

2024



Annual Report

Corporation for Independent Living

ACCESSIBLE

Futures



Table of CONTENTS

THOUGHTS FROM THE CEO 04

PHOTO ESSAY: THE GLORIA HOUSE 06

IMPACT REPORT 12

WHAT DOES AN ACCESSIBLE FUTURE LOOK LIKE TO YOU? 14

FUTURE-PROOFING BATHROOM DESIGNS 16

TEAM NEWS 18

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 22

Thoughts from THE CEO

I've always thought the future was bright – and I still do.

The path is not always straight and there are ups and downs, but overall, the human race, society, and technology tend to find ways to improve over the long haul – even with the occasional setback.

When I think about creating accessible futures, I'm particularly excited. More than at any time in the past, we are considering the needs of all individuals when envisioning and developing environments that allow everyone to thrive.

The future is no longer seen in a form defined solely by the able majority, but as a place where everyone can be included and contribute.

Society has been shifting towards accessibility in regard to physical disabilities, albeit with varying degrees of success, for quite a long time. Here in the United States, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) shone a spotlight on the need and raised the issue in the national psyche. Some other parts of the world haven't even accepted the need, but some might be moving more quickly to address it. Progress is not consistent, constant, or guaranteed. It's hard work and we all have to keep pushing forward.

The ADA explicitly prohibited discrimination based on both mental and physical conditions and did not require the condition to be severe or permanent. Unfortunately, even among its strongest supporters it was often easier to describe and explain when dealing with permanent physical conditions. You don't usually have to go far or look hard to see how much still needs to be changed to sufficiently address those obvious needs and in many cases, mental conditions have not even been considered.

There are so many aspects of an accessible future that need to be addressed. They require diverse expertise and include things like universal design, assistive technologies, inclusive education, changes in employment and workplace, accessibility to healthcare, access to transportation, social and community inclusion, and changes in policies.

Viewed from this perspective it would be easy to label our previous efforts as a failure because we clearly haven't succeeded. I'd like you to consider an alternative view. We have not succeeded in building an inclusive and accessible built environment, but we have not failed, either.

We just aren't done.

I don't mean in any way to justify the delays or argue about what could have been done sooner. I'm merely suggesting that we all accept that we can't change the past, but we can commit to doing more and being better in the future. That's a core belief at CIL. We appreciate progress that has been made, but we are never satisfied and never finished. We learn, we adapt, we evaluate, and we move forward pushing to do more.

Stop for a moment and think about something that you've learned to do better as you've gotten more experience and developed better techniques. It can be in your work life, a hobby, or anything where you've grown over time. Now think about your first results and consider how you would feel if you produced that same result today. You may have been proud of it back then, but today, you'd be tempted to call it a failure and say it isn't good enough. That's because we learn and grow. Society is the same, but it grows and learns much slower than we do as individuals.

It may take a long time, probably too long for some of us to see "success" in our lifetimes, but we owe it to the generations still to come to keep moving toward accessible futures and make their world better than ours. Hopefully, they will take inspiration from our efforts – but not be satisfied. The process will continue, and more and more people will be truly and meaningfully included in society.

That's the future that excites me and that is why we keep striving for more at CIL.

Kent Schwendy

KENT M. SCHWENDY
President & CEO



Love & Compassion: THE GLORIA HOUSE

When Pastor Dana Smith reflects on the foundations of New Life II, his mind drifts back to his childhood in New Haven. He remembers the Black Panthers stationed on Goffee Street. He recalls the stores where security followed him around simply because of who he was. He thinks about the projects where he grew up; that in the 200+ units there were very few that had a traditional family structure. Drugs were rampant, and the police response was slow, if they showed up at all. He reflects on the resources provided to his neighborhood – or more accurately, the lack thereof. “The resources never got to us,” he says.

**“WHERE WAS
IT WHEN WE
NEEDED IT?”**

– PASTOR DANA SMITH

“They poured billions into the opioid epidemic, but during the heroin epidemic of the 70’s and 80’s, you couldn’t find a dollar. If you were detoxing, you detoxed in jail or in someone’s basement. If you OD’d, you were dead, and it would take a day for someone to come and get the body. Even during COVID, in our neighborhoods, things weren’t much different. A box of masks cost \$50. We were buying tubs of hand sanitizer and refilling the little bottles. We’d scream, yell, bang on the door – we needed this stuff. And after COVID died down, that’s when we started getting these materials, well after the fact. Where was it when we needed it?”



