



A Business Plan for the



ROTTERDAM
COMMUNITY CENTER



**as adopted on March 20th, 2023.
by the Congregation Council of Messiah Lutheran Church
with subsequent modifications by the Community Center Advisory Board**

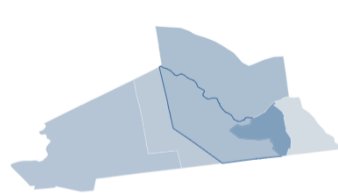
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Executive Summary

Communities across New York State, from tiny villages to large cities, are home to a community center. There is good reason for this, as community centers serve an integral role in the life of the community. They are where the fabric of the community is sewn. They are places people can connect as neighbors, whether it's for learning opportunities, recreational activities, or access to needed services. Community centers serve as anchors of community.

Rotterdam, the 77th largest municipality in New York State with a population of over 30,000 residents (2021 American Community Survey), is one of the largest without a dedicated community center.



Rotterdam town, Schenectady County, New York	
Total Households:	12,040
Poverty (%):	6%
ALICE (%):	23%
Above ALICE Threshold (%):	70%

ALICE rates in Schenectady County.

A review of the demographic and census profile data for the area portrays a picture of a community that would benefit greatly from having such a facility. A great indicator of the need in the Rotterdam/Bellevue area is shown by the United Way's ALICE research. ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained and Employed. ALICE workers often educate our children, keep us healthy, and make our quality of life possible, and while living above the federal poverty rate, do not earn enough to support their own families. ALICE households are often forced to make tough choices, such as deciding between quality childcare or paying the rent, which have long-term consequences not only for ALICE households, but everyone.

According to the recently released 2021 county profile, while only 6% of Rotterdam residents live below the federal poverty rate, an additional 23% of residents live below the ALICE threshold. While these percentages are lower than in the City of Schenectady, they are higher, and in some cases much higher, than surrounding towns. Rotterdam, especially in the Mohonasen School District portion of town, is increasingly a community of people working in the caring professions but still struggling to get by. Rotterdam is also beginning to serve as a "displacement zone" as nearby City of Schenectady neighborhoods gentrify.

As one of our guests Annette recently put it, "I grew up my whole life in Rotterdam, but it's become so hard to make ends meet with inflation and especially the cost of housing. The Community Center's Food Pantry helps me make ends meet since I am on disability."

The Rotterdam Community Center (RCC) has been formed by a group of committed local volunteers who share a vision to not only provide their neighbors with an open table, a place to practice

community, but also act as hub for services to address food insecurity; provide mental health and wellness supports; and offer quality and affordable arts, culture, and self-expression activities. To achieve that goal, RCC is designed to stand independently of any municipal governance. Programming will be supported by revenue from office leases generated in an innovative “provider incubator space,” program grants, activity fees, space rental fees, and donations.



Our wonderful Produce Pantry volunteers.

The operational model relies heavily on mobilizing the caring power of volunteers and community partners to augment staff in advancing important outcomes and developing strategic solutions. To be successful however, we realize it will take more than dedicated volunteers. It will take a network of professionals and community-based organizations collaborating and working together to deliver the comprehensive approach that meets the broad spectrum of needs in the Rotterdam/Bellevue area.

That's why community-based organizations like RCC have become critical components of the social safety net in our region. We have the knowledge, we have the connections and partnerships, and we have the passion needed to provide adequate support services for so many individuals who have been facing great hardship these past few years.

As you read through the business plan, you will see some statistics and references to programs that mostly began operating out of the Rotterdam Community Center in mid 2022, as we placed a priority on immediate service delivery during the COVID19 pandemic over operational matters. Like so much of what we do, this document was created by a dedicated volunteer.

Our Story

The Rotterdam Community Center is currently a program under the 501(c)(3) umbrella of Messiah Lutheran Church, a congregation that has been part of the Rotterdam, New York community for nearly a century.

During that time, as a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Messiah has always looked to serve the ever-changing needs of our neighbors, regardless of their religion or creed. That dedication has been the driving force behind Messiah's internal growth, as well as our greatly expanded community footprint. Bucking the national trend of church decline in mainline Protestant denominations, from 2013 to 2021, Messiah saw an 89% growth in worship attendance and a 360% increase in total revenue.



The groundbreaking on our new food pantry in February 2022.

Why? Because we have cultivated a sense of trust, acceptance, connection, and support among members and the community at large. We are truly known for our work on behalf of diversity, social justice, equity, and inclusion.

We believe it is our mission to serve a diverse population of all ages, races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, relationship statuses, socioeconomic statuses, disabilities, and mental and physical conditions. We commit to the work of anti-racism, in institutions and internally; interpersonal; and structurally; and a Progressive Pride flag is prominently displayed in front of both our Faith Center and the Community Center.

We have been leaders in developing programs and initiatives to improve the quality of life for children, families, our elders, and people in need, by investing our time, talents, and resources in direct engagement programs to help meet the immediate and burgeoning needs of the Rotterdam/Bellevue area with respect to food needs, economic well-being, education, and health.

Then in 2021, in the grips of COVID-19 and amidst a half million-dollar Accessibility Capital Campaign for our Faith Center, our vision to serve the community in a larger role led us to take an even bigger step. In September of 2021, Messiah Lutheran acquired the site of the former Trinity Reformed Church located at 705 Curry Road in Rotterdam from the Schenectady Classis of the Reformed Church in America.



Moving into the completed pantry in May 2022.

We set to work immediately converting the existing church building into a Community Center to support critical components of our local social safety net. We considered how we could make a difference in tried-and-true ways, like our Bread of Life Food Pantry, whose space has doubled, and clients served numbers have increased by around 25%, and our Produce Pantry, which has tripled, now serving close to 130 households a week with fresh produce. We also looked for what kind of bold new changes and ideas we could imagine, what kind of synergies we could create to strengthen direct service provisions to individuals and families, to

build a stronger more accessible social safety network, right here in the Rotterdam community.

COVID-19 and subsequent inflation hit our community hard, resulting in a tremendous increase in the need for food assistance, as well as the need for assistance in accessing all kinds of services from economic well-being to employment and health issues, along with the need for a place to turn to for support. Rotterdam was without such a place, and we could make a difference.

