

# Foundations for a Stronger Future

## A Capital Campaign to Preserve, Expand, and Sustain Deeply Affordable Housing for Families

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: What is the total fundraising goal to complete this project?**

**A:** The total fundraising goal is \$6,600,000. We have three pillars of this campaign:

- \$4,100,000 for renovations at East Metro Place, including a secure front entry, increased program areas and staff offices.
- \$1,000,000 to increase affordable housing, focused on purchasing existing housing in Washington County
- \$1,500,000 for capital reserves, based on capital improvements through 2040 needed for the buildings that Solid Ground owns.

**Q: Who are our donors?**

**A:** An effort like this requires a wide variety of support from all constituencies. We have already received significant funding from several foundations and individual donors. Now we are reaching out to the community and our partners personally, intentionally, and broadly to finish our campaign.

**Will we be expecting donations from individuals in Ramsey and Washington Counties?**

**A:** We have been actively identifying and asking for support from donors in our entire service area. We started our campaign with the Board, and have begun reaching out to our closest supporters and donors. We will continue outreach until we reach our goals.

**What if we don't raise enough money to complete the project?**

**Q:** We have carefully scoped the project to be successful. If an unforeseen issue arises, we will

**A:** have the ability to conduct our construction in phases to match our fundraising benchmarks. Our first efforts are around our renovations at East Metro Place, with construction slated to start in May of 2024.

**Have you asked for money from the State of Minnesota?**

**Q:** We will be pursuing public dollars from the State of Minnesota when we start to renovate the residential units; public dollars are not available for the secure front entry, staff offices, and updated community spaces.



## **PILLAR #1: EAST METRO PLACE (EMP) RENOVATIONS (\$4.1M)**

**Q: Where is EMP and who does it serve?**

**A:** East Metro Place is located in White Bear Lake, very close to Century College.

East Metro Place I provides 20 units of transitional housing to families along with income-based rental assistance and supportive services, including goal-planning, advocacy, basic needs assistance, employment services, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) groups, after-school tutoring, and educational support.

East Metro Place II provides 14 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless families with disabilities (typically mental illness and/or chemical dependency), and/or histories of long-term homelessness.

Solid Ground currently operates prevention assistance and time-limited and permanent supportive housing programs serving 841 children and parents (342 families) annually throughout Ramsey and Washington Counties (both site-based and scattered site).

In 2023 East Metro Place housed a total of 156 individuals in 39 families. 104 (67%) of residents were children, 64 were school-aged children, and 40 were between birth to 5 years old. 83% of the families identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and 17% as White.

**Q: Why do we need renovations at East Metro Place (EMP)?**

**A:** Solid Ground proposes to expand and remodel EMP, a 34-unit supportive housing building it owns in White Bear Lake, to create a safer and more welcoming environment for families emerging from homelessness and the staff that supports the work of Solid Ground throughout Washington and Ramsey Counties.

Solid Ground acquired East Metro Place in 2022; the building is 30+ years old and showing a great deal of wear and tear. We want the building to be welcoming to families and visitors and represent the value of Solid Ground. East Metro Place is the heart of Solid Ground; the organization has grown significantly, and we need a space to accommodate our growing staff.

We also need more thoughtful design of our program spaces — from furniture to fixtures and colors that are trauma informed — as well as space to do our work differently, like the addition of a dedicated Learning Room, where students and tutors can focus on homework help while keeping the Community Room available for other after-school activities for kids who are not in tutoring at that time. The Learning Room will be used for parent and family education and support. The sidewalks and parking lot need repairs/replacement as well.

**Q: How will renovations help the people we house now?**

**A:** Based on other best practices in supportive housing, creating a single, secured building entry with a staffed front desk will improve engagement with residents, discourage unwanted visitors/behavior, and create a safer, more welcoming environment for vulnerable families and their neighbors. Currently, there are four entrances to East Metro Place, two in the front of the building and two on either end. Only the entrance near the Solid Ground office is monitored by staff, and even then, residents must enter the office lobby in order to speak with staff.

In the new front entry concept, all residents, staff, and visitors will enter the building through the new front entrance and each person will be greeted by a Front Desk worker. A new camera and door alarm system will allow staff to monitor other entry points. Having a physical presence at the front desk (which could be staff, volunteers, or contracted security), rather than relying solely on cameras, will help us achieve our goals to build and deepen relationships with residents, which in turn, should lead to better participant outcomes.