For Pastor Dana, his mission now is to ensure that the neighborhoods and communities where he grew up receive the care and resources they deserve.

"We work with everyone – black, white – we don't care. But our focus is on black and brown neighborhoods – our community's neighborhoods," he says. "We try to make sure people are taken care of. There are people out there that will say we make our own conditions, but you can't understand the struggles we've gone through. We're surviving in our conditions."

Serving the greater New Britain area, New Life II, founded in 2016 by Pastors Dana and Evelyn Smith, is Connecticut's first black-owned, faith-based, peer-led recovery community organization. It offers comprehensive recovery housing and peer services, providing intensive, person-centered addiction recovery alongside safe, affordable, drug-and alcohol-free housing. They offer non-clinical, peer-to-peer support for individuals affected by addiction, incarceration, trauma, and other significant life events, meeting individuals wherever they are in their recovery journey with enthusiasm, understanding, and without judgment.

**"WE KNOW
WHAT IT FEELS
LIKE TO NOT
HAVE, TO BE
STIGMATIZED,
AND IGNORED."**

For Pastor Dana and Pastor Evelyn, these efforts ensure that people in their communities are not forgotten.

"What used to be a crack is now a gap, and people are falling through them, and the people falling through the gaps look like me," says Pastor Dana. "Now we're trying to fill them in, but instead of cement we're filling those gaps in with love, with information, with understanding, with resources, with education and collaboration."

The Gloria House, named after Pastor Dana's mother, is another effort to prevent people from falling through those gaps. The home serves as Connecticut's first peer-run respite, a four-bedroom residential home in New Britain staffed by peers with direct lived experience with mental health, addiction, and trauma. The Gloria House offers voluntary, short-term respite services as an alternative to traditional psychiatric stays. Guests are provided a space to navigate emotional distress, one-on-one peer support, and access to many other tools and resources to promote wellness, connection, and self-determination. The Gloria House aspires to create a space where guests can find the connection and support needed to turn a difficult time into an opportunity.





"Everyone has different needs. Some people just need their rest," says Pastor. "If you're having a crisis of some sort, or life just hits you and you get the wind knocked out of you, you can't breathe at home or at work, we are the alternative – a place where you can come and get your breath. I think of life like a snow globe. Sometimes it's all shaken up, but when you get the chance to put it down, everything settles. That's what we want to be."

To develop this supportive environment, New Life II needed a partner. Pastors Dana and Evelyn, having heard of CIL through a friend at the Klingberg Family Center, reached out to CIL to turn their vision for The Gloria House into a reality. CIL found the home in New Britain that would become The Gloria House in February of 2024 and closed on the home in early March.

"They took the work off the table for us," says Pastor Dana. "From closing costs to paperwork, they made it all happen."

After furnishing the home and finding and training staff, The Gloria House has been open to residents since early July. The home is open to anyone 18 or older with an address in Connecticut, and guests can come and go as they please. The home provides 24/7 peer support with minimal paperwork and is free of charge. Amenities are designed to create a comfortable and enriching stay, including access to two full kitchens with staple foods provided, two living rooms, two TV rooms, laundry facilities, a house phone, Wi-Fi, a house computer, arts and crafts supplies, musical instruments, yoga/meditation tools, and a large backyard with a garden. Guests enjoy their private bedroom while having unlimited access to common spaces. The house encourages rest and personal regrouping, allowing guests to determine their own schedules for waking, sleeping, and eating.

Reflecting on the opening of The Gloria House, Pastor Dana acknowledges those contributing their time and efforts to help those in need, putting past experiences and growth into perspective.

"We don't know it all, but we know what it feels like to not have, to be stigmatized and ignored," he says. "We know what it's like to not have eaten in days, to be detoxing. We know what it's like to be unhoused, what it's like on Mother and Father's day and not be with your kids. We know what it's like to have your lights turned off and have an extension cord running from three houses down. There's no sympathy in the house, but there is a whole bunch of empathy."

In a world where marginalized communities have long been overlooked, the opening of The Gloria House stands as a beacon of hope and renewal. It represents a commitment to providing resources, understanding, and a sense of belonging to those who need it most, an effort that ensures everyone who walks through their doors receives not just a respite but a genuine opportunity to heal, learn, and grow. The Gloria House, the first of its kind in the state, is a place where people can find their breath amidst life's storms and begin to rebuild their lives with the love, support, and dignity they deserve.

