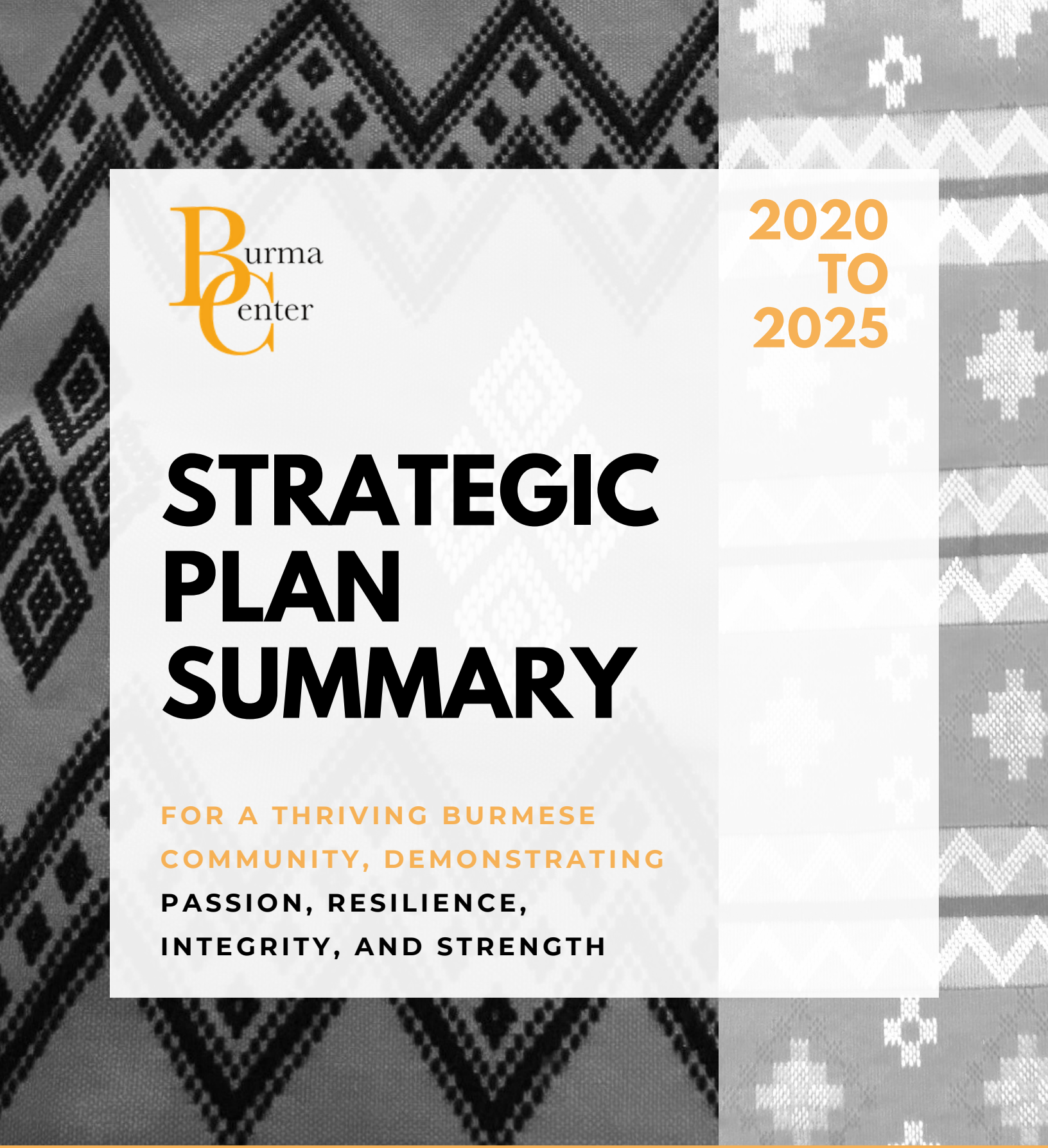

Burma Center

2020 TO 2025

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

FOR A THRIVING BURMESE COMMUNITY, DEMONSTRATING

PASSION, RESILIENCE, INTEGRITY, AND STRENGTH

765 Upton Ave,

Springfield, MI 49037

www.burmacenterus.org

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MESSAGES FROM THE TEAM

"The Burma Center's strategic plan is so empowering for me personally. It excites me and gives me hope for our community's tomorrow. I am excited to see the impact that our strategic plan will bring to our community,"
Christina Khim, Board Co-Chair