We knew from experience that collaborative approaches increase efficiency and effectiveness in addressing issues such as food insecurity, but to effectively address the spectrum of economic, health, and social issues, we would need a variety of programming and professionals to develop and deliver outcomes.

Undeterred by the roughly \$48,000 projected overhead costs to operate a Community Center in 2022, Messiah had a “soft opening” as a welcoming and inclusive space to increase the services that could be offered to the community and become a central hub to meet the growing needs of Rotterdam, New York.

**We hosted our Grand Opening for the Rotterdam Community Center
on Sunday, September 17th, 2023.**

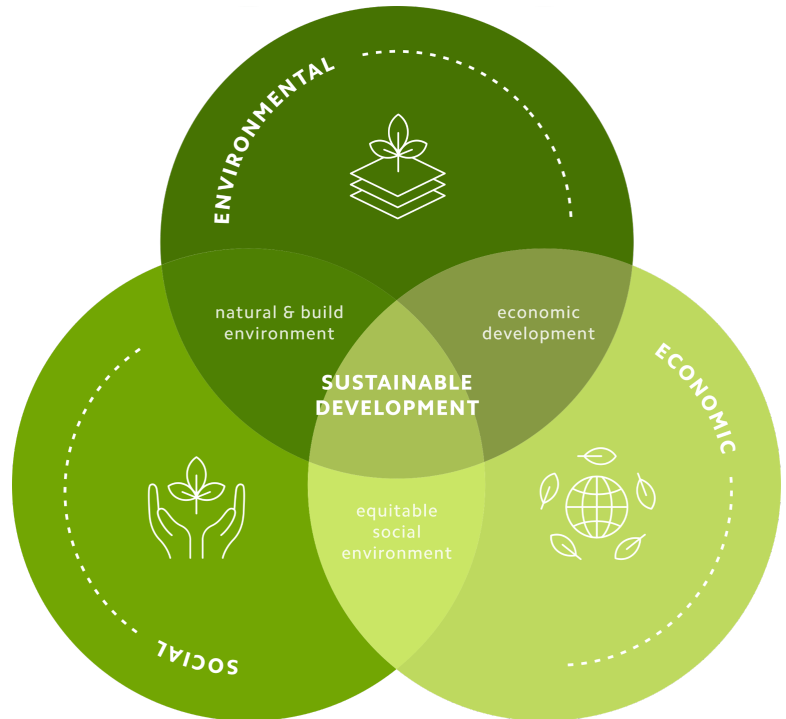
Program and Services

Our **vision** is a Rotterdam, New York that is grounded in human connection and sustainability where everyone can live abundantly, where everyone can learn from our diversity, and where everyone can live free from fear.

To achieve that vision, our **mission** is to be an open table for the people of Rotterdam and the Greater Schenectady area of New York, where neighbors of all backgrounds can gather safely and without judgement to support, learn and grow together.

Our **programs**, the “three legs” of Rotterdam’s open table, all crosscut by a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, are:

- food security
- mental health & wellbeing
- arts, culture & self-expression



The three pillars of sustainability communities.

By mixing these three programs together in one space, we believe RCC can be so much more than the usual community center and truly transform into a neighborhood hub for mutually reinforcing services. Our unique combination of dedicated people, the physical location, situated in a diverse area at the intersection of urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods bordering the City of Schenectady and a building layout which provides abundant and versatile space are the perfect mix both for what we are already doing and what we are planning in the months ahead.

FOOD SECURITY

We are keenly aware of the immediate and burgeoning needs of the area based on an increasing demand for our two food security programs. The *2017 Schenectady County Healthy & Equitable Food Action Plan* identified the Rotterdam/ Bellevue neighborhood as one of only two in the county without a weekly food pantry. We are proud to say RCC has successfully filled that gap in service. Our two different food security programs reach different populations with different needs, improving access to healthy and fresh foods.

The **Bread of Life Food Pantry** is a full service, client choice food pantry that operates at various times of the week. Bread of Life provides nine meals worth of food (three meals for three days) for each member of a guest’s household. Fresh produce, proteins and dairy options are available, as

are culturally relevant foods, all distributed within the federal government’s Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) guidelines.

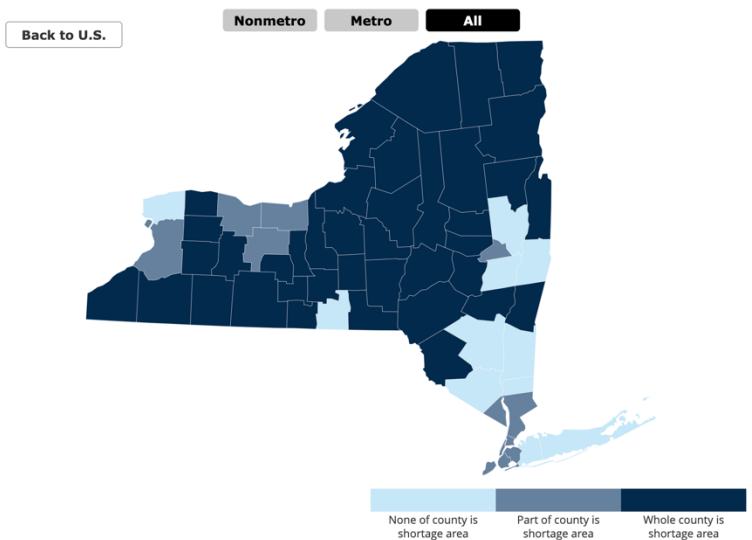
It also packs for deliveries with Food Pantries of the Capital District and began operating an additional pantry day a month for Mohonasen Central School District families in early 2024.