"FROM CLOSING COSTS TO PAPERWORK, THEY MADE IT ALL HAPPEN"

Impact REPORT

Since 1979,
CIL HAS INVESTED

\$711,515,572

IN DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES



154
DEVELOPMENT
CONSULTING
PROJECTS



321
MULTIFAMILY
+ MIXED USE
UNITS



470
OTHER
PRODUCTION
(HOMEBUYER
PROGRAMS, OFFICE
SPACE, ETC.)



2,774
HOMES DEVELOPED



8,773
PEOPLE AND
FAMILIES
HELPED



287 LICENSED
MASSACHUSETTS
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES



544 LICENSED
CONNECTICUT
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES



6 LICENSED
PENNSYLVANIA
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES



2 LICENSED
DELAWARE
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES



1 LICENSED
VERMONT
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCE



13 LICENSED
TENNESSEE
COMMUNITY
RESIDENCES



ADMINISTERED **624** GRANTS & **139**
MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON
THROUGH ACCESSOLUTIONS

Accessible FUTURES

We asked the CIL team to describe in their own words what an accessible future looks like to them. Could that look like all public spaces having ramps, elevators, and clear signage so everyone can move around freely? Or is it about websites that are easy to navigate with screen readers and include captioned videos? Take a look at how they answered:



Chris Carma, VP of Real Estate Development

"IT MEANS UNIVERSAL DESIGN IN PUBLIC SPACES, HOMES, & TRANSPORTATION, WITH TECHNOLOGY THAT SUPPORTS INDEPENDENCE & INCLUSION. COMMUNITIES ARE PLANNED WITH ACCESSIBILITY AS A CORE PRINCIPLE, ENABLING EVERYONE TO PARTICIPATE FULLY & INDEPENDENTLY."

"An accessible future is one with more inclusivity than separation: better options & easier options for all to do the things they love."



Chanelle Neves, Senior Accountant



Susie Schwendy, Executive Assistant

"AN ACCESSIBLE FUTURE HAS PHYSICAL ACCESS - RAMPS, HANDRAILS, WIDE ACCESS POINTS, PLACES TO SIT & REST, AUTOMATED DOORS, VARIOUS AIDS FOR THE HEARING & SIGHT-IMPAIRED - & MENTAL ACCESS - QUIET SPACES, DARKER SPACES, SPACES TO BE LOUD"

"CIL would continue to help people with much-needed accessibility modifications so they can live independently in their home!"



Fan Mazarella, Senior Real Estate Developer



Diana Deng, Asst. Dir. of Real Estate Development

"IT LOOKS LIKE PLACEMAKING WHERE ALL SIDEWALKS ARE WIDE ENOUGH FOR WHEELCHAIRS TO PASS. LIGHT POSTS AND SIGNPOSTS ARE NOT MOUNTED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SIDEWALKS. RAMPS ARE ROUTINELY MAINTAINED. "

"For me, everyone can stay in their home, and it is accessible. No matter your circumstances."



Brenda de los Reyes, Property Management Assistant



Keatiki Changoo, Senior Accountant

"I ENVISION AN ACCESSIBLE FUTURE WHERE AI PLAYS A MUCH LARGER ROLE IN COMMUNICATION BY FURTHER ENHANCING INTERACTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH SPEECH DISABILITIES WITH SPEECH TO TEXT & TEXT TO SPEECH SYSTEMS, MAKING COMMUNICATION EVEN MORE SEAMLESS."

Future-Proofing BATHROOM DESIGNS



BY DIANA DENG, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

Over the past 45 years, CIL has learned the importance of designing homes that support aging in place and are adaptable to evolving needs. We've also found that bathrooms are the most common area needing repairs, so we've enhanced our approach to future-proofing bathroom design in our community residences.

UPGRADED BATHROOM DESIGN

From the weight of the mud job, tiles, fixtures, equipment, and daily use by residents, we understand that the framing of a bathroom in a community residence needs to support a heavier load. In the past, we framed bathrooms 16" on center, consistent with the rest of the house. However, we recognized that these high-use areas could benefit from additional reinforcement. That's why we've upgraded our design, now framing bathrooms 12" on center. This provides significantly more support, reducing the likelihood of flexing and increasing overall durability.

