



VISION 2021 & BEYOND
A Strategic Plan for La Casa de Amistad

Our mission is to empower the Latino/Hispanic community within Michiana by providing educational, cultural and advocacy services in a welcoming, bilingual environment.

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VISION 2021 & BEYOND: A Strategic Plan for La Casa de Amistad

HISTORY: Since the humble beginnings of La Casa de Amistad in South Bend, Indiana, in 1973, the organization has grown, expanded, and added services to meet the needs of Latina/o and immigrant families. The organization has become the preeminent voice for the Latina/o communities of Greater South Bend.

*Throughout its existence, La Casa's purpose has been clear: to **empower families** and **advocate effectively**. The organization always has, and always will.*

La Casa started as an extension of St. Casimir's Catholic parish in South Bend, founded with help of the Congregation of Holy Cross. La Casa became independent and then moved to a small site on Warren Street. La Casa's current center on the corner of Meade and Dunham has been home since the early 1980s, a home that served the organization well but which can no longer meet the needs of La Casa's expanding services.

TODAY: La Casa has created innovative programs, including a bilingual preschool. Staff and volunteers created after school youth programs that not only helped with out-of-school academic needs, but helped build children's confidence. Through careful listening to local immigrant communities, the organization developed programs requested and needed by the community, such as the award-winning citizenship classes and La Casa's legal clinic. The actions of **empowerment** and **advocacy** occur every day for La Casa's families.

La Casa's modest building has limited its capacity to serve the broader community. A positive result has been the many successful collaborations with other organizations, businesses, government agencies, and individuals. These growing partnerships, along with the expansion of the immigrant community and La Casa's higher profile, has pushed the organization to address these great challenges with plans for a more spacious building which conveys respect for the dignity of La Casa's families and provides long term opportunities for growth and partnerships.

Vision 2021 and Beyond is more than just new walls, additional programs, or more staff. It is a community plan. It is a plan that will unfold over the next five years. It is a plan to handle the transition of La Casa into a new center (2021), to celebrate the 50th Anniversary (2023), and to prepare the next generation of leaders for this critically important organization.



LA CASA'S KEY PRINCIPLES

Mission:

Our mission is to empower the Latino/Hispanic community within Michiana by providing educational, cultural and advocacy services in a welcoming, bilingual environment.

Vision:

A community in which Latina/os and immigrants are fully included in and occupy leadership roles in all aspects of community life.

Pillars:

La Casa supports its families in their diverse and ever-changing consistencies through focus on empowerment and strong advocacy.

Focus Areas: La Casa has outlined six strategic areas of focus for the organization, which this plan identifies as its key strategies:

- **Leadership:** Within the Latinx community, and encouraging emerging leaders
- **Physical space:** Development and growth of a new center in South Bend
- **Regional growth:** Embracing emerging unmet needs in the Greater Michiana area
- **Sustainability:** A funding strategy to ensure continued success
- **Impact:** Ensuring that La Casa's services create positive, long term, measurable change
- **Advocacy:** Representing Latinx needs to elected, business, nonprofit and other leaders

Definitions:

- **Immigrant:** an immigrant is someone who has left their own homeland to establish a life in a new place; in this instance, immigrants and subsequent generations, notably those from Latin America, are the primary community of La Casa de Amistad
- **Refugees and Asylum seekers:** though US and international law have very strict definitions for immigrants in these categories, people who have fled violence and oppression and now reside in Michiana are an important sub-category for La Casa; an increasing number of these populations that seek services are from non-Latinx backgrounds
- **Undocumented:** there are many terms, some pejorative, for people whose legal status is not established. La Casa serves them with respect and dignity, as a safe provider
- **Latinx:** this term is increasingly used to refer to individuals and groups of people from various Latina/o backgrounds, which is those with Latin American heritage and signals inclusivity regarding gender and sexuality



OUR VISION FORWARD: Six Focus Areas

In 2023 La Casa de Amistad will celebrate its 50th Anniversary, a significant milestone and a call to prepare for the next 50 years. Michiana's Latina/o and immigrant communities have expanded and changed dramatically since La Casa was founded, and will continue to change and grow.

