

Build Back Better

Living United for a more equitable
Olmsted County



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Olmsted County consistently ranks high in quality of life, health, and worker productivity. A recent report determined that Rochester has the lowest poverty rate of any metropolitan area in the country.ⁱ The unemployment rate is low, and median household income compares favorably with the state and nation.ⁱⁱ

Yet not everyone shares in the prosperity. The poverty rate for Black households is more than 5 times that of white households—the worst disparity in the nation when compared to similarly sized metro areas.ⁱⁱⁱ Households of color report a rate of financial stress 72% higher than that of white households. Housing affordability has reached a crisis point; 23% of residents are cost-burdened by housing, including 44% of renters.^{iv} Labor force participation among people with disabilities and Native Americans is disproportionately low.^v As our community experiences rapid economic and demographic shifts, residents increasingly feel socially disconnected, with people of color and immigrants reporting the highest rates of disconnection.^{vi}

These disparities are the result of systemic discrimination, and experts warn that the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate existing inequities.^{vii} To take just one example, Olmsted County's population is approximately 6% Black, but Black people account for approximately 35% of local confirmed COVID-19 cases.^{viii} This disproportionate health impact alone will have economic consequences in the form of lost income and unexpected expenses that many Black households can ill afford. Moreover, national data shows that Black people have been more likely to face job loss due to shutdowns, and Black households are expected to face eviction at higher rates than white households as a nationwide eviction moratorium ends.^{ix} If these trends hold, they threaten to widen the existing financial stability gap between Olmsted County's white and Black households. Other communities face their own unique challenges.

As communities know and research verifies, CSOs play a vital role in communities' wellbeing.^x Studies indicate that people of color, Native Americans, and immigrants often prefer to interact with organizations that reflect their culture and traditions.^{xi} However, these organizations are less likely than their mainstream counterparts to receive grant funding and tend to be smaller in size.^{xii} This underinvestment in CSOs is an effect and a symptom of the historical and ongoing marginalization of BIPOC and other minoritized groups. We acknowledge that our own funding practices have tended to replicate these patterns, and this investment is one among several steps United Way of Olmsted County is taking to improve equity in our grantmaking practices.

Amid the ongoing health and economic crisis of COVID-19, investing in CSOs is especially urgent. It's part of our strategy to Build Back Better, a phrase used in disaster recovery that emphasizes equity and put communities at the center.^{xiii} Build Back Better means that we're doubling down in our fight for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in Olmsted County.

ⁱ <https://247wallst.com/special-report/2019/10/04/cities-with-the-lowest-poverty-rates-3/>

ii Olmsted County's unemployment rate is 3.7% according to American Community Survey 5-year estimate Table ID: S2301

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=labor%20force%20participation&g=0500000US27109&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S2301&hidePreview=true>

Median household income in Olmsted County is \$74,880, compared with \$68,411 for the state of Minnesota and \$60,293 for the US according to American Community Survey 5-year estimate. Table ID: S1901

https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=income&g=0100000US_0400000US27_0500000US27109&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S1901&t=Income%20%28Households,%20Families,%20Individuals%29&hidePreview=true

iii American Community Survey 2018 1-year estimate. Table ID: S1701.

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=olmsted%20county%20mn&g=0500000US27109&tid=ACSST1Y2018.S1701&vintage=2018>

iv <https://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/OCPHS/reports/Needs%20Assessment/Documents/2019CHNA.pdf>

Nearly 78% of Black households in Olmsted County rent their homes, compared with approximately 23% of white households and 40.5% of Asian households, according to American Community Survey 5-year estimate Table ID: S2502

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Housing&g=0500000US27109&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S2502&hidePreview=true&t=Housing&vintage=2018>

v American Community Survey 5-year estimate Table ID: S2301

<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=labor%20force%20participation&g=0500000US27109&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S2301&hidePreview=true>

vi <https://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/OCPHS/reports/Needs%20Assessment/Documents/2019CHNA.pdf>

vii <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/04/health-care-disparities-in-the-age-of-coronavirus/>

viii As of July 29, 2020 <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/60943ce3b4c84e3491e03f9112e6d13b>

ix <https://www.theroot.com/black-people-set-to-be-disproportionately-affected-as-e-1844472383>

x <https://m.scrip.org/papers/63676>; [https://www.unitedway-pdx.org/sites/default/files/cult_specific_orgs_water mark - for sharing.pdf](https://www.unitedway-pdx.org/sites/default/files/cult_specific_orgs_water_mark_for_sharing.pdf);

xi Report to SE MN Whole Family Systems Core Team 2020 (unpublished);

https://s3.amazonaws.com/Omnera/VerV/s3finder/38/pdf/Dr_Ray_Study_Parent_Priorities_February_2010.pdf

xii https://ssir.org/articles/entry/overcoming_the_racial_bias_in_philanthropic_funding;

<https://www.propelnonprofits.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Propel-Nonprofits-Equity-Research-Builder-Report.pdf>

xiii https://www.preventionweb.net/files/2054_VL108301.pdf