

# Strengthening Partnerships to Build Hopeful Futures:

Lessons from the Returning Home Saint Paul Pilot Program



# MNJRC — Who are we?

## Transforming Our Justice System

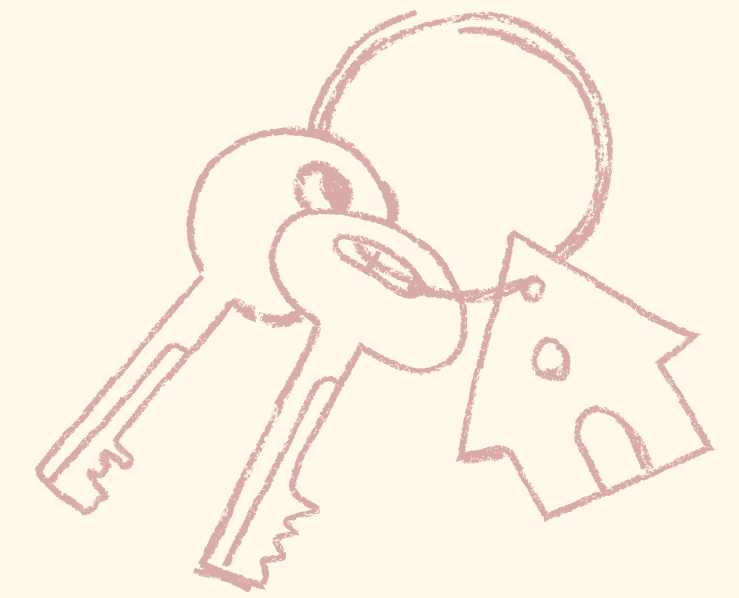
**Vision** - We seek a criminal legal system that promotes public safety by being more **equitable**, **accountable**, and **restorative** in delivering justice.

**Mission** - Through *research, education, and policy* development, we help our community create a criminal legal system that advances justice and safety for all.



# Issue Overview

Research tells us:



People who have spent time in prison are 7 times more likely to experience homelessness than the general public

(Prison Policy Initiative)

60-88% of respondents in a returning home study reported living with family members upon release

(Urban Institute)

Significant restrictions for public housing and housing vouchers and landlord resistance combine to make housing seemingly impossible to access for those returning home

(Vera)

# Program Overview: RHSP

*Returning Home Saint Paul* began enrollment in December 2020, and sought to:

- Increase housing access—specifically to market-rate housing—for those with criminal backgrounds  
(avoiding restrictions, expanding access)
- Bridge the transition from re-entry to self-sufficiency  
(case management, support, Ujamaa partnership)
- Mitigate perceived risk for landlords through a housing fund (3K)





# RHSP – *By the Numbers*

## People

**12 participants housed through the program, 10 in St. Paul**

- 6 participants graduated and 5 (of the 6) re-signed leases
- 4 participants exited the program early (2 mutual terminations, 2 evictions)
- RHSP goal was 20

**9 landlords** housed participants through the program process

**53 interested landlords** added to a Saint Paul-specific pipeline

**70% of participants** housed in Saint Paul did not have additional criminal legal system involvement while enrolled in the RHSP (of the 30%, no new felonies)

# RHSP – *By the Numbers*

## Cost/ Financial

Rental application fees paid:  
**\$58 for one participant**

Security deposit fees paid:  
**\$5,742.50 across 7 participants** in Saint Paul

Other fees paid:  
**\$589.50 for half of the first month's rent** for  
one participant

*Access funds disbursed to landlords:*  
**\$0!**



*\*Photos used with participant permission*

# RHSP – *Participant Experiences*

Securing housing helped participants feel **hopeful**, **supported**, and an increased sense of **stability**, especially for participants who are fathers