"Thank you for this opportunity to serve on the board of the Burma Center. I have a strong background in technology and administration and hope to share my 50 years of experience and wisdom in the corporate, non-profit and small business environments to assist in reaching the desired goals of the Burma Center. I am excited about the ongoing activities and plans for the Burma Center to provide the services needed by the community. I look forward to getting to know you and meeting with you soon,"
Brent Reid, Board Co-Chair

"Building on the success of the past years, the Burma Center began this process by listening to the changing and emerging needs of our Burmese community. This strategic plan summary reflects individuals' input, woven into our collective vision and goals. This collective planning creates a process of openness to new possibilities, culminating in this very ambitious strategic plan,"
Tha T. Par, Executive Director

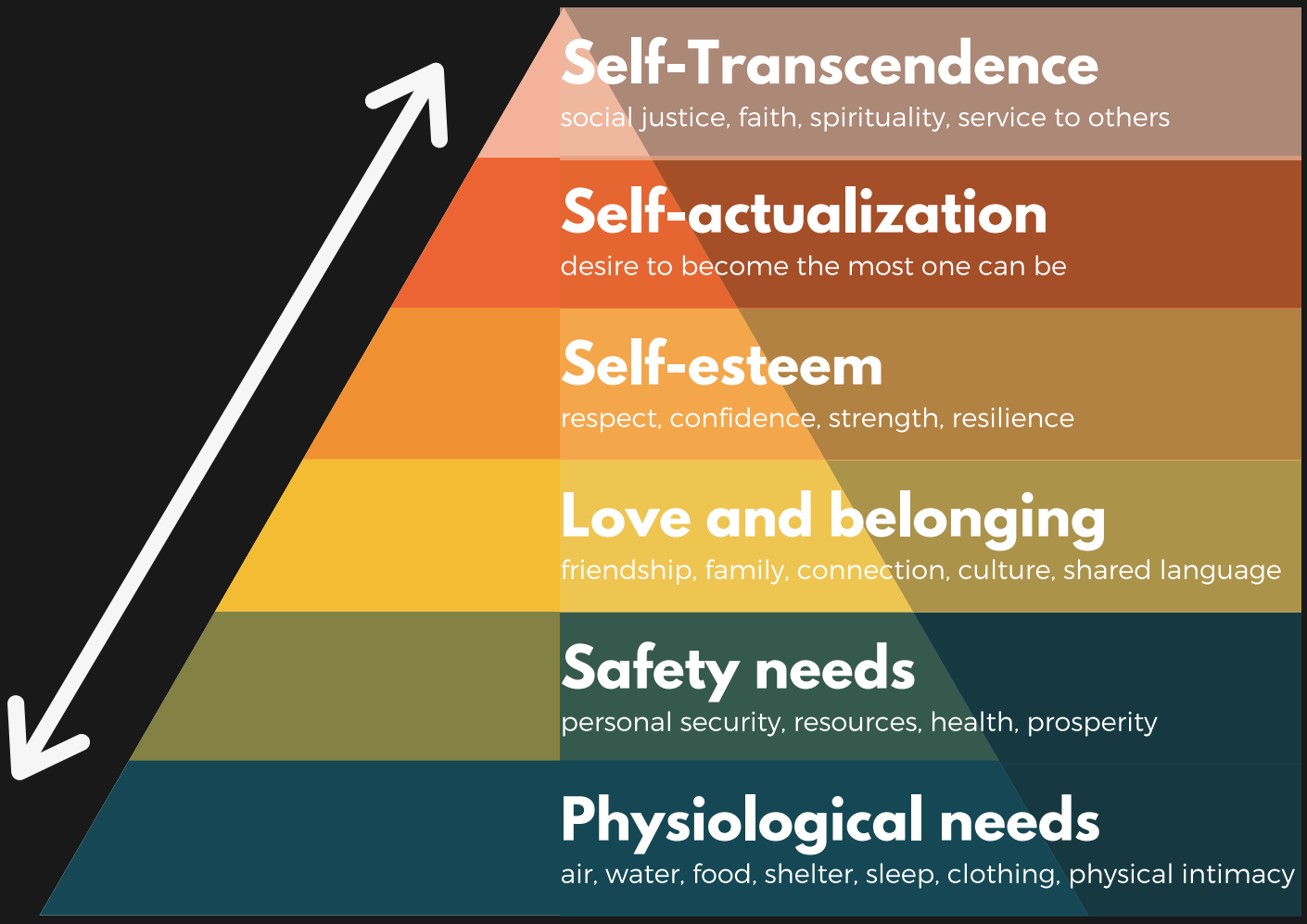
CHRISTINA KHIM
Board Co-Chair

BRENT REID
Board Co-Chair

THA T. PAR
Executive Director

PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING:

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



The Burma Center's strategic plan and theory of change are grounded in the blending of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), while affirming the refugee experience, Burmese culture, language, and history. A more comprehensive description is included on page 12.

