

*Chief Impact Officer, CNP Revision Project Manager*

We are at our best when the resident's voices are centered, and their vision becomes the reality. I'm thrilled to work with this community to make a lasting change!



# Important Terms

## **Antiracist**

choosing to become actively conscious about the role race and racism play in our daily lives as well as taking action to end racial inequities in our society.

## **Code Enforcement**

A department within the City of Rochester responsible for detecting, preventing, investigating, and enforcing violations of laws regulating public health and safety, and business/residential activity.

## **Commercial spaces**

Physical Buildings (like the Neighborhood Hub or Market) as different from a residential home.

## **Community Control of Land**

A structure or non-profit organization such as a Community Land Trust that owns land on behalf of a community.

## **Convener**

An individual or group responsible for bringing people together to address an issue, problem, or opportunity.

## **Disposition**

The transfer of property or money.

## **Ecosystem**

A community or group of living organisms that live in and interact with each other in a specific environment.

## **Financial empowerment**

The ability and confidence of individuals and communities to make positive financial decisions that promote their long-term financial stability and well-being.

## **Gentrification**

A process of urban development in which a city neighborhood develops rapidly over a short time, changing from low to high value. A neighborhood's residents are often displaced by rising rents and living costs brought about by gentrification.

# Important Terms

**Greenhouse**

A usually permanent climate-controlled structure enclosed (as by glass or multiple layers of plastic) and used year-round for cultivating or protecting tender plants.

**Incubate**

To cause or aid the development of.

**Neighborhood Corridors**

A passage of business buildings along a street; a strip of joining buildings.

**Rehab**

A thing, especially a building, that has been rehabilitated or restored.

**Robust**

Strong and healthy.

**Streetscape**

The overall look and feel of a street, including everything you see when walking or driving along it. This includes sidewalks, streetlights, crosswalks, trees, public art, and more. We envision a streetscape that promotes a sense of neighborhood belonging, safety, and connection.

# Acknowledgements

This **Beechwood and EMMA Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan**, also known as **CNP 2024** was made possible by:

- The interest and involvement of hundreds of neighborhood residents who dedicated their time, talents, and ideas to help shape the plan

- The leadership and efforts of **Connected Communities Staff:**

**Dr. LaShunda Leslie-Smith**, *Executive Director*

**Janielle Crocker**, *Chief Impact Officer- Project Manager for the CNP Revision Project*

**Alicia Montalvo**, *Communications & Engagement Project Manager- Assistant Project Manager for the CNP Revision Project*

- The ESL Federal Credit Union who made the partnership with Causwave possible, and the partnership, consultancy, and dedicated efforts of **Causewave Community Partners:**

**Todd Butler**, *President & CEO Causewave Community Partners- Consulted with Connected Communities for a year to ensure the success of the CNP Revision Project*

**Sarah Studwell**, *Sr. Program Manager Causewave Community Partners- Consulted with Connected Communities for a year to ensure the success of the CNP Revision Project*

- The thought partnership and collaboration of the remaining Connected Communities team, Board, Partners, and Committee Members who encouraged awareness of and participation in the planning process:

**Meghan Callan**

**Sheila Carpenter**

**CC Housing Committee**

**CC Education Committee**

**Solomon Davis**

**Dr. Marilynn Grant**

**Timothy Guillemette**

**Dr. Chantz Myles**

**Jacque Procope-Isaacs**

**Atashia Walker**

**Shane Weigand**

**Tammy Westbrook**

- The ongoing collaboration between a broad group of community stakeholders, neighborhood organizations, and their networks of community champions and volunteers

**Connected Communities**

**EMMA Neighborhood and Business Association**

**Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition**

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**CONNECTED COMMUNITIES THANKS YOU!**  
**COMPREHENSIVE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN 2024**