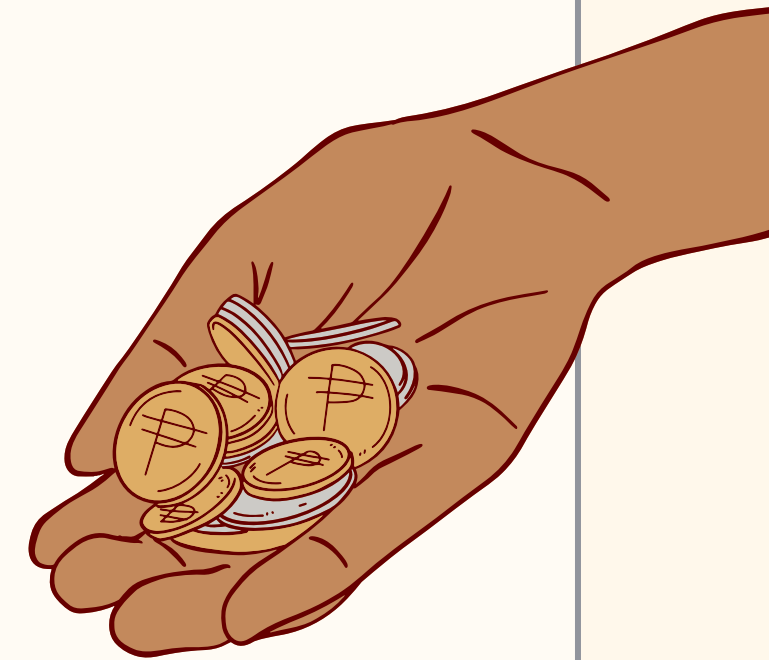
# RHSP – *Continued Barriers*



Many continued **barriers** to **searching** for housing, **securing** housing, and **maintaining** housing.

- Job instability
- COVID-19
- 8-10 year look back

The majority (80%) of participants **struggled to pay their rent on time** - pilot provided financial assistance paying for security deposits and application fees





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# RHSP – *Learnings*

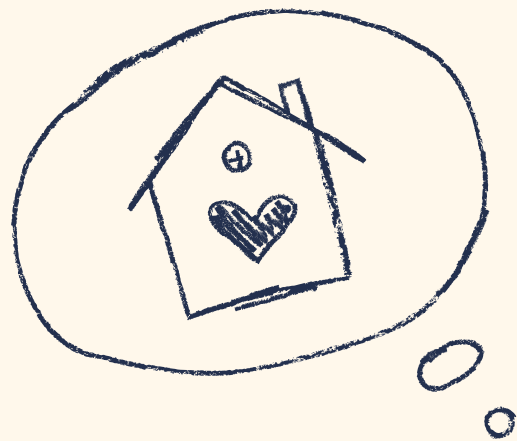
- Landlords who have housed participants **already have a history** of working with people returning home from incarceration
- Recruitment was a challenge, especially limiting geography
- The market moves fast, so **timing is critical**, partner relationships are crucial, and **need guidance and support**



“It’s a great opportunity to build rapport with Ujamaa and the City of Saint Paul, and connect some more. I want to continue to get more properties and give a hand to whoever needs it.”

- **Landlord**

# Recommendations



*Image from [ujamaaplace.org](http://ujamaaplace.org)*

- Build **additional wraparound support and rental assistance** for participants into the infrastructure of the program
- **Increase the pipeline** of participants for the program
- **Shift to targeted landlord outreach and engagement** to help maximize a Saint Paul-specific pool of interested landlords
- Establish and support **relationships** between program partners
- Advocate for policy changes that...
  - Allow for individuals with harder-to-house offenses to not be automatically denied
  - Eliminate the barrier of 8-10 year lookback periods

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“ I think the overarching story of Returning Home would just be hope and inspiration. It gives you an extra reason to know you’re doing the right thing and to keep doing the right thing. It’s changed my life perspective.”