PLANNING PROCESS

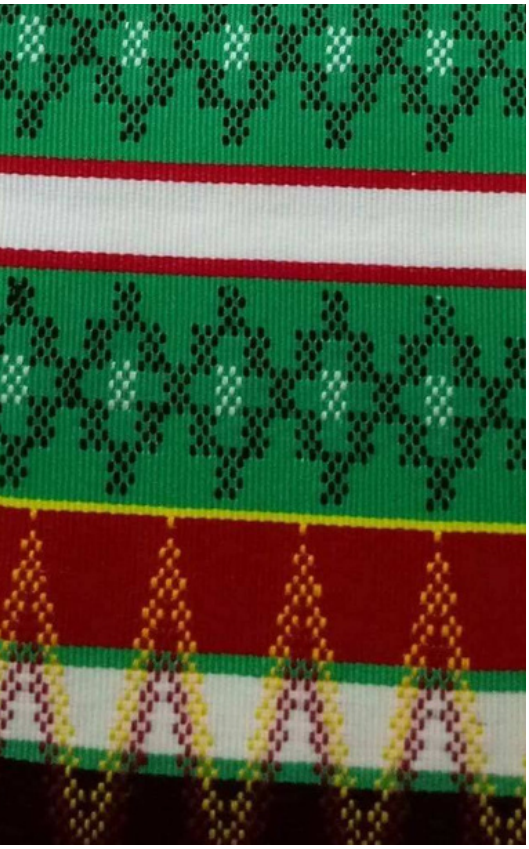
In the middle of 2019, the Burma Center embarked on a strategic planning process to ensure that the organization remained responsive to the changing needs of the Burmese community. To facilitate development of the strategic plan, the Burma Center hired Kathy Grosso, an independent consultant, to support two teams that oversaw the process: The Core Planning Team and the Strategy Planning Team.

The Core Team was made up of staff, board, and the consultant. The Core Team was responsible for the overall process and met monthly. Members of the Core Team conducted community partner interviews, assisted in historical document gathering, and served as direct reports to the consultant.

The Strategy Planning Team was made up of staff, board, community members, and partner organizations. This team met on a bimonthly basis. They were charged with synthesizing input, reviewing additional focus areas beyond those already established, and prioritizing the organizational, programmatic and operational strategies.

At the core of the Burma Center's strategic planning process was the participation of Burmese community members and partner organizations, resulting in the incorporation of their perspectives and ideas. The plan was informed by the people and for the people through community meetings, church visits, interviews with stakeholders and partner organizations, and community surveys.