While I-Joists offer strength and long spans in residential construction, they can weaken if exposed to moisture, leading to costly repairs. To prevent this, we've switched to using solid 2"x10" LVL beams for bathroom floors. Unlike I-Joists, these beams are more resistant to moisture and can dry properly without losing their structural strength, reducing the need for future replacements.

Toilets in a community residence endure significantly more wear and tear compared to those in a typical home. Traditionally, residential toilets drain through the floor, but in high-use settings, this can become a vulnerability, increasing the risk of water damage. To address this, we've redesigned our bathrooms to feature wall-draining toilets. This approach eliminates the potential for leaks from the toilet flange through the floor.

In our original wet bathroom design, we included two floor drains—one in the shower area and one in the center of the room. However, we found that the pitch of the drain in the center sometimes allowed water to escape the bathroom and enter the hallway or main house. To improve this, our new design still features two drains, but we've repositioned the middle drain to the back of the room, aligning it with the shower drain. This linear setup significantly reduces the risk of water leaving the bathroom, ensuring a more efficient drainage system.

FUTURE-PROOF TIPS & TRICKS

1 NO LONGER INSULATING UNDER THE BATHROOMS.

Previously we installed insulation in the crawlspace under the bathrooms. When any waterproofing failures occurred and water got through the floor, the insulation would retain the water against the framing, therefore accelerated degradation of the framing.

2 AVOID USING FLOOR DOOR STOPS IN BATHROOMS

Doors in community residences are quite heavy, and when they consistently hit a floor door stop, the force of the door eventually weakens and knocks the door stop out of the floor, creating an indent in the waterproofing in the floor and creating a point of weakness for water to get through.

3 UPGRADED CAULKING

Bathroom corners are especially vulnerable to water penetration, making proper caulking essential. However, not all silicone sealants are created equal. At CIL, our best practice is to use high-performance silicone sealant that offers superior flexibility and easier application.

4 CAULKING TOILETS

CIL has found that adding caulking around the toilet provides an extra layer of protection, helping prevent water from seeping beneath the toilet and into the framing below.

6 USE OF SENSOR LIGHTS & FANS

Sensor fans, triggered by moisture, help prevent water damage by improving air circulation, while sensor lights eliminate the need for staff to manually turn them on and off, reducing energy consumption and improving efficiency.

8 ANNUAL UPGRADES & INSPECTIONS

Each year, CIL will conduct a thorough maintenance routine for every home. This includes re-caulking the bathroom corners and around toilets, inspecting the entire home for water damage—particularly in basements and crawl spaces—and performing any necessary upgrades to bathroom tiles, grout, fixture attachments, grab bars, and other key elements to ensure lasting durability and functionality.

5 WATER/FLOOD TESTING

After the water-proofing system is installed in the bathroom, we perform a flood test to ensure that the system is truly watertight.

7 POST-OCCUPANCY REVIEW

After 6 months of residents living in the home, CIL will perform a visual review of the basement/crawl space to check for signs of water penetration.



Team NEWS



New to the **CIL TEAM**

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER **Rob Madden**

CIL welcomed a new Real Estate Developer to the team this year, Rob Madden. As Real Estate Developer, Rob will oversee projects from conception to completion, ensuring clients needs are met throughout the entire process. Determined, personable, and driven, Rob brings a wealth of experience from his career in transforming nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities into drug and alcohol treatment centers. When he isn't working, you can find Rob traveling the world—Asia, Europe, and South America are some of his favorites, spending time with family and friends, trying new restaurants, and working on his golf game. Rob holds a Management and Marketing degree from Lasell University and believes that consistency, communication, and execution are the keys to success.

We're very excited to welcome Rob to Team CIL and look forward to seeing his impact on the communities we serve.



Impact **BUSINESS DEVELOPER** *of the year*

VP OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS **Samantha VanSchoick**

We are thrilled to announce that our very own Samantha VanSchoick, VP of Strategic Partnerships at CIL, has been awarded the prestigious Impact Business Developer of the Year award at SMPS's 2024 Amplify A/E/C National Conference! This award is a testament to Sam's outstanding achievements in client procurement and retention, demonstrating significant and measurable accomplishments in her role. Her dedication and strategic vision have played a crucial role in driving our success and showcasing the vital role of business developers within the A/E/C industries.