La Casa's half century of success will be magnified in its second 50 years. The organization will only achieve its potential through intentional relationships, advocacy that makes an impact, and excellent programming in inclusive and accessible spaces that empower the whole community.

Through a process of interviews, surveys, focus groups, and retreats, the plan developed aligns around **six focus areas** for La Casa's future. Each area is interconnected and viewed through the dual lenses of empowerment and advocacy; La Casa is planning for what happens inside of its walls, focusing on the changes reflected by the Michiana community



- Effective **LEADERSHIP**, from both the board of directors and the professional staff team, is critical to achieving desired outcomes. La Casa will focus on human capital from both its volunteer base and staff structures for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Dignified and modern **PHYSICAL SPACE** is critical. La Casa models inclusivity for others, engages in collaborative partnerships, which leads to shared success with the community.
- **REGIONAL GROWTH** beyond La Casa's St. Joseph County origins is a natural consequence of the community's expansion and need for services; La Casa will expand service and its exposure to more people throughout the South Bend/Elkhart Region.
- **SUSTAINABILITY** for La Casa will require continued growth in the organization's funding in order to build on its successful legacy.
- **IMPACT** refers to La Casa's capacity to foster measurable change, through services offered and through increased inclusion of Latina/os and immigrants in all aspects of local community life.
- **ADVOCACY** is a core role of La Casa, ensuring that the voices of its constituents are heard by decision makers and by the Michiana community.

Looking Forward, Looking Ahead

The people who form **La Casa de Amistad's family** in 2021 have reaped the benefits gained by 50 years of past wisdom and success, trials and crises, and 'standing on the shoulders' of those who came before—founders, supporters, staff, volunteers, and the vibrant Latina/o communities of Michiana.

In gratitude to our predecessors for their dedication, La Casa is launching our **VISION 2021 & BEYOND** to make sure that the organization's guiding principles of *advocacy* and *empowerment* continue to improve the lives of La Casa's families and our Michiana community in the next 50 years.

A. LEADERSHIP: Values and Human Capital

A.I - Governance: The Board of Directors of La Casa de Amistad is made up of a diverse group of people with different backgrounds and professions. Most Board members are Latina/o, which has guaranteed that La Casa safeguards its role as the lead Latina/o organization in the area.

As the role of La Casa grows and evolves, the Board's role evolves as well. The Board governance plans for Vision 2021 include:

1. Develop an ongoing Board Development Action Plan through the Membership Committee, to include annual retreats, board evaluations and other means for the board to recommend new Board members, as well as monitoring the Board's engagement and success.

2. Use the Executive Committee as a strong governance group to ensure proper recruitment of future Board leaders, as well overseeing other regular structures to meet emerging needs.

3. Develop and implement strategies to best enable the La Casa Board to guide the organization to best serve the Latina/o community, as well as other underrepresented communities.



A.II – Professional Staffing: La Casa de Amistad has long attracted highly qualified, visionary staff who have been willing to work in support of the organization's mission, with lessened regard to salaries that have long been below market standards. The crew is dedicated, attracts volunteer engagement, and has always managed to succeed, regardless of how stretched and undercompensated they are. This is an area La Casa will improve upon, as the organization's long-term financial stability continues to improve.

With the assistance of the HR Committee and other human resources subject-matter experts, the organization will:

1. Develop a strategy and create a staffing plan that improves:

- Training and continuing education opportunities for staff
- Administrative assistance to key La Casa staff leaders
- Review of benefit increases for long-term and committed staff

2. Develop achievable plans for key staffing/human resources indicators that includes review of:

- Staff retention rates
 - Compensation analysis to comparable employers
 - Employee satisfaction and engagement

B. PHYSICAL PROPERTY CHANGES: El Sueño Campaign

The recently purchased La Casa building on South Michigan Street in South Bend symbolizes a new era for La Casa de Amistad. It will create a significant shift in priorities for the organization and with it, great potential for program expansion, as well as new types of potential risks. This project is not just about adding square footage, bricks, or murals, it is about improving the story of a growing community and helping to shape the lives of La Casa families that the organization serves now and in the future.