Collectively, the two teams identified five focus areas as priorities for the organization to implement in this five-year strategic plan. The strategic plan was completed in July of 2020. The plan was adopted by the Burma Center Board of Directors in August of 2020.



MISSION

The Burma Center empowers Burmese Americans and the Battle Creek community through advocacy, engagement, and education to support the whole person.

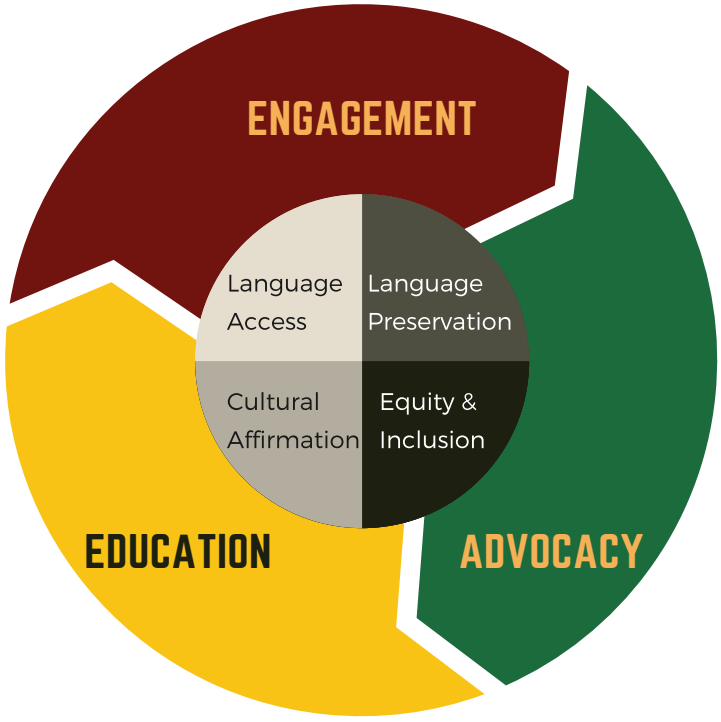
VISION

We envision a community where Burmese Americans are valued for who they are and their contribution, while being empowered to thrive alongside the people of Battle Creek to create a more equitable and inclusive community.

VALUES

Excellence
Responsibility
Community
Empowerment
Justice
Compassion
Integrity
Sustainability

THEORY OF CHANGE



STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The Burma Center is proud to announce a new strategic framework that will guide the organization through 2025, via five strategic focus areas:

1 / HEALTH & WELLNESS

Provide relevant and culturally appropriate resources, educational programs, and referrals to improve physical and emotional health.

2 / EDUCATION & CAREER

To support youth, young adults, and families, in their formal educational experience and beyond, to be prepared and better equipped for post secondary education and/or career entry.

3 / COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To engage the Burmese Community, as well as the greater Battle Creek and beyond communities, to increase access to needed services and programs that support relationship building, leadership, and advocacy.

4 / FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

To provide support for Burmese parents and families in their desire to provide what is most needed for their children, from birth to adult.

5 / ORGANIZATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

To align various segments of the organization (i.e. staffing, facility needs, funding, board development, etc.) with the stated goals and strategies of the Strategic Plan, to ensure the organization is supporting the Burmese community, in a way that is sustainable and equitable.

1 / Health & Wellness

PROVIDE RELEVANT AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE RESOURCES, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND REFERRALS TO IMPROVE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH.

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
OBJECTIVE 1 ENSURE ALL BURMESE RESIDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.	• IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES OVERALL & REDUCTION IN BURMESE COVID-19 CASES, HOSPITALIZATIONS, AND DEATHS • ALL BURMESE RESIDENTS HAVE A PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN, DENTAL, & VISION CARE
OBJECTIVE 2 PARTNER AND/OR CONTRACT WITH LOCAL & STATEWIDE HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS TO OFFER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AND RESOURCES.	• INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION CONTRACTS WITH ALL MAJOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS IN BATTLE CREEK • INCREASED AWARENESS OF HEALTH & WELLNESS TOPICS FROM JOINTLY DEVELOPED PROGRAMS, SUCH AS DIABETES, MATERNAL & FEMALE HEALTH
OBJECTIVE 3 PARTNER WITH LOCAL MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH EXPERTS AND ORGANIZATIONS TO OFFER IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS AND TRAINING.	• INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FROM JOINTLY DEVELOPED PROGRAMS • LOCAL MENTAL HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS ARE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IN SERVICE DELIVERY
OBJECTIVE 4 INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING.	• INCREASED COMMUNITY ACCESS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES AND WELLNESS PROGRAMMING AT THE HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTER, LOCATED AT THE BURMA CENTER