The **Rotterdam Produce Pantry** operates every Friday afternoon on a first come, first served basis, and distributes a supplemental supply of fresh produce to local households for use over the weekend. A unique feature of this program is guests do not need to submit any form of identification.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

In the aftermath of COVID19, it is clear we are navigating a mental health crisis. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 1 in 5 US adults experience mental illness every year and suicide is the second leading cause of death for children aged 10-14. There is a well-documented “ripple effect” related to mental illness. According to NAMI, mental illness and substance use disorders are involved in 1 out of every 8 emergency department visits by a US adult and over 32% of US adults with mental illness also experience a substance use disorder. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, from April 2020 to April 2021 nearly 92,000 people in the U.S. fatally overdosed on drugs – the single highest reported death toll during a 12-month period. At the same time, according to the Health Resources & Services Administration, Schenectady County is the only county in the Capital Region that has a “partial shortage” of mental health professionals. While informal community-based support groups can never replace the work of a licensed mental health professional, we do believe they serve an important role, particularly in an underserved area like Schenectady County.

Health Professional Shortage Areas: Mental Health, by County, 2022 - New York



Mental health professional coverage map from the Health Resources & Services Administration.

RCC hosts several **12 Step Programs** in Rotterdam that provide support to individuals suffering from drug and alcohol addiction, as well as their families. We also organize a **Mindfulness Coaching Class** and an **LGBTQIA Support Group** to facilitate mutual care and information sharing amongst communities with unique care needs. We know physical activity is a major component of mental health & wellbeing, and hence provide steeply discounted space use for two programs: **Zumba with Annie Grzywaczewski** and **Gentle Yoga with Jean Marie Sefcovic, CYT, LMT**. As space is provided at well below market rate, savings can be passed on to class participants, increasing access.

ARTS, CULTURE AND SELF-EXPRESSION

While opportunities to engage in arts, culture, and self-expression activities abound in Schenectady and the Greater Capital Region, there is a lack of programming accessible to everyone right in town. Rotterdam does have a wonderful Senior Center and a Boys and Girls Club, but it is split into two different school districts and outside of its extremely popular Little League program, does not currently have that central “downtown” sort of space that brings everyone together and increases civic pride. Knowing this, a key goal of the 2022 *Rotterdam Comprehensive Plan* is to “Expand opportunities for residents and visitors to experience history, arts and culture.” RCC is uniquely situated near the Little League ballfields, the Boys and Girls Club and is in a Main Street/ Neighborhood Center Overlay District. As stated in the 2022 *Comprehensive Plan*, “The purpose of this overlay district is to promote a mixture of complementary land uses that include housing, retail, offices, commercial services, and civic uses, to create economic and social vitality...” We thus believe that RCC is uniquely positioned to help our town reach its goal of expanding arts and culture access.



Our 2022 Craft Fair drew over six hundred guests to Rotterdam.

In only its first full year of operations, the Community Center has hosted a **Craft Fair** that drew over 600 guests, **Help Portrait Schenectady** that provided over 100 free professional portraits to guests right before the holidays and several smaller concerts and performing arts events. **The Underground Railroad Education Center** recently gave an AMAZING presentation as part of our celebration of Black History Month.

RCC offers a wide variety of weekly and monthly arts and culture programming as well. Monthly **Movie Nights** provide neighbors with access to a wide assortment of films on a large theatre sized screen with theatre quality surround sound in the Trinity Performance Hall, which we have begun converting from the building’s former sanctuary. **Monday Crafters** provides an increasing number of individuals, including many of our pantry guests, with an outlet for self-expression and community building each single week. A monthly **Board Game Night** is a space where especially young adults can have fun and connect with one another.

Our three programs, “three legs” of our open table at the Rotterdam Community Center, 1) food security; 2) mental health & wellness and 3) arts, culture and self-expression are mutually reinforcing and by being located together in one space, are growing into both a prominent hub for support services and a “town center” that creates economic and social vitality.

These three programs, all crosscut by a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, are contributing to our vision of making Rotterdam, New York a more sustainable community. Our initial five months of operations proved this is a POWERFUL mix of programming. From June 2022 through February 2024, our combined programs served 77,729 meals and welcomed 22,224 guests, all supported by 9,544 volunteer hours served!

The Space

Despite great initial success in our three program areas, we know we cannot meet the needs of our neighbors alone. It will take partnership, especially in mental health & wellness programming and we believe we can provide a WONDERFUL space for partnership to happen!



The Recording Studio (Conference Room)

OFFICE SPACE & CONFERENCE ROOMS

The Rotterdam Community Center is blessed with rentable space that will be marketed to startup social service providers, mental health professionals and local artists. Located downstairs beyond our food pantry space and two conference rooms, we have six 11x13 office spaces for lease at below market rate.

In addition to use of the conference rooms, tenants will also be able to reserve the Trinity Performance Hall for presentations, conferences, clinics, educational

programming, and other small gatherings. Ideally, we are looking at the space being used as sort of an “incubator” for local providers to get started in an affordable place and then move on. We believe that the affordable price and outstanding location with its easy access by private or public transportation can be transformative for many small non-profits and others who just need a hand up to get started. We want them to locate here in the Rotterdam/Bellevue area where such services are much needed.

THE TRINITY PERFORMANCE HALL

The former beautiful Trinity sanctuary/worship space has already begun its transformation into the Trinity Performance Hall. The exquisite space has already had its church pews removed to improve useability and a movable theatre equality screen and surround sound system is already installed.

Our goal is to further improve the space with the following:

- An expanded stage
- New stage lighting, electrical, audio and technology upgrades, including a new sound booth.



The Trinity Performance Hall

- Safety improvements
- New modular door system with acoustic seals to connect the performance hall to an adjacent dining/ community room.
- New energy efficient lighting
- Installation of new multi-use floor appropriate for performances, exercise classes, dance, etc.
- Two hundred stackable cushioned chairs and various sized tables for multi-functionality

The proposed renovations and upgrades will create a state-of-the-art space for performances, conferences, art instruction, educational programs, workshops, concerts, movie nights, weddings, banquets, exercise classes and other community events. All opportunities to build a stronger community bond around the Center. We are also confident that the investment in this new multi-purpose, beautiful space in the heart of our local community, will function as an economic driver for the wider neighborhood, given its location along the Curry Road and Broadway corridor.

To date, the space has been used for free community movie nights, a craft fair held in the hall was attended by 600 people, it has hosted free music events, and several youth-oriented events.