**Q: Will residents have to move out during the renovations?**

**A:** No, residents will continue living in their units during the renovation. Special care is being taken to ensure the safety of residents, children, and staff during construction.

**Q: How will this new building help our partner agencies?**

**A:** Investing in our families and our community helps all of us. We will now be able to host more events at our space with the updated staff and community areas. We will be able to increase our community engagement and volunteer opportunities as well as investing in the sustainability of Solid Ground.

**Q: When will it be built?**

**A:** We intend to break ground in May of 2024 and fully occupy by December of 2024.

Phase One (May – Sept) involves a building addition of 1,700 square feet and includes a new single, secured building entry, front desk, and offices/meeting spaces for East Metro Place staff and the property manager. Again, having just one building entry will increase access and visibility of staff and facilitate community building. Several meeting rooms will be accessible from the hallway, allowing residents to meet with others privately (i.e., county workers, therapists). Phase One also involves expanding the parking lot to accommodate an increase in vehicles, as well as installation of a new security camera and door system to enhance safety onsite. All visitors will need to register at the front desk, which will reduce unauthorized entry.

Phase Two of the project (September – December) is focused on expanding and renovating our shared community spaces. This includes the Community Room, which is our biggest common area, the kitchen, a Learning Room for after school-tutoring homework help and



parent education, a larger and more functional donation and storage area that will be accessible from the parking lot, and a Kid's Club that will provide supervision for children while their parents are participating in programming or need respite care.

**Q: Why are we renovating an existing building instead of buying something new?**

**A:** East Metro Place is the heart of Solid Ground. We have provided services to families residing at East Metro Place since the building first opened in 1993. We want to invest in the property and bring it up to the standards that our residents and the community deserve. It's more fiscally and environmentally responsible, too.

**Q: What will the building look like?**

**A:** See pictures on our website!

**Q: Will there be a Kitchen? Garden? Volunteer Re-Pack Room?**

**A:** Based on the needs in our community, trends in our industry, our ability to raise enough funding, and the needs of our agency partners, we are designing the new facility to have all the current features and incorporate those that will help us fulfill our mission most efficiently and effectively.

Yes, there is a kitchen. We will have a garden and lots of opportunities to volunteer there! Our donation area will be renovated and redesigned, with outside access and a curb drop-off for donated items.

**Q: Who is our Architect?**

**A:** BKV Group. Solid Ground was initially introduced to BKV Group in February of 2023 when we were chosen to participate in the Search for Shelter Design Charrette. Search for Shelter helps local and regional affordable housing organizations envision beautiful, innovative design solutions for projects that previously existed only in written form or in the dreams of nonprofit staff.

Each year at Search for Shelter, volunteer architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and students create pro bono solutions for design projects submitted by Minnesota affordable housing and/or homeless nonprofit organizations. BKV was partnered with Solid Ground for the Charrette, and after a competitive process was chosen to implement their design for the EMP renovation.

Solid Ground and BKV Group share a holistic approach to preventing and ending homelessness for families by enriching lives and strengthening communities. Our aligned values establish a goal where every family has a safe and affordable place to call home by seeking ways that design can support, revitalize, and enhance communities and people in need.

BKV Group is a holistic design firm providing a full complement of architecture, interior design, engineering, landscape architecture, and construction administration services.



Their core belief is that regardless of project type, design has a profound impact on the community, and our responsibility as a multidisciplinary firm is to enhance the economic, aesthetic, social, and environmental context of the communities we shape and design.

**Q: Who is the General Contractor?**

**A:** After a highly competitive bid process, Solid Ground chose Greiner Construction for general contractor services. Greiner Construction is a Minneapolis commercial contractor that provides strength from the inside-out—renovations, tenant improvements & new construction.

Greiner is one of the largest minority-owned construction companies in Minnesota. They are dedicated to inclusion and creating opportunities for collaboration and advancement, which is important to Solid Ground and the families we serve. It was vital to us that we chose an excellent contractor that was experienced and committed to working in affordable housing, and with the families and the curious children that would be onsite during the build.

Solid Ground has been working with BKV Group architects and engineers on the design of the 1,700+ square foot building addition and remodel for the past year. Solid Ground also engaged 45 North Group as our Owner’s Representative managing the project. Construction is anticipated to begin in May and be complete in December 2024.