2 / Education & Career

TO SUPPORT YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS, AND FAMILIES, IN THEIR FORMAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND BEYOND, TO BE PREPARED AND BETTER EQUIPPED FOR POST SECONDARY EDUCATION AND/OR CAREER ENTRY.

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
OBJECTIVE 1 FOSTER PARTNERSHIPS WITH K-12 SCHOOLS, EARLY CHILD CARE CENTERS, AND POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS.	• PARTNERSHIP WITH SCHOOL LIAISONS IN LAKEVIEW, BCPS, & CALHOUN AREA CAREER CENTER • INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION CONTRACTS WITH ALL PUBLIC & PRIVATE SCHOOLS • PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL PRIVATE SCHOOLS & CHILD CARE CENTERS TO SUPPORT BURMESE STUDENTS
OBJECTIVE 2 PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH SUPPLEMENTARY ACADEMIC & SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORTS, VIA EXPANSION OF THRIVE PROGRAM.	• EXPANDED THRIVE PROGRAM, INCLUDING NEW VIRTUAL TUTORING FOR K-12, ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAM, AFTER SCHOOL AND SUMMER PROGRAM FOR MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS • DEVELOP BURMESE LANGUAGE GUIDE FOR NAVIGATING K-12 SCHOOLS AND COLLEGE
OBJECTIVE 3 PARTNER WITH LOCAL CAREER PREPARATION INSTITUTIONS & EMPLOYERS.	• REVENUE GENERATION FROM REFERRALS AND ASSISTING LOCAL COMPANIES WITH RECRUITMENT OF BURMESE EMPLOYEES • DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING REGARDING BURMESE EMPLOYEES • YOUNG BURMSE PROFESSIONALS GAIN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & EXPERIENCE VIA INTERNSHIPS AT BURMA CENTER AND PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS
OBJECTIVE 4 CREATE BURMESE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE.	• LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, CAREER ADVANCEMENT, AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAMS • FULL TIME CAREER COACH

3/Community Engagement

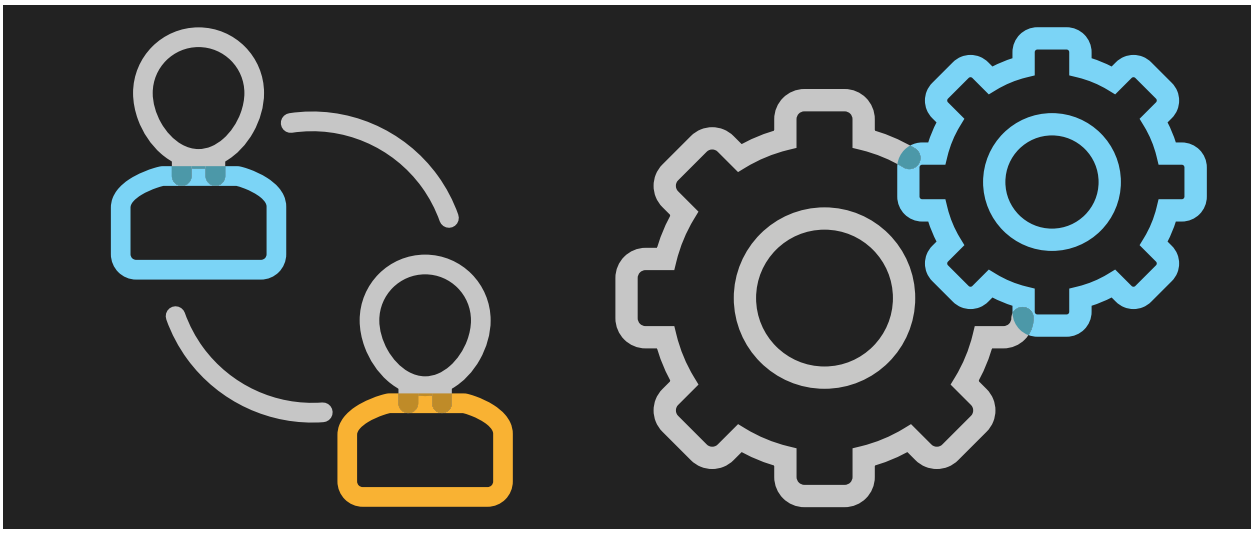
TO ENGAGE THE BURMESE COMMUNITY, AS WELL AS THE GREATER BATTLE CREEK AND BEYOND COMMUNITIES, TO INCREASE ACCESS TO NEEDED SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THAT SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING, LEADERSHIP, AND ADVOCACY.