FRIENDSHIP HALL & KITCHEN

The Center also has a large common space area, including a full kitchen with dishes and basic appliances provided to host community events and other activities such as fund-raising dinners, card parties, showers, game nights, or bingo. The space is perfect for just about any event. There is even an old-fashioned shuffleboard court on the floor of Friendship Hall.

Being able to offer so much because of the multi-purpose space and following a business model with private providers means that naming additional programs and services at this time to use the space might be premature. However, our commitment is to provide programs & services that will touch the entire community of Rotterdam/Bellevue in line with our vision, mission and three core program areas and improve the quality of life for every resident.



Friendship Hall

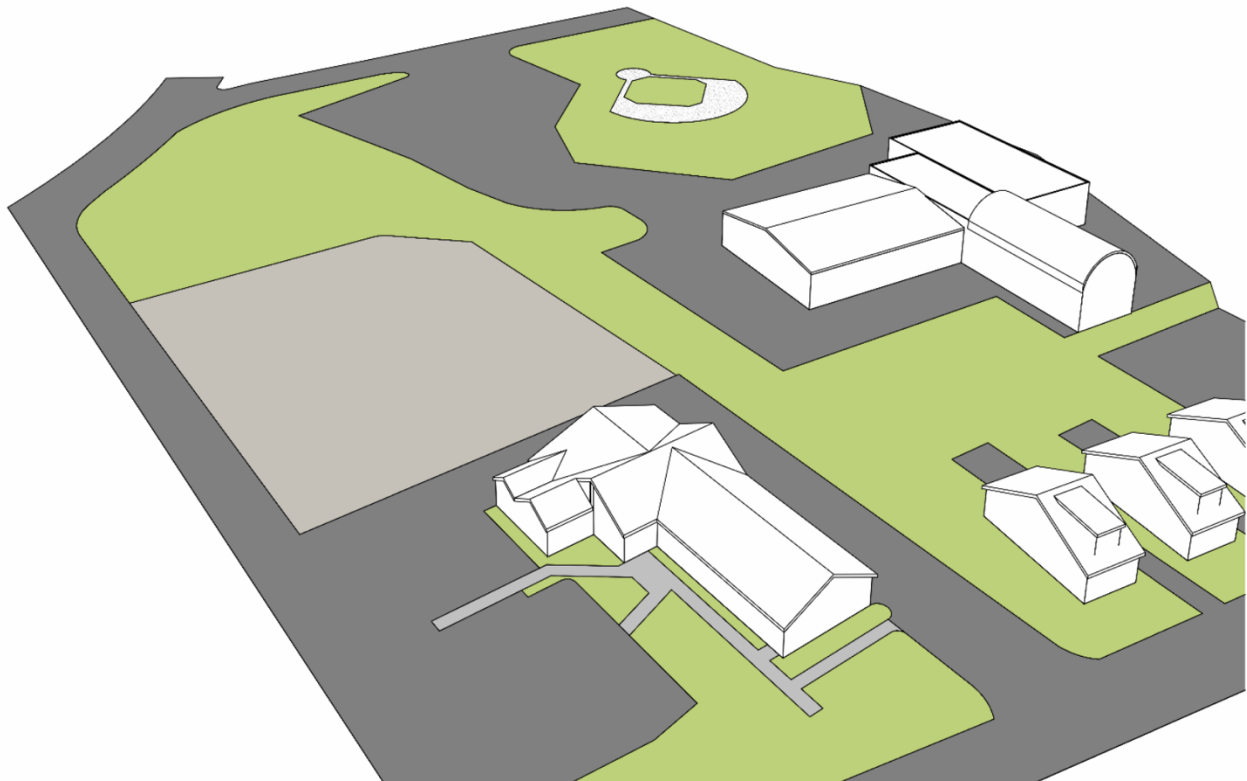


The Community Center from Curry Road.

LOCATION

We are perfectly located along a bus line, are adjacent to Rotterdam's Little League ballfields and the Boys and Girls Club. Town Hall, a public library, a post office, and the busy Five Corners Area which features restaurants, grocery shopping and more are close as well. The Community Center is located at the confluence of urban, suburban, and rural communities and the property is zoned as a Main Street/ Neighborhood Center Overlay District. We have fifty-five parking spaces.

We believe better neighborhoods make better towns. Better towns attract better businesses, and the Rotterdam Community Center wants to be part of that important work. Attracting new service providers will improve the business environment and that comes full circle back to the residents, bringing both economic and quality of life benefits. That is why we are committed to bringing new stakeholders into the community to begin addressing the problems the area and the residents are facing. The Center will also help bring change, not just in Rotterdam/Bellevue but other parts of Schenectady County and the surrounding counties of Montgomery and Schoharie as well.



A three-dimensional rendering of our location.



Birds eye view of the property.

Marketing Plan

Reaching your target audience can be challenging in today's world without a huge budget to create a presence on all available platforms and we don't have that budget yet. What we do have is the ability to create partnerships and collaborations that can help us connect with those in need with the services they need.

We understand upfront that marketing in a service delivery environment, with several program offerings, will present an even greater challenge because it requires more than just a communication or advertising campaign built on fancy images and slick wording. It requires real insight into the relevant nature and quality of the services that will be offered. Residents over many decades have seen the former Trinity space as a church building rather than a community center, which is another challenge to overcome.



Our recent "First Six Months" Community Gala.

The Center's messaging must clearly answer the major core questions that a potential user would have:

- Is the service or program provided useful for people in meeting their basic needs, solving a situational or chronic problem, or making daily life a bit easier or perhaps more fun?
- Can they easily use the service or program? Is it accessible, convenient, affordable, and appropriate for their culture and literacy level?
- Is the service or program desirable or something they would want to engage with? Do people they know talk about it and recommend it to them, and is the service or program valuable for them in their daily life?

Understanding those principles, along with a limited budget, is what has shaped our initial roll-out marketing campaign strategy. The tools we will use moving forward revolve around target market identification and relationship marketing.

