



2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Since 1936, Central Community House has been serving near-east and near-south Columbus residents in the settlement house tradition with a holistic approach to programs that help families and individuals of all ages achieve and maintain self-sufficiency. The spring of 2021 provided a unique moment for the organization to plan as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic eased and the organization's leadership and financials stabilized. CCH seized this moment and released an RFP to conduct an efficient strategic planning project in a three-month timeline.

The goal of this project was to co-create a comprehensive five-year strategic plan in a way that builds on Central's strengths and supports its aspirations for the future with stated strategic priorities, suggested goals and actions to achieve those priorities over a five-year timeframe. The defined deliverables include a short, high-level plan and accompanying one-page visual plan informed by the CCH community that will be filled in with specific, measurable goals and actions by staff.

THE PROCESS

Consultants Amy Baskes and Joanna Helon developed a three-phase approach from May to August 2021 to achieve Central's project goals. As your planning partner, we engaged CCH's stakeholders in intentional, interactive collaboration, making the process of creating the plan as important as the final product. As a result, your final plan can be used as your shared roadmap for organizational success. It is meant to be a vital tool for tracking progress and communicating your impact and results.

Discovery Phase: We focused on project planning and data collection. A focused group of staff and board members served as the Steering Committee and met regularly throughout the process to help co-create the planning process and to guide the work. We conducted a total of nine interviews with individual board members, funders, program partners and members of the community. We facilitated two focus group sessions with program participants and affiliated staff and a third focus group comprised of staff leaders. We also conducted a staff survey and two board surveys. In addition, we presented at the June staff meeting and engaged the board at their regular meetings in May, June and July. We reviewed Central's documents including financials, strategic and organizational documents, and development materials. A full list of the stakeholders and materials is included in the Appendix.

Dream Phase: We grouped and shaped the ideas gathered in the Discovery Phase in conversations with the Steering Committee and Board. Together, we discussed the organization's mission and shared vision and distilled and refined the ideas generated through the process to help build a framework of strategic priorities for the plan.

Design and Plan Phase: We knit all the pieces together, both qualitative and quantitative, to create a five-year strategic plan that includes four strategic priorities, suggested goals, and actions for these priorities.





FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission and Vision

Finding: As an organization’s mission and vision is foundational to strategic planning, we asked the people we interviewed to reflect on CCH’s work and state the organization’s purpose and potential impact in their own words. They frequently used words such as “community,” “support,” and “empowerment.” This consistent reflection and other insights showed a strong alignment among stakeholders about CCH’s mission and results.

When asked to reflect what they saw as the shared vision, the result of Central’s work, the responses showed less alignment. Among external partners, there was confusion about CCH’s focus and impact. Similarly, the staff comments were varied. The Board responses had the most synergy with two themes about future results emerging from their responses: 1) CCH as a resource for residents on the Near-East side, providing services that improve their lives in the face of a changing neighborhood and 2) CCH as a stronger organization, with stable funding and more staff/programs, one that serves as a model for settlements in Columbus.

Recommendation: Reflected in the Strategic Plan is both a mission and vision statement. These were created together with the Board by splitting the current mission statement into two statements, one that describes CCH’s purpose (the mission) and one that articulates the result of Central’s work, its impact (the vision). Given the questions raised about using your existing language in this way, we recommend you work to further refine these statements, so they accurately reflect the work and impact of the organization. The clarity of purpose and direction that consensus on Mission and Vision offers will set Central up for successful implementation of your strategic plan.

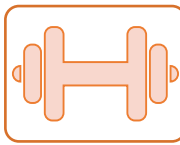
Primary Customer

Finding: Throughout the interviews and focus groups, we heard different answers regarding CCH’s audience. Some of your programs are very place-based, for example your senior program. Some – like Transit Arts or ACE – serve people all over Columbus, by nature of your program partners or because of the pandemic. We also heard different answers about audience as it relates to the changing nature of your neighborhood. Answers included: “Central can bridge the gap between new and old residents.” And “Central’s primary purpose is to serve the neediest neighbors.” Both things – about geography and about income level – can be true as all organizations naturally have a variety of audiences. Clarifying your primary and supporting customers will give Central an important lens to make strategic decisions about your programming and the organization’s future.

Recommendation: Continue the Board conversation to define your primary customer. Although sometimes challenging, these strategic conversations will help the organization best achieve its goals with focused not divided energy.