**Q: How will we afford to operate once EMP is renovated?**

**A:** Solid Ground will continue to pursue public and private funding to support our housing and programming, as we have done since 1987. We have diverse and long-term investors in our work, including private foundations, individual donors, businesses, faith communities and public funding. The third pillar of the campaign is also about investing in the sustainability of our housing. Strategically planning and budgeting for future capital expenses — planned and unplanned — is key to our ongoing success.

**Q: When will the campaign start?**

**A:** We started fundraising from foundations in 2022 to cover the building of a secure front entry. Realizing that the renovations to EMP were a great start to a more comprehensive campaign that includes increasing and sustaining affordable housing, we expanded the campaign to include the other pillars. Our first area of priority, however, is the focus on \$4.1 million to renovate EMP. We are now moving into the active phase of the campaign that includes corporate and individual fundraising efforts, which will run from 2024 to 2026.

**Q: When will the campaign end?**

**A:** This is a three-year campaign, focused initially on raising \$4.1 million for the EMP renovations. The second two pillars of the campaign, \$1 million for increasing access to



affordable housing and \$1.5 million for capital reserves, will continue after money is raised for EMP renovations. Every dollar invested in our community matters!

**Q: Who is leading the campaign?**

**A:** Our campaign co-chairs are Carrie Cunnington and Briana Joyner. ***(More about Carrie and Briana here)*** We have a great deal of help from our entire Board of Directors. Internally, the campaign is led by our Executive Director, Diamond Hunter.

Capital Campaign Committee:

- Carrie Cunnington Co-Chair
- Briana Joyner Co-Chair
- Sarah Meek and Eric Swanson
- Brenda and Rich Farrell
- Mark Houge
- Janeen Vogelaar
- Mithra Irani Ramaley



## **PILLAR #2: INCREASING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING (\$1M)**

**Q:** What will Solid Ground do to increase affordable housing?

**A:** Several years ago, Solid Ground formed a Housing Opportunities Committee to address challenges faced by Solid Ground participants due to the increasingly challenging rental market. The purpose of the committee was to explore critical issues and barriers hindering us from fulfilling our mission and to explore/pursue additional housing options, such as partnerships with housing developers, scaling up master leasing, purchasing existing affordable housing and/or building new housing.

Recognizing the differences in populations served and their needs, the committee developed a priority for finding new Permanent Housing, preferably in Washington County, due to the limited supply in that part of our service area and the difficulties we have in finding units for our program participants to rent.

Purchasing an existing apartment building would allow us to both preserve affordable housing for the current tenants as well as access housing for Solid Ground program participants when units turn over. By having ownership of the building, we have more control over tenant selection and can house families that we are unable to serve through external landlord relationships.

Solid Ground has \$700,000 in reserves for a down payment on a building. We need another \$1,000,000 to move on a property that fits the needs of our families and organization. This would allow Solid Ground to lower our monthly mortgage payment and increase income generated by rent while also keeping rents affordable for residents and allowing us to create an operating reserve for the building for repairs and upgrades.

More information on the state of housing in Minnesota and the Twin Cities can be found here:

- [MN State Housing Profile 2023, Minnesota Housing Partnership](#)
- [Out of Reach 2022: Highlights, National Low Income Housing Coalition](#)

**Q:** Why are you purchasing an existing property rather than building a new one?

**A:** New construction is expensive! It costs \$350K+ per unit compared to \$125K. Plus, it takes a long time to secure financing (deferred loans, Low Income Housing Tax Credits), typically 3-5 years per project. And building new housing requires specialized knowledge, contracting with development consultants, and other time-consuming and expensive processes. Also, labor and materials are expensive right now.



### **PILLAR #3: CAPITAL RESERVE FUND (\$1.5M)**

**Q:** Why are we raising money for a reserve fund?

**A:** Solid Ground had a capital needs assessment and determined that we would need to have at least \$1.5 million dollars available over the next 20 years for updates and capital improvements to East Metro Place. The third pillar of the campaign is a capital reserve fund that will allow us to update the buildings and units we own without using general operating dollars or compromising our services to residents.

\*\*Getting more information from our Property Management Company about typical Capital replacement costs for a building our size, and typical remodel costs for units.