

Stewarding the Expanded Capacity

A SECOND VISTA PROPOSAL

Who We Are.

VISION

We envision a thriving unified community where all are celebrated.

MISSION

To provide a safe space where all enter as equals to cultivate authentic connections, express our unique gifts, and experience the unifying power of the community.

VALUES

Safety: We hold a safe space by protecting the physical, emotional and spiritual well being of all. (Body)

Collaboration: We value collaboration within all relationships, across generations, and socioeconomic differences, through the intentional practices of openness, active listening, and mutual accountability to achieve shared outcomes. We seek input, feedback and support from the community to achieve sustainable growth. (Heart)

Hospitality: We value providing a space to enrich the community through generous acts of service, celebration, respect, and the connection to resources and knowledge. We believe that everyone has the right to live a full life. (Spirit)

Communication: We are committed to clear, open, and inclusive communication that honors information, ideas, and dreams and is rooted in love and respect. We foster relationships through kindness, reconciliation, and celebration with the intent to create a joyful community and environment that honors individuals. (Mind)

What We Do.

The Community Unity Center (CUC) has become a trusted gathering space where Maplewood residents and leaders come together across lines of age, class, belief, and background.

- **Community Dinners** – Monthly dinners serve an average of 92 plates (including take-home meals), bringing together elders, children, unhoused neighbors, and families in one shared space. These meals combine food security with fellowship and resource-sharing.
- **Education and Awareness** – The CUC highlights key social justice issues such as Juneteenth, Hispanic Heritage Month, women's rights, disability rights, and

LGBTQIA+ rights, ensuring neighbors learn from one another's experiences and perspectives.

- **Resource Connection** – Resource tables at each dinner provide direct access to services, programs, and mutual aid, making quality-of-life services accessible.
- **Community Connections Network** – Co-led by the CUC, this monthly gathering unites city leadership, MRH schools, emergency responders, nonprofits, churches, and residents to share information and coordinate resources.

Where Are We Going?

The CUC's most important contribution is **unifying Maplewood**.

- Residents who would not normally cross paths now sit together, share meals, connect to resources and experience new perspectives..
- City leaders, churches, businesses and grass-root-movements collaborate within the same network, creating a strong mutual aid system.
- Information that was once siloed through individual channels, is now distributed across multiple platforms, reaching those most in need.
- Our work is visible and respected enough that City Council members and MRH School leaders now reference the CUC in official meetings.

No other organization in Maplewood serves this role: connecting leaders, service providers, and neighbors in a single, people-powered system.

What We Have Built So Far.

With one full-time VISTA, the CUC has:

- Created a consistent, reliable, community respected third space.
- Built partnerships with local businesses, nonprofits, city leadership, and funders.
- Launched a social media and newsletter presence that is steadily growing in reach and engagement.
- Established organizational structures: steering committee, mission/vision/values, dinner protocols, volunteer recruitment systems, and data-tracking methods.
- Gained public recognition as a trusted, unifying voice in Maplewood. We are seen as a valuable resource.

Why We Need Additional Support?

This growth has been a blessing, but it now exceeds the capacity of one VISTA. The single role is forced to balance two essential areas:

1. **Community Engagement** – outreach, programming, partnerships, and volunteer management.

2. **Organizational Development** – data tracking, financial systems, compliance, and long-term planning.

Each is critical to the CUC's success. If combined into one role, both risk being stretched too thin.

What Role Each VISTA Will Play?

Front of House VISTA – Community Engagement & Program Support

- Welcome community members and support programs and events.
- Recruit and coordinate volunteers.
- Build partnerships with businesses, nonprofits, and funders.
- Maintain outreach through social media, flyers, and community meetings.
- Collect participant feedback to inform programming.

Back of House VISTA – Capacity Building & Infrastructure Development

- Develop and maintain administrative systems, policies, and documentation.
- Track data for evaluation, funding, and reporting.
- Support financial systems, grant writing, and donor engagement.
- Draft MOUs and sustain organizational partnerships.
- Build long-term strategies for sustainability and compliance.

Formal Request

To sustain and strengthen the unifying role of the CUC, we respectfully request that the Ad-Council fund a **second AmeriCorps VISTA position** at a cost of **\$5,000 for one year**.

This investment will:

- Ensure consistent delivery of programs and outreach.
- Protect the organizational systems that keep CUC growth sustainable.
- Honor the progress already made and build on it with integrity.
- Position the CUC to secure permanent staffing and long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

A second VISTA represents more than additional capacity—it represents stewardship of what has already been built. With this support, the Community Unity Center can continue uniting Maplewood across lines of difference, sustaining a people-powered movement that brings neighbors, leaders, and resources together for the common good.