

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**Together**



— WEST —  
**Michigan**

IMMIGRANT  
& REFUGEE  
WELLBEING

TRAFFIC  
SAFETY

PUBLIC MONEY  
TRANSPARENCY &  
ACCOUNTABILITY

ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS AREAS

*We are* a broad-based power organization focused on **citizen-led action** through leadership development and building relationships across the lines that typically divide us.

In 2025 we prioritized our focus issues for the year, based on feedback and reflections from our more than 20,000 members.

The number one issue was the **wellbeing of immigrants and refugees** as they strive to make a life for themselves and their families in our community and face challenges like:

- Fear of being separated from their families, detained or deported without due process.
- Securing employment.
- Learning a new language.
- Paying for rent, food, and utility bills.
- Having adequate transportation.
- Discrimination in the workplace, based on skin color or language, and where low pay too often requires individuals to work two full-time jobs.

Together West Michigan formed a **traffic safety** team with residents on Kalamazoo Avenue to identify trouble spots and possible solutions.

To learn more, we:

- Met with Mobile GR to learn about funding for traffic safety and request a study on Kalamazoo Avenue.
- Confirmed through the Mobile GR study that the requests for flashing beacons, a traffic light, an additional school crossing guard, and improved crosswalk markings and signage were justified.

To take action, we:

- Met with Commissioners Kilgore and Perdue, Mayor LaGrand, Deputy City Manager Berens, and Grand Rapids Economic Developer Rainero to discuss potential funding sources.
- Won commitments from Commissioner Kilgore and Mayor LaGrand to support and advocate for funding Together West Michigan's Traffic Team proposal to install traffic calming measures.

Demonstrating a clear lack of **transparency and accountability**, the Grand Rapids City Commission voted in favor of a half-billion-dollar tax break for developers downtown despite public resistance. Together West Michigan members formed a team to figure out how to make public money work better for public good.

To learn more, we:

- Studied the work of national economists on public benefit for public investment.
- Met with economists and local leaders to learn about tax incentives and their impact on public money.

To take action, we:

- Developed a civic academy called *Show Me the Public Money: Making Taxes Work for the Common Good* to teach community members the basics of how local public money works, learn their priorities for public money, and teach them how to get involved in decisions regarding local tax policies and incentives. The presentation is available to interested community groups, parishes or organizations.
- Formed a team to support boosting the hiring of firms led by women and minorities for major construction projects, starting with making the dream of \$50 million in contracts to micro-local businesses come true for the towers planned for Market and Fulton in downtown Grand Rapids.
- Partnered with The Urban League of West Michigan and Construction Allies in Action in several "Construction Ready" educational events to prepare contractors to bid on various aspects of the Three Towers project.

### To learn more, we:

- Held numerous meetings with churches and immigrant/non-immigrant institutions to build relationships across lines and discern how best to support immigrant families.
- Collaborated with St. Joseph the Worker parish to organize a free Delegation of Parental Authority Workshop, connecting attorneys, notaries, and interpreters to help families prepare for emergencies.
- Held meetings with four local police departments—Kentwood, Wyoming, Grandville, and the Kent County Sheriff—to build relationships and clarify immigration and law enforcement policies. All four of these departments confirmed they would NOT enforce immigration law and, if asked to enter into a contract with ICE, they would refuse. The Chiefs also provided their own contact information for reporting violations or verifying the presence of ICE versus local police.
- Met with Michigan Senate Majority Leader Winnie Brinks, who is committed to exploring collaborative efforts on state policies that prevent family separations.

### To take action, we:

- Designed a Civic Academy on immigration. To date over 250 community members have been taught how the immigration system works, and what is happening to immigrants and refugees in our own community.
- Formed two teams to assist immigrants and refugees:
  - Family Support Group:* identifies those in need of help in TWM member institutions, mobilizes individuals and churches to donate groceries, clothing, and financial assistance for rent, utilities, help provide transportation, or accompany persons to medical and other appointments.
  - Education and Awareness Group:* Offers presentations to local parishes and other interested groups about the immigration system and the economic contributions and impact of New Americans on our community.

To broaden our base of allies, Together West Michigan is building collaborative relationships with the interfaith and business communities in order to change policies and procedures regarding the treatment of our immigrant and refugee neighbors.

## 2025 by the numbers



**30+** research actions



**60+** public accountability training sessions booked



**12** meetings with public officials



**1000+** community members active in broad-based organizing



**4** Clergy and Executive Caucuses



**2** Delegate Assemblies



**5** Public Money for Public Good civic academies



**7** immigration education sessions



**25** member institutions representing over

**20,000** area residents

“I’ve met a ton of incredible talented, driven and caring people in Together West Michigan, who’ve, despite my own self doubts, believed in me and pushed me to become a leader in my community!” - **Santiago Salvarado, co-founder of Sudden Enlightenment, a group for young professionals to engage more intentionally in leadership development and building relationships to improve our community**

“Being a part of Together West Michigan means we are part of the community. We are joining with our neighbors to work on important issues that impact us all.” - **Sheryl Luth, Fuller Avenue Church**

“Together West Michigan continues to learn that broad-based community organizing is the reaction that unleashes the potential power that lies latent in the community. Organized people and organized money really can move the needle on the issues that are important to us and our neighbors. We’ve been able to move the needle on child care at the county level. We’ve been able to move the needle on how public dollars for development are directed toward women and minority-owned businesses. Moving forward we expect to continue moving the needle on immigrant support, accountability and transparency, and traffic safety in our neighborhoods. As a network of 25 institutions that continues to grow and make new connections, Together West Michigan will continue to set the bar higher for what we believe is possible.” - **Rev. Peter TeWinkle, Oakdale Park Church**

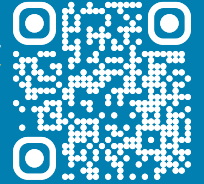
...and we do it all on a modest annual budget of **only \$122,000.**

*Our expenses are in three categories: salary and benefits for our half-time Organizer, office space rental and supplies, and our national network training and consulting services. Revenues are generated from member institution dues, corporate donations, and individual contributions from community members.*

**Learn more. Take action.**

We invite you to help sustain our efforts to identify and address issues that are important to everyone who lives here. When we build relationships and collaborate to improve the quality of life of our fellow residents, we all benefit!

Scan the code to learn more or visit [togetherwmi.org](http://togetherwmi.org)



Thanks to these new member institutions who joined Together West Michigan in 2025!

**Church of the Servant**

**First Church**

**Calvin Church**

**Access of West Michigan**

**Tri-Parish of St. Francis Xavier/Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Sorrows, and St. Dominic**

**Holy Name of Jesus Parish**

**Fuller Avenue Church**

**Neland Church**

**Building Relational Power**