TARGET MARKET IDENTIFICATION

Successful marketing requires that you be knowledgeable about the demographics, lifestyle, and geographic location of your audience to successfully offer a product or service. It's called target marketing. Understanding the characteristics of both your audience and their environment better enables you to connect with and influence people. Our early experience with the community has

helped immeasurably in understanding the people, the area, and most importantly, their needs. We are ready to deliver.

RELATIONSHIP MARKETING = EMPATHY



Board members tabling at the 2022 Rotterdam Tree Lighting.

Showing empathy means seeking to understand and appreciate someone's emotions and builds rapport, which is the foundation of a positive approach. Relationship marketing creates long-term and trusting relationships with people and creates the best environment for promoting a service. No matter what is offered, to make a difference you must connect with people in the right way. Based on those principles, our marketing plan has five distinct components that together will be used to reach and motivate the community to become active users and supporters of the Center.

COMPONENT 1: WORD OF MOUTH

The Center has already begun the process needed to achieve success on the street using the oldest and most tried and true method of advertising word-of-mouth. All the early program offerings we have put forth have continued to grow week after week. One true measure of success is the number of clients who have become volunteers. We have a core of people who are very knowledgeable about the Center and its programming, and they will be serving as ambassador's going forward. Other volunteers are encouraged and equipped with a short "elevator pitch" to help them explain and promote programs.

COMPONENT 2: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

It takes a whole "area" to raise a community center. We are currently identifying private organizations, public organizations, governmental entities, charitable foundations, and individual service providers, with whom we can establish partnerships, collaborations, and linkages. Establishing as many relationships as we can with as many diverse organizations as we can from all walks of life will be key to success. We have already begun to leverage partnerships, like the Schenectady Foundation, the Regional Food Bank, and Schenectady Community Ministries (SiCM),



Board members joining the Capital Region Chamber.

and many others, to help lessen food insecurity concerns. The Foundation provided a \$75,000 grant to renovate and expand space for the Center's food pantry to serve more clients. SiCM is hosting the 2023 Phil Grigsby Memorial CROP Walk, a major community event, out of the center. Also, various church organizations have donated to support the Center's operation to date.

COMPONENT 3: SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an extremely important tool in outreach today. 42% of the world's population – a whopping 3.2 billion people – use social media. Just a few brief stats from Facebook highlight that. Facebook has 1.96 billion active daily users under the following age brackets:

- 86% of people ages 18-29 use Facebook.
- 77% of people ages 30-49 use Facebook.
- 51% of people ages 50-65 use Facebook.
- 34% of people that are 65+ years old use Facebook.

A vibrant social media presence is a must. The Community Center currently operates a very active Facebook Page and will launch on Instagram and TikTok soon to reach folks of all backgrounds. We send a monthly digital newsletter to our growing mailing list and will launch a website separate from Messiah Lutheran Church's soon.

The Center's staff and volunteers saw and learned from the positive experience and benefits that Messiah Lutheran experienced from its use of social media during its recent years of growth and will be following a similar format.

COMPONENT 4: EARNED MEDIA

Another important leg of the marketing effort will be the use of earned media which has traditionally been broadcast and new print. Efforts have already been underway to ensure the Center's current programs are listed in local newspapers on a weekly basis. The Community Center has already received extensive news coverage on TV and radio with press conferences regularly organized to highlight major announcements and events.

News releases are also sent out about programs and awards. Higher level events also will seek to generate news coverage on TV and radio. Press conferences will be held



Reverend Longmire speaking with press at the Food Pantry Groundbreaking.

for major announcements and events.

COMPONENT 5: MARKETING MATERIALS

We are fortunate to have wonderful paid and volunteer graphic designers to create a wide variety of attractive marketing material and program guides. Supported by a dedicated group of outreach volunteers, these marketing materials are distributed throughout various locations around Rotterdam and Schenectady to promote the Center. Distribution sites include libraries, the senior center, the Boys & Girls Club, schools, and other venues. As a Community Center that nurtures the arts community, several photographers and videographers have already volunteered to assist in the development of promotional materials beyond our in-house talent. Meredith Coons

of Meri Light Photography, for instance, took the interior shots featured in this business plan. Local prominent realtor Jamie Mazuryk has offered to develop a promotional video as we begin to lease our office spaces and several local photographers have volunteered at Help Portrait Schenectady every year.



We are SO thankful for our local artists!

Operational Plan



Volunteers at a recent clean-up day.

The Rotterdam Community Center has a detailed *Operations Manual* reviewed and signed by all staff, lead volunteers and community partners before beginning programming within the building. The *Operations Manual* covers a wide variety of subject matter from emergency response to storage policies, health and safety policies, abuse prevention policies and more.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

The *Operations Manual* clearly describes the Community Center's commitment to principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and

justice, which crosscuts everything we do. We believe our organizational culture, values, norms, and behaviors must mirror what we are seeking to build and sustain in the community. We must lead by example, viewing and encouraging diversity as a fundamental and abiding strength of nonprofits throughout the Capital Region. The Community Center recognizes that its effectiveness will be enhanced, and its mission well served when the practice of inclusion is reflected at all levels of the organization, whether by leadership, volunteers, or service providers.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Community Center is governed by an Advisory Board consisting of the pastor(s) of Messiah Lutheran Church and up to nine elected individuals including a minimum of three voting members of Messiah Lutheran Church and two community partners. As a program currently operating under the 501(c)(3) umbrella of Messiah Lutheran Church, the Congregation Council works in tandem with the Advisory Board to provide fiduciary oversight.

STAFF

For its first two years of operations, we intend for all staffing positions to be part-time depending on financial support and office lease space being occupied. Full occupancy of our office spaces is project to provide approximately



Our dedicated volunteers at Schenectady Help-Portrait.

70 – 75% of our operating budget, so some positions could move to full-time sooner or hours could be increased as finances allow. Our Advisory Board and dedicated volunteers are EXTREMELY active, but a top priority for the Community Center in its first two years will be to grow its finances to support a full-time Community Center Coordinator and a full-time Executive Director.

Currently, Messiah Lutheran Church's Pastor spends a quarter-time as Executive Director of the Community Center. A Community Center Coordinator works seven hours a week, Messiah's Business Administrator supports Community Center operations five hours a week with a Custodian working six hours a week. Job descriptions are as follows:

Executive Director

- Serve as Community Ambassador.
- Cultivate community donors, grant opportunities and partnerships.