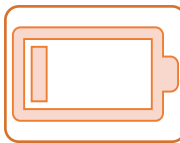
SWOT Findings

In addition to questions about impact and mission and vision, we conducted a basic SWOT Analysis – considering Central’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats – in all interviews and conversations. This situational analysis examined the internal workings of CCH and the world in which the organization operates. It also explored the impact of emerging opportunities and external forces on Central’s work. The following distills the findings reflected in our conversations and interviews; excerpted quotes from the Discovery Phase are shown in the SWOT Summary on the final page of the Appendix.



Strengths

- Central's rich history in the community
- Deep relationships
- Authentic approach



Weaknesses

- Lack of visibility
- Not having enough resources
- Lack of a plan



Opportunities

- Changing neighborhood
- To bring together established and new residents
- Model to settlements



Threats

- Social injustice
- Inconsistent funding sources
- Staff turnover and burnout

These key findings informed the development of the Strategic Priorities, which were created in conversation with the Steering Committee and the Board. These four over-arching Strategic Priorities, together with your Mission and Vision statements, anchor all of Central’s work and serve as the foundation to all that you do, as represented in the following Visual Plan.



Central Community House

Strategic Plan 2021-26

Our Mission

To build community that meets the needs and nourishes the creative aspirations of one another.

Our Strategic Priorities

Advance racial justice and equity

Build a thriving neighborhood

Promote financial well-being

Celebrate creativity

Our Vision

People in our community are empowered to reach their full potential, be self-supporting, and live cooperatively with all others.





2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

The mission of Central Community House is to build community that meets the needs and nourishes the creative aspirations of one another.

VISION

People in our community are empowered to reach their full potential, be self-supporting, and live cooperatively with all others.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Over the next five years, Central will use these four strategic priorities to guide its work as it delivers services and achieves its mission. These priorities were articulated in the Strategic Planning process (May- August 2021) through facilitated conversations with board, staff, colleagues, clients and community members and then refined by a Strategic Planning committee made up of members of the leadership staff and board.

These strategic priorities are organization-wide and encompass all of Central's current and possible future program areas. The measurable and time-bound actions that will support these priorities will be articulated by the Central leadership team in fall 2021 and shared with the Board at that time. The possible goals and actions listed here are not meant to be prescriptive, rather they provide depth and clarity to the concepts included in each of the strategic priorities.

- **ADVANCE RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY**

As a society, we have only begun to acknowledge and address the systemic nature of racism – in housing, health, public safety. For Central to effectively address the needs of all its neighbors, it is essential to talk about racial justice and equity very plainly in all spheres of influence and to take action. Staying silent on race perpetuates traditional systems of power that negatively impact people of color.

Suggested goals and possible supporting activities for this priority include:

- CCH organizational policies promote equity and diversity.
 - Governance audit; policy change; implementation.
 - HR audit; policy change; implementation.
- All staff and board are culturally competent.
 - Define CCH's vision and goals for cultural competence, consider the individual, programmatic, organizational and community levels.
 - Conduct a cultural competency audit.
 - Based on results, develop training for all staff and board members.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness of the training to assess and implement the appropriate next steps in this work on a regular basis.
- All of Central's programs are culturally competent and anti-racist.
 - Implement the recommendations of the audit above.
- Central is a safe space in the neighborhood for conversations on justice and equity.
 - Host listening sessions to learn the needs, concerns and ideas of Central's neighbors.
 - Center community leadership and advocacy on the lived experience of neighbors and clients.



- Host public cultural competency trainings for all neighbors, as appropriate.

- **PROMOTE FINANCIAL WELL-BEING**

Financial wellness is foundational to a family's, an organization's and a community's ability to thrive. It brings stability and reduces stress, allowing for achievement beyond fiscal concerns. Through this work, Central's financial health will bring strength to the families it serves and the neighborhood overall.

Suggested goals and possible supporting activities for this priority include:

- Central is an "employer of choice," selected above other employment options.
 - Assess payroll and HR packages.
 - Scale positions where appropriate to offer living wages and competitive employment packages/ policies.
 - Create a culture where employees feel valued and invested in the success of the mission of Central Community House.
- Central has the adequate resources to accomplish its goals.
 - Diversify and expand revenue with a healthy mix of income sources – individual, corporate, foundations and government.
 - Stay focused on mission and strategic priorities when applying for funding opportunities.
 - Maintain 3-month operating reserve.
- Neighbors' financial needs are met, and individuals have the opportunity to turn their passion into paid work.
 - Stabilization programming
 - Emergency assistance
 - Seniors' home repair and household assistance
 - Support entrepreneurs
 - Help creatives get paid work/ mentors/ internships
- Central supports the financial health of the community.
 - Anti-poverty advocacy
 - Building relationships with city officials and planners to represent the needs/interests of the neighborhood.