**- Housed Participant**





# Questions?







**SAINT PAUL**  
MINNESOTA

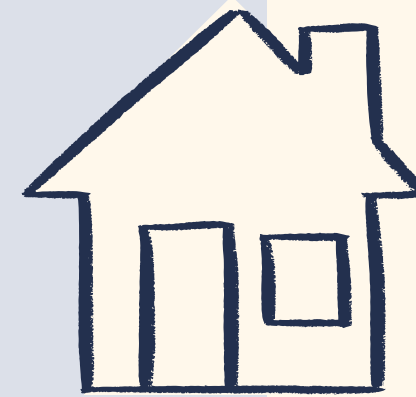
- Partner relationships
- Programmatic support



**UJAMAA**  
PLACE

- Participant case management
- Wrap around support

## Returning Home Saint Paul



Housing**Link**™

- Housing opportunities
- Landlord connectivity
- Access fund admin



- Evaluation partners

# Program Overview: RHSP

## Design Elements:

Community-based access and wrap-around support (Ujamaa)



Targeted Black,  
St. Paul residents, 18-30

Financial support



Up to **\$60** for application fee(s)  
Up to **\$500** for security deposits

Housing access fund for landlords  
to address perceived risk



Up to **\$3,000**

# RESPONSE TO CRIME/CRISIS

## CRIME AND VIOLENCE



### EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Prevent and respond to incidents of violent, dangerous, and criminal activity in our city.

#### Examples:

- Police Officers
- Fire Fighters
- Paramedics

## CRISIS AND CONCERN



### CRISIS INTERVENTION

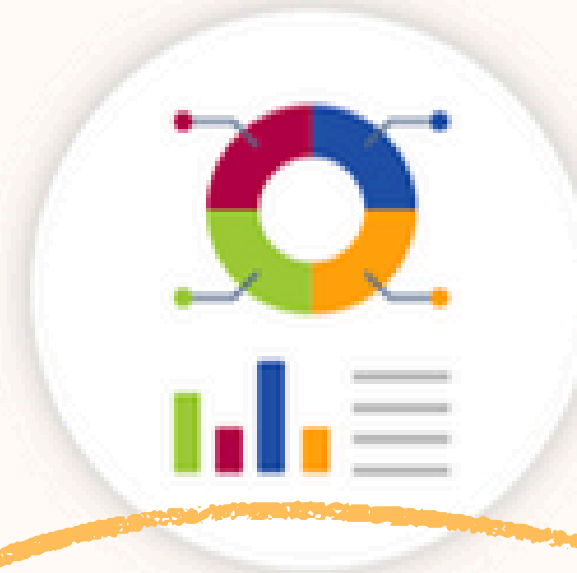
Interrupt cycles of crime and violence, and lighten the load for officers by engaging professionals as rapid responders to connect people in crisis to supportive resources.

#### Examples:

- Social Workers
- Community Public Health Workers
- Housing Counselors

# PROACTIVE INVESTMENTS

## RESIDENTS



### EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME REDUCTION

Data-drive investments to reduce high-potential residents' likelihood to become an offender or victim.

#### Examples:

- Grief Counseling
- Youth Jobs/Summer Programs
- Workforce Training
- Housing for Returning Residents

## NEIGHBORHOODS



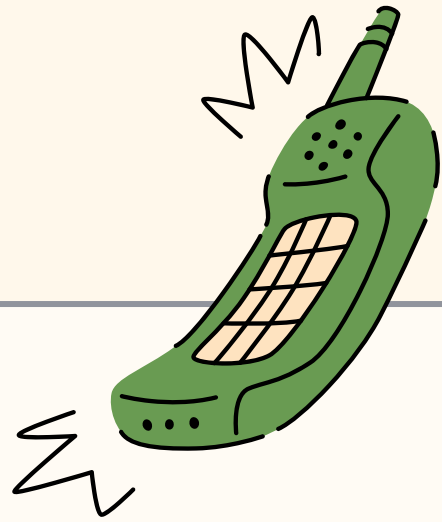
### SAFETY BY DESIGN

Investment in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in our highest-potential neighborhoods.

#### Examples:

- Lighting and Sight-Line Improvements
- Activation of Public Spaces
- Natural Access
- Cleaning and Maintenance

# RHSP – *Behind the Scenes*



Participants made an average of **18 calls** before finding housing.



Partners spent up to **20 hours per week** helping participants find housing.



Took an average of **2.5 months** for participants to find housing.



# Participants

Housed participants:  
**23-37 years old**

Most recent offenses range from  
**0-3 to 8-10 years ago**

**Many are fathers**, some are  
primary caregivers of their children