So many of our key volunteers are young people from our community.

Director of Operations

- Oversee the implementation of all policies and procedures of the Community Center.
- Supervise Community Center staff.
- Keep accurate schedules of all programming on Community Center premises.
- Keep accurate contact information including email addresses and phone numbers for leaders of all Messiah Committees, Community Partner Organizations and Outside Groups who use space on Community Center premises.
- Provide oversight of all Community Center programs, events, and services
- Answer all emails, phone calls and social media inquiries associated with the Community Center with support from the Executive Director and the Advisory Board as needed.
- Collaborate with the Community Center Coordinator to support Messiah Committees, Community Partner Organizations, Outside Groups, staff, and volunteers in promoting the Community Center and its programs (print and digital), including maintaining bulletin boards.
- Sort mail, submit expense forms for all invoices received to Messiah's Treasurer and maintain a file of expense form copies for the annual audit.
- Maintain all records for the Community Center in line with Messiah's *Records Retention Policy*.
- Maintain office supplies, ensure printer maintenance, and order custodial supplies as needed.
- Hold daytime office hours at the Community Center and support the work of the Community Center Coordinator in their absence.

Food Pantry Administrative Coordinator

- Schedule clients for the Bread of Life Food Pantry.
- Be onsite to assist volunteers during pantry hours.
- Represent the Bread of Life Food Pantry at relevant meetings.
- Coordinate regular safety inspections and checks of the Bread of Life Food Pantry.

Custodian

- Clean all areas.
- Check and report any maintenance issues.
- Weed gardens and remove outdoor litter.

Non-Paid Staff

While perhaps a small distinction from volunteers, the Center has a committed core of folks with specific skills in areas such as grant writing, graphic design, audio-visual, marketing, and community ambassadors who have been on-board since the beginning and will remain in place.

VOLUNTEERS

The mission of the Community Center relies heavily on volunteers to be the helping hands to serve our community members in need. Our volunteers already include families, seniors, religious organizations, military members, school groups, and many others who wish to help us.

Whether volunteering with a program sponsored by a Messiah Lutheran Church Committee or by a Community Partner Organization, all volunteers must certify they understand and agree to abide by the Community Center's *Operations Manual*. Volunteers at the Community Center may be certified in several ways:

- At regularly scheduled General Volunteer Orientations led by the Community Center Coordinator.
- At program specific Volunteer Orientations led by relevant Messiah Committee or Community Partner Organization Program/ Event Leaders.
- Volunteer groups made up of predominantly youth may be covered by a single adult leader of that group completing the certification form.



Our Zumba participants are SO great about spreading the word about the Community Center!

OPERATING HOURS

The Center will initially be open on an as-needed basis to meet scheduled program needs. This currently takes the form of Monday and Friday afternoons, all weeknights and usually Saturdays. As more programming and services become available the transition to a daily schedule of fixed times for providers and programs will be established. Additional staff hours and will be added at that time, and additional staff positions will be created as needed. After two years, our goal is to be open roughly 9:00am – 9:00pm Monday – Friday, regularly on Saturdays and as needed on Sundays.

Impact & Evaluation Plan

Unlike a financial business plan that tries to create a financial return on investment, we are seeking to create social change and social return on investment. We dream big because we believe the Center will impact untold thousands of lives here in our hometown. We know that what we are offering will change the fabric of the community in positive ways.

QUALITATIVE DATA

We have already begun to see that with several clients becoming volunteers as we gain their trust and confidence. We did it first with our food security programming, and then by offering courses and classes for health and wellness, such as yoga, Zumba, meditation. We provided meeting space to hold community group discussions surrounding difficult issues of social and economic concern. We connected. We gained trust.



Evaluation comes in part from feedback from our wonderful community supporters, most recently Congregation Gates of Heaven.

The seeds have already begun to grow. We are beginning to see community residents at multiple activities, and we are seeing guests become volunteers. In fact, **the line between guests and volunteers continues to blur, which we deeply believe is a VERY good thing!** We are experiencing more and more personal interactions between our volunteers and service providers with residents as well.

One of our volunteers even helped a food pantry client, who used to come on a bicycle, get his driver's license by giving him driving lessons. He told us he can now look for a job.

On an annual basis, we connect with each of our program providers to understand what is working, what can be improved, what has changed and stories of success.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Similar stories continue to emerge, but empirical data is essential as well, which is why beginning in June 2022 we put in place an impact tracker report for all programs to capture statistics and program data. It tracks three key metrics that we believe show the growth and impact of our programs:

- Number of Meals Served
- Number of Guests Welcomed
- Number of Hours Volunteered

Again, current data is showing recurring activities to date continue to grow with each offering.

PROGRAM LEARNING

It's all new but we have learned a lot in our first months of operation. Providing a central hub where people can gather and get basic needs met has given us a much better understanding of what is needed, what is working around us and what is not. We have collected data and tracked the upward progress of our programs and activities using spreadsheets, but it is the voices of thousands of people we have interacted with this past year that really tell the story.



Guest and volunteer Michael Mitchel shares his story of impact at our First Six Months Community Gala.

They are the ones telling us what success looks like: No families without food, no wage earners home suffering from depression, someone to help with finding them a job, someone to just listen to them, or somewhere they can find educational opportunities.

We would love to say success comes when we solve all these critical issues, but success will come when we can provide the services people, they need to address those issues. We will do this one person at a time, as we build a stronger community that can meet the economic challenges it faces.

Programmatically, impact success should be evident after a two-year funding cycle. At that point we will have spun off several new providers who will be active in the community whose work can in turn be documented.

We will also be able to continue measuring our work against the United Way's *ALICE Report*, the Town of Rotterdam's *Comprehensive Plan*, and subsequent editions of the *Schenectady County Healthy & Equitable Food Action Plan* in conversation with our Advisory Board, our volunteers, community leaders, and most importantly, our guests.