- **CELEBRATE CREATIVITY**

Central believes that all people have within themselves the capacity and determination to positively shape their lives. This strengths-based approach focuses on individual gifts and talents, how communities can work together, and embraces creativity and innovation.

Suggested goals and possible supporting activities for this priority include:

- The families CCH serves feel valued based on a strengths-based approach.
 - Assess current internal/external language and make edits to improve messages.
 - Include a focus on storytelling with dignity in annual staff training.
 - Staff evaluations and reviews include measurements related to client feedback.
- The creative aspirations and unique gifts of all individuals CCH serves - from youth to families to seniors - are honored in all programming.
 - Integrate creative arts across all programmatic areas.



- Measure the impact of this programming across the organization to share internally and externally.
 - Central is a role model among settlement houses as it creatively reimagines place-based work in the post-pandemic period.
 - Reflect on lessons learned in the Covid pandemic (What was invented? What has worked?)
 - Assess opportunities and be a catalyst for collaboration with other area Settlements.
 - The community turns to Central as a place to gather, share their talents and learn new things.
 - Continue to build on innovative ideas about earned income through use of CCH space and services.
- **BUILD A THRIVING NEIGHBORHOOD**
- Founded in the settlement house tradition, Central Community House has offered comprehensive social services to its neighbors of all ages on the near-east side of Columbus for nearly 100 years. Today Central is recognized as a place where compassion and positive action bring benefits to all who are willing to come together. As the neighborhood grows and changes, and as its footprint expands throughout central Ohio, Central can build on its rich history and deep relationships by continuing to center the needs of its neighbors in its programming and services.

Suggested goals and possible supporting activities for this priority include:

- CCH programming reflects the specific needs and interests of neighbors.
 - Annually survey neighbors and program participants to determine their priorities, needs and interests.
 - Annually evaluate programming to determine responsiveness.
- In the spirit of Central's "One House" approach, staffing teams are based on strategic principles instead of program channels.
 - Utilize an inter-departmental approach in all programs.
 - Develop coordinated methods for delivering internal and external communications.
 - Consider hiring a community-focused staff person to coordinate neighborhood specific efforts between and among existing program areas, and to represent CCH externally at community meetings.
- Established and new residents of the near-East are connected through new programming and intentional communication.
 - Consider tactics to incorporate new residents in outreach and engagement materials.
 - Host community dinners that intentionally include established and new residents.
 - Facilitate community conversations about the changing neighborhood and other topics of interest to all neighbors.
- Central is known by all as the go-to resource in the neighborhood.
 - Improve visibility of CCH through increased and effective outreach strategies that include a greater social-media presence.
 - Establish and strengthen relationships with community leaders throughout the east side so that they can refer families to CCH and help bring diverse groups of neighbors together for important community conversations.



CONCLUSION

The strategic priorities identified in this plan will guide Central as it makes decision about its programs, resources, and relationships. The strategic priorities recognize the changing community conditions and Central's vision that people in our community are empowered to reach their full potential, be self-supporting, and live cooperatively with all others.

In the Appendix that follows, you will find the one-page visual plan that illustrates the strategic priorities of the plan which can be used in internal and external meetings to help tell the story of your work and impact. You will also find suggestions for successful implementation of the plan and additional Discovery Phase information.

We are grateful to have this opportunity to create this plan with the community of Central Community House. From here, staff will define the goals and actions that support the strategic priorities and develop metrics to measure progress toward achievement.

APPENDIX

1. Suggestions for Implementation
2. Additional Discovery Phase Information
 - a. Steering Committee members
 - b. Interview List
 - c. SWOT Summary

Suggestions for Implementation

The most important way to make strategic plan implementation a success is to make the plan your own and refer to it often. Below are key elements to consider.