Priorities related to maximizing utilization of the new building are:

1. Engage La Casa's Board of Directors to ensure success of the building's use:

- a. Finance Committee will be assigned responsibility of budgetary planning for long-term health of the building.
 - i. Identify committee and/or board members with building management or asset management experience.
 - ii. Rental oversight to develop opportunities to rent to good tenants at a fair price.
 - iii. Development of maintenance and update plans, budgets and schedules.
 - iv. Develop plans to better ensure security of the property, given the higher public profile of La Casa.
- b. The ED and key staff members will be assigned responsibility to pursue strategic community partners to bring into the building and ensure that space is matched with the quality of our partners and community.
 - i. Provide monthly staff check-in opportunities to assess success of the moving process and make real-time corrections.
 - ii. Actively recruit and consider partners in value-add services and community engagement, such as murals, events and other opportunities.



C. REGIONAL: Expanded Branding Strategy and Service Footprint

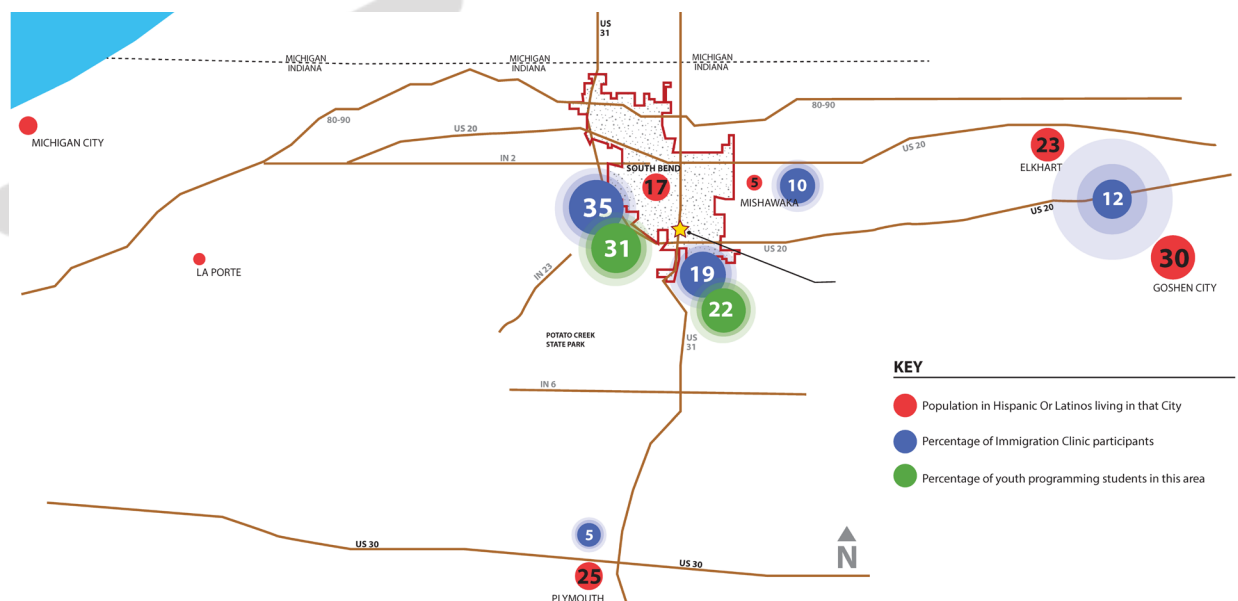
La Casa was founded in South Bend's historic Latina/o community, now proudly called the West Side, although the true service territory has generally been St. Joseph County, Indiana. Increasing needs in surrounding Indiana communities and the growth of the Latina/o population in the greater South Bend region, provides the organization with expanded opportunities to serve a broader clientele.

1. The ED & leadership team to engage West Side South Bend community leaders in determination of plans for legacy building and continued connections to original territory of La Casa.

- a. Remain engaged with and provide appropriate leadership to the other SB West Side organizations and neighborhood constituencies.
- b. Ensure best disposition of legacy property.