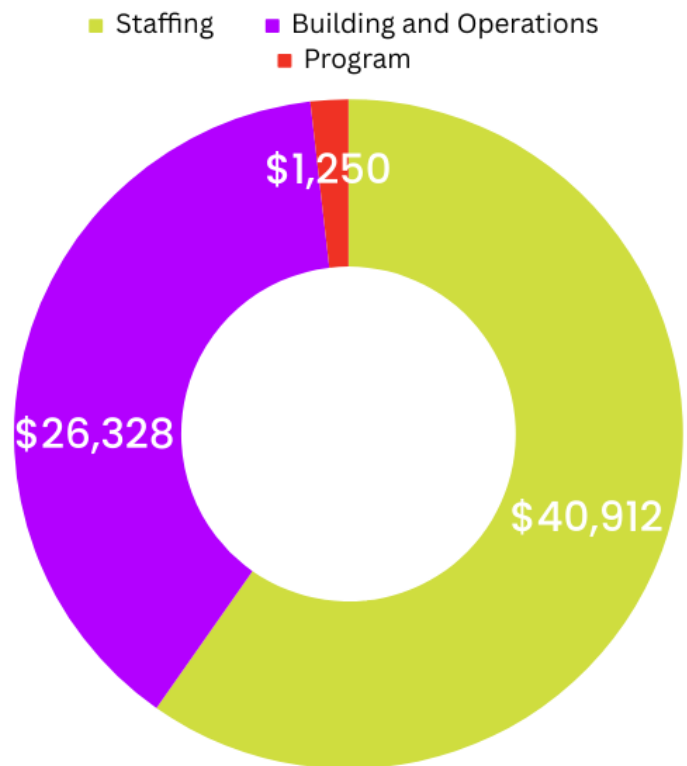
Financial Plan

Operating a full-scale community center without any municipal support is no easy task. Building operational costs and program costs alone are approximately \$42,000 before adding salaries. Those costs have been borne to date in the start-up phase by the Center's sponsor, Messiah Lutheran Church, as well as grants from close partners and other organizations. The Center's in-house grant team has already been responsible for over \$250,000 in grant monies since late 2021. A great example of the potential we must attract outside dollars comes from the recent announcement that the CDPHP Workforce Challenge has designated the Center as its 2023 Charity of Choice.

The current year's fiscal plan (pie chart below) projects a net operating loss of approximately \$14,000 deficit which the Center hopes to close with additional grant monies, but especially growing individual and small business donations, as well as space use and space use fees throughout the year.

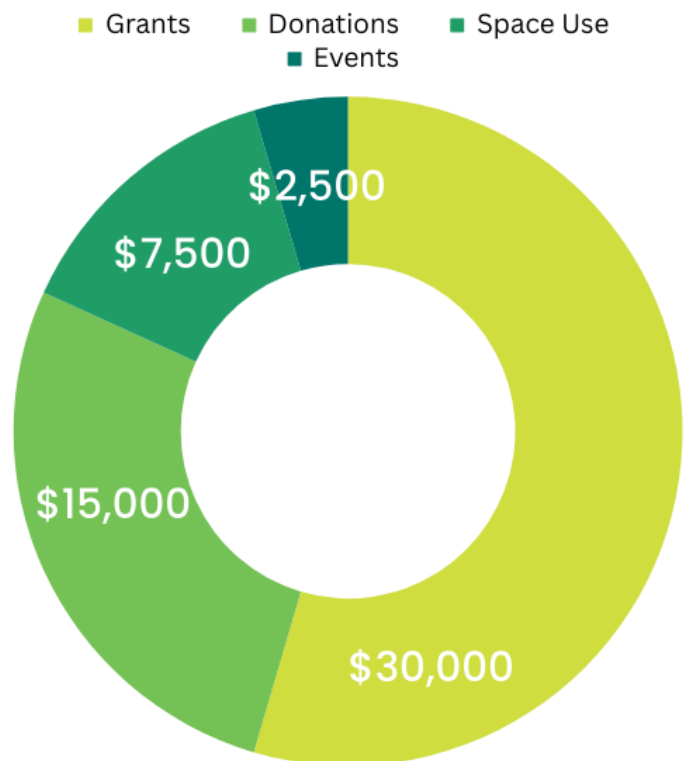
2024 Projected Expenses

We project a total cost of \$68,490 in UNDESIGNATED FUNDS to run the Rotterdam Community Center in 2024. This does not include DESIGNATED FUND supported programs such as our Food Pantries and Community Organizer program.



2024 Projected Revenue

Under current conditions, we project \$55,000 in UNDESIGNATED FUND revenue in 2024, leading to a current budget deficit of \$13,490.



While grant writing has been extremely successful, we believe the next key step to Center’s long-term financial stability comes from the office space lease revenue that will be recurring. Going forward the Center anticipates that once all available office space is leased (six offices at \$500 / month), revenue will cover half of operating expenses. The remaining funds will come from other space use fees, donations, and grants. We expect those funds will provide enough to allow for expansion of programming, services, and staff.

A secondary key step in growing the Center’s long-term financial stability is the development of a “Community Champions” program that recognizes local area businesses and individual donors to the Center on an annual basis. We are well positioned in the community to continue raising the needed dollars to supplement the Center’s budget. We are well known among the area’s community-based organizations for the work we are doing in the community which opens numerous opportunities, and we are ready to respond to those as well as seeking out other opportunities with our in-house grant writing team.

The Center also has the potential to receive additional revenue in the future through the redevelopment of other portions of the sight, although conversations with potential developers are in the very early stages. The Center’s financial picture looks bright moving forward.

Leadership Team

We have a dedicated and experienced team of Staff and Advisory Board members, all who live directly in Rotterdam, New York or in nearby neighborhoods and towns.

STAFF



Rev. Dustin G. Longmire (he/ him, they/them)

Executive Director

Born and raised in Connecticut, Rev. Longmire joined Messiah Lutheran Church as Pastor in August of 2014 after graduating from the United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia. During his time at seminary, he participated in clinical pastoral education at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, engaged in a year of local faith-based advocacy with Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, interned with the Lutheran Office for World Community and served as Vicar of Saint Peter's Church in New York City. He also received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Religion (with a focus on Islam)

from the George Washington University in the spring of 2008.