- **Commitment from board and staff.** As you take the next steps to implement the strategic plan, affirm the commitment of the board and staff through continued engagement.
 - Share the final plan with all the audiences that contributed to the content of the plan so that they see which final strategic priorities emerged from these conversations and can feel ownership of your next steps.
 - Work together to affirm your shared vision and mission statements so that everyone involved can embrace them and commit them to memory. Your mission and vision can be read at board meetings and staff meetings to ground conversations in the importance of CCH's work.
- **Openness to change.** This project is an invitation to think differently about how Central approaches its work. While we all think we are open to change, it can sometimes be difficult to do things differently. We recommend identifying what new thinking or actions this plan might require - e.g. new approaches to staffing or new programs developed - and name them so all involved can actively engage in a change mindset.
- **All teams connected.** We encourage Central to step away from the traditional silos of service that have been created by programming by age and look at how the organization can serve the whole family. This can lead to partnership among departments that can address the whole community you serve.
- **Clear leadership.** Assign one staff person to oversee the process of creating final goals and objectives with staff. This work must be done as a team, of course, and it also needs a leader who has dedicated time and the clear authority to design and shepherd the implementation process.
- **Spend time to get the goals and actions set.** Engage staff leadership in a process to develop "S.M.A.R.T." goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.
- **Develop metrics.** Set qualitative and quantitative metrics.
- **Align resources to support.** Consider allocation of resources. Human and financial resources are critical to implementation success.
- **Regular review. Monitor.** We recommend a tracking document that is referred to at board meetings and staff meetings. Perhaps even give each person a laminated copy for their office. Keeping these four strategic priorities front and center for all staff, not just leadership, helps bring people together around the common goal of CCH's vision.
- **Celebrate.** The process of creating and implementing a strategic plan takes a lot of work. Take time to celebrate key milestones and the people who made these successes possible!



Additional Discovery Phase Information

Steering Committee members

- Tamar Mott Forrest, Executive Director
- Alex Barkley, Development Director
- Lisa Durham, Board member
- Jerry Valentine, former Board member and current staff member

Interview List

- Anneka Drafton, Board Chair (5/12)
- Lisa Courtice, United Way, current funder (5/25)
- Douglas Argue, COOHIO, new funder (5/28)
- Mark Hatcher and Patricia Mullins, Isabelle Ridgway Foundation, current funder (6/2)
- Gina Ginn, CELC, program partner (6/8)
- Shelbi Harris, community leader (6/7)
- Ebony Fadis, program attendee (6/7)
- Art Krumsee, board member (6/23)
- Marisa Ratajczak, incoming board chair (6/25)

Focus Groups

- Senior Chat (5/24)
- Transit Arts (6/1)
- Staff group (6/10)

Additional Touch Points

- Board meetings 5/19 (introduction + survey) + 6/16 (shared vision) + 7/21 (strategic areas)
- Staff presentation(s) & survey – Introduction at 6/10 staff meeting + staff survey
- Advisory Committee (scheduled at regular intervals)

SWOT Summary Notes

STRENGTHS: HISTORY, RELATIONSHIPS, AUTHENTICITY

Nearly every conversation praised Central's deep history and authentic relationships in the community

- "a trusted and valuable resource in the community"
- "home away from home"
- "a cornerstone of the community"
- "a place where you can come as you are and all are treated the same"
- Staff generally & specifically are often cited – TA, Senior Chat, and Tammy specifically
- Several Board survey comments mentioned your longevity as an asset

WEAKNESSES: LACK OF VISIBILITY

This was expressed in many different ways – unique to specific stakeholder's perspective

- "Not enough people in the community know about their services"
- "We don't share (our work) and people don't notice us."
- "I don't hear a lot about them these days."
- "You either know Central or you don't"
- "I don't see Tammy in many Zoom meetings"
- The Board talked about the challenge of not having a strategic plan to follow – and that lack of clarity can translate to a lack of visibility because you're diluting energy in lots of directions.
- They also talked a lot about staff and resources (not having enough of either)

OPPORTUNITIES: CHANGING NEIGHBORHOOD

The gentrification of the Near-East side came up in pretty much every conversation.

- "Our community is leaving the community." "It's not our neighborhood anymore."
- "Central can be recognized as a place where tolerance and positive action bring benefits to all who are willing to come together."
- The Board sees this as an opportunity for Central to become a leader in Columbus, with new creative partnerships and a role model to other Settlement Houses.

THREATS: SOCIAL INJUSTICE

This area includes both racial injustice and wealth disparities

- "More focus is needed on cultural competency - from the board to work on the ground."
- "Racial unrest and inequality are threats."
- "We have to pay living wages to attract talent."