Congratulations, Sam! Your hard work and commitment are truly inspiring, and we are proud to have you on our team. Here's to continued success and many more milestones ahead!

Notable **ACHIEVEMENTS**

JANELLE NEVES,
PROMOTED TO SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

MARIA GREEN,
RECEIVED INTERNATIONAL COACHING FEDERATION CERTIFICATION

MARIA GREEN & KENT SCHWENDY,
ACCREDITED INSIGHTS DISCOVERY CLIENT PRACTITIONERS

Happy ANNIVERSARY

VICE PRESIDENT & CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Maria Green



This year, we are excited to congratulate CFO Maria Green on her 30-year CIL anniversary. "For those who know Maria, it comes as no surprise that she has been able to continue to grow and evolve along with CIL for the past three decades," says CEO Kent Schwendy. "She excels in her role because she has the belief that she can make the world a better place and the talent to make an impact. Her technical knowledge and business acumen would be a benefit anywhere, but her deeply caring personality is key to her leadership at CIL."

Through her 30-year career, Maria has climbed the ranks from Accountant to Senior Accountant, to Director of Realty Accounting to Assistant Controller, Controller, and now Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, and has had a hand in some of CIL's biggest strategic transformations, always bringing innovative and creative ideas to further our mission.

"Congratulations Maria on your 30 years of outstanding service to CIL, you're a tremendous asset to our organization. As a teammate for 23 of those 30 years, I had a front row seat to your evolution and growth. I appreciate your kindness, professionalism, creativity, drive, and friendship. I wish you continued success as the journey continues." – Eric Plummer

"Maria's 30 years with CIL have been nothing short of inspiring. Her dedication and leadership have transformed lives and shaped the way we support people with disabilities. It's been an honor to work alongside her and witness the lasting impact she's made on our community." – Chris Cannna

Team OUTINGS



Team ANNIVERSARIES



MARIA GREEN
30 YEARS WITH CIL



CHRIS CANNA
10 YEARS WITH CIL



MELISSA MCGEOWN
10 YEARS WITH CIL



Board of DIRECTORS

NON-PROFIT ENTITIES 2024

KENT SCHWENDY, PRESIDENT/CEO
PRESIDENT/CEO
CIL

JACK SOOS, CHAIR
SENIOR DIRECTOR
RTX

KELLY REYNGOLD, VICE CHAIR
CONTROLLER
ISO NEW ENGLAND

GIOIA ZACK, IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

RUTH BANTA, TREASURER
RETIRED
PATHLIGHT, INC.

JOSEPH C. BLACK, ASSISTANT TREASURER
FOUNDER & PASTOR,
SPIRIT AND TRUTH APOSTOLIC CHURCH, INC.

MARIA GREEN, SECRETARY
VICE PRESIDENT/CFO
CIL

PAUL SANFORD, DIRECTOR
RETIRED, FORMER EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
OPERATIONS, THE CIGNA GROUP

PATRICK PINNELL, DIRECTOR
OWNER, PATRICK L. PINNELL, FAIA/ARCHITECTURE
& TOWN PLANNING

DOUGLAS HENLEY, DIRECTOR
DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES, CENTRAL FLORIDA
TOURISM OVERSIGHT DISTRICT

FOR-PROFIT ENTITIES 2024

KENT SCHWENDY, PRESIDENT/CEO
PRESIDENT/CEO
CIL

MICHAEL GOMAN, CHAIR
PRINCIPAL
GOMAN+YORK

GIOIA ZACK, VICE CHAIR & TREASURER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WILLIAM FARLEY, DIRECTOR (FOUNDING
CHAIR)
RETIRED, PRESIDENT
CRBE CT REGION

MARIA GREEN, SECRETARY
VICE PRESIDENT/CFO
CIL

SAMANTHA VANSCHOICK*, BENEFIT OFFICER
VP OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS
CIL

JOSEPH C. BLACK, DIRECTOR
FOUNDER & PASTOR
SPIRIT AND TRUTH APOSTOLIC CHURCH, INC.

PATRICK PINNELL, DIRECTOR
OWNER, PATRICK L. PINNELL, FAIA/ARCHITECTURE &
TOWN PLANNING

*Indicates no voting rights

2024

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This year marks 45 years of **Corporation for Independent Living**. We are incredibly proud of the important progress we have made so far, and are even more excited to continue making an impact in people's lives in the future.