He LOVES to have called Upstate New York his home for over ten years and has served in leadership roles with a variety of local and statewide interfaith justice movements and nonprofit organizations as Chair of the Schenectady County Food Council Advocacy & Empowerment Working Group, past Chair of the Sycamore Collaborative Interfaith Task Force, past Chair of the Schenectady Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and past President of the New York State Council of Churches. He also is a proud member of the Schenectady Rotary Club.

During his time at Messiah Lutheran Church, the congregation has experienced tremendous growth, completed a \$570,000 Accessibility Project, and was named one of the fifty most innovative congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. One of his proudest professional moments was chairing the process of moving Schenectady Community Ministries to be an interfaith organization.



Heather Zimmer (she/ her)

Director of Operations

Heather Zimmer has been a lifelong member of Messiah Lutheran Church. She currently has a bachelor's degree in early childhood and volunteers as Sunday School Teacher. In her free time, she loves to do crafts, enjoy family time and be outdoors as much as possible. She is looking forward to having an important role at this already amazing place



Chris DeTeso (he/ him)

Food Pantry Administrative Coordinator

Chris was born in Rotterdam and has spent his entire life here. He is married to his amazing wife, Sarah, and together they have 3 beautiful children, Nathan, Grace and Anthony. He has been a member of Messiah Lutheran Church since 2019 and has been in Production Management for the last 20+ years.

He believes we can do more for our community and those that can, need to. He also believes that no one should worry about where their next meal is coming from. It has become his passion to help and serve others.

OFFICERS AND ADVISORY BOARD



Kimlee Marquise (she/ her)

Chair

Kimlee Marquise is the Chairperson for the RCC advisory board. She is a commissioner on the Schenectady County Human Rights Commission. She has a BS in social policy and community services. Her goal for the RCC is to create a safe space where diversity and inclusion are celebrated, and everyone has a seat at the table to have their voices heard and respected. She and her wife live in Schenectady.



Pete Jones (he/ him)

Vice Chair

Pete has been retired since June of 2019 having worked most of his life for St. Clare's Hospital, with twenty-seven years of the time as the recruiter. When Ellis and St. Clare's merged, he continued in a similar role at Ellis. Subsequently he trained healthcare workers for Schenectady Community Action Program. Pete, his wife Jean, and grandson Tyler joined Messiah in 2014. He currently serves as Chair of the Personnel and Community Service Committees. He is very excited about the Community Center and its potential positive service for the Rotterdam and South Schenectady neighborhood.



Penny Incitti (she/ her)

Financial Secretary

Penny Incitti is a retired fifth grade teacher (Schenectady City Schools) who has lived in Rotterdam for 45 years. Raising four children in this community has led her to an understanding of why this Center is so necessary. She enjoys being involved and helping others, so the Advisory Board is an excellent avenue for her to be able make a difference.



Kathryn Snively (any pronouns)

Secretary

Katherine is a prolific notetaker who has lived in Schenectady County all their life. They have worked in various fields, including as a theatrical electrician, a mailman, and a farmer. They represent Congregation Gates of Heaven for the Community Center and are excited to see it grow and develop.



Randolph McGough (he/ him)

Member at Large

Randy is currently retired from NYS Government where he spent 35 years working in the field of Human Resources Management. Since then he has been blessed to volunteer with a number of Community Based Organizations within Schenectady County which are engaged in meeting the needs of the unserved and underserved populations of the county. He is a graduate of the State University of New York at Oneonta where he obtained a Bachelor's of Arts degree in US History/Black Hispanic Studies. He also attended graduate school at the State University of New York at Albany where I majored in

African/Afro-American Studies. He is looking forward to serving on the board of the Rotterdam Community Center as it goes about meeting the needs of those who are currently struggling within the Rotterdam Community.



Jackie DeTeso (she/ her)

Member at Large

Jackie DeTeso was born and raised in Lansingburgh, New York. After attending the College of St. Rose where she studied Special Ed and English, she married the love of her life. Before losing him 12 years ago, they raised three children of whom she is extremely proud. She has six glorious grandchildren.

Jackie was the Assistant Manager at The Open Door Bookstore for many years. She is a Master Gardener and loves to paint and cook. She spends her time between Schenectady and Cape Cod, and has been blessed with a wonderful life. She firmly believes that all people should be afforded the same benefits she has had regardless of gender, ethnicity, social status or who they might choose to love.



Rachel DeTeso-Mathis (she/ her)

Member at Large

Rachel DeTeso-Mathis has been a member of Messiah for several years. A full-time teacher for over twenty years, Rachel earned her BA in English from the State University of NY at Albany, and her Master of Science in Education in Secondary Education from the College of Saint Rose. Prior to becoming a teacher, Rachel worked for several years in human services and nonprofit agencies. In her free time, Rachel loves to read, talk about books, watch reality TV, and grow vegetables in her garden- especially tomatoes!



Matt Winans (he/ him)

Member at Large

Matt has lived in the Schenectady/Rotterdam area for the past 15+ years, and now considers the area his “adopted hometown”. He holds a BS in Healthcare Administration, and has almost 20 years of experience in healthcare system transformation. He also holds a leadership role with Schenectady Pride.

In his spare time, Matt enjoys gardening, hiking, camping, and traveling with his husband, Andrew.



Sue Collins (she/ her)

Member at Large

Sue grew up in Fort Plain, and went to St. Lawrence University for her Bachelor of the Arts in French, during which time she studied for a year in France. She received a Masters in Education from SUNY Elmira and then taught French and sometimes English for the Perth Central School District and for the Canajoharie Central School District for thirty-four years. Sue worked as a Real Estate agent for ten years, then for Clarkson University as a Supervisor of Student teachers. She volunteers at Proctors theatre and the RCC Produce Pantry. Sue is married to Tom, has five children (with two bonus kids!) and six grandkids. She is an avid animal rescuer and loves to read, garden, golf, play bocce, bowl and travel.

Thank You

The Rotterdam Community Center Advisory Board and Staff would like to SINCERELY thank Thomas Collins for the development of this Business Plan.