2. The ED & leadership team to ensure that the organization is providing outreach to defined expanded territory of Michiana to outline services that will be available 'in person' or virtually with communities, emphasizing roles of advocacy and empowerment, in categories to include:

- a. Programming strategy
- b. Public outreach
- c. Advocacy
- d. Physical location for services



D. SUSTAINABILITY: Financial Diversification and Strength

La Casa has grown in its annual budget to nearly a million dollars. It has also grown its impact in the community. From being a relatively small youth programming provider, La Casa has established services and programs for the larger community. While it would have been hard to imagine the organization undertaking a major capital campaign five years ago, La Casa is now in the midst of the ambitious *'El Sueño Campaign,'* which will pay for its newly purchased building, create an endowment for the upkeep of the center, and other associated needs. In order to achieve this goal, La Casa will:

1. Ensure exceptional execution of the Capital Campaign: El Sueño, by meeting or exceeding our financial and participation goals for the project in support of La Casa de Amistad.
2. Transition the existing Board's Events Committee to the Board's Development Committee:
 - a. Continue to foster general fundraising in support of the organization's ongoing operations and programs through events, donations, and grant funding.
 - b. Develop outreach opportunities to new geographical territories to increase the awareness of La Casa's mission and reach:
 - Foundations and business outreach in Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall and other surrounding counties.
 - Businesses and associations in regional areas such as Chicago.
 - South Bend/Elkhart partnership and other similar community entities.
3. Develop funding mechanisms that provide ongoing earned revenue streams for La Casa's advocacy and training mission.
 - a. Engage business communities in regional footprint with diversity and inclusion training.
 - b. Faith community outreach within the expanded region.
4. Finance Committee will take a leading role in considering long-term sources of capital revenue streams and ensure that best practices in financial management and reporting are being followed.
 - a. Finance Committee to maintain a strategic roadmap around long-term funding mechanisms such as endowment and rental income that would provide independent, ongoing revenue streams for La Casa's advocacy and training missions.
 - b. Finance Committee to maintain an understanding of best practices in financial accounting and reporting.
5. Ensure that the Board contains relevant experience in the following areas:
 - a. Grant funding from public and/or private sources.
 - b. Fundraising and relationships with individual, corporate and other funders.
 - c. Endowment funding.

E. IMPACT: Measuring More Than Help

La Casa is known for core programs and high-level partnerships with community agencies like United Way, the University of Notre Dame, and other leaders of the nonprofit and civic communities. As a smaller local non-profit without national ties, La Casa de Amistad often created and measured outcomes on its own. Growing in size and scope means the organization must evolve its capacity to measure impact, demonstrate program outcomes, and demonstrate the value proposition to the communities served. To accomplish this, the following goals have been created for the ED and staff members, with support of the Board:

1. Measure programmatic needs and understand the changing community that La Casa serves:
 - a. Ensure that La Casa programs are meeting needs and filling programmatic gaps.
 - b. Ensure that La Casa programs deploy the most effective way to solve the challenges for the community by studying research-based best practices around the country.
2. Work with industry experts to develop modern and state of the art methods for outcomes assessment.
 - a. Data collection and digital resources.
 - b. Convene others on collective impact and common data points.
3. Serve as coordinator with grantors and other agencies on ways to best leverage dollars to maximize a positive impact on La Casa families and community.



F. ADVOCACY: Increased Expectations

La Casa has historically had a strong advocacy voice for the local Latina/o community. The word “advocacy” was in the original mission statement and intentionally remains a part of it today.

In recent years, La Casa’s voice has established itself as a trustworthy resource, garnering the confidence of local elected, appointed, and community-grown leadership. As immigration issues continue to be prominent, it is expected that La Casa will continue to be a key resource on these matters. For this reason, the ED, staff members, and Board will collaborate to develop strategies to ensure that it remains focused on its key issues and continues to serve its key program constituents as follows:

1. Create criteria for areas of advocacy engagement that La Casa will engage as: a) leaders, b) participants, and; c) observers that will encompass local, state and national concerns.
2. Continue to develop immigration enforcement action plans with community organizations.
3. Continue to provide trusted and expert leadership to elected and appointed leaders in the multi-county area, with outreach to new communities, as appropriate.
4. Develop revenue-positive plans to allow qualified businesses and communities to provide cost-reimbursement to the organization, where appropriate.
5. Utilize experiences of assisting La Casa community with COVID-19 and other emergency response to ensure that La Casa clients and community needs are addressed and that services are provided equitably for all constituencies.