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
OBJECTIVE 1 BURMA CENTER IS RECOGNIZED AS A COMMUNITY HUB FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT FOR BURMESE PEOPLE, ACROSS GENERATIONS.	• CREATION OF A BURMA CENTER ADVISORY COUNCIL • BURMESE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS ADVOCATE FOR COMMUNITY NEEDS • PEOPLE INVEST IN MEMBERSHIP WITH THE BURMA CENTER
OBJECTIVE 2 ESTABLISH AND NURTURE EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS & GROUPS.	• ESTABLISHED CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER BURMESE COMMUNITIES IN MICHIGAN AND THE MIDWEST • STRONG PARTNERSHIPS WITH MEMBERS OF CATALYZING COMMUNITY GIVING AND OTHER BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR-LED ORGANIZATIONS • PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS DEMONSTRATE ENHANCED CULTURAL COMPETENCY REGARDING BURMESE COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
OBJECTIVE 3 MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT PROGRAMMING, PARTNERSHIPS, AND RESOURCES.	• DESIGNATED STAFF POSITION TO FOCUS ON MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS TASKS • INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS AND REACH • ADVOCACY FOR & PROVIDING LANGUAGE ACCESS, INTERPRETATION & TRANSLATION
OBJECTIVE 4 EMPOWER BURMESE COMMUNITY THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & RESPONSIBILITY	• CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COURSE • GET OUT THE VOTE PROGRAMS WITH PARTNER ORGS • STAFF PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP GROUPS LIKE CDBG RACIAL EQUITY TASK FORCE

4 / Family Empowerment

TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR BURMESE PARENTS AND FAMILIES IN THEIR DESIRE TO PROVIDE WHAT IS MOST NEEDED FOR THEIR CHILDREN, FROM BIRTH TO ADULT.

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
OBJECTIVE 1 PROVIDE RELEVANT AND TIMELY SUPPORT FOR BURMESE FAMILIES.	• CREATION OF A FAMILY EMPOWERMENT "DEPARTMENT" • DESIGNATED FAMILY EMPOWERMENT FULL TIME STAFF POSITION • CASE MANAGEMENT & RESOURCE NAVIGATION FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS • HIGH QUALITY TRAINING AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMMING, INCLUDING FAMILY AND MARRIAGE COUNSELING AND CLASSES ON FINANCIAL LITERACY, WEALTH BUILDING, REAL ESTATE, PARENTING, AND NAVIGATING K-12 EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS
OBJECTIVE 2 HONOR AND PRESERVE BURMESE CULTURE, LANGUAGE, AND TRADITIONS TO SUPPORT POSITIVE CULTURAL IDENTITY.	• START BURMESE LANGUAGE CLASSES • BURMA CENTER-SPONSORED CULTURAL EVENTS ORGANIZED BY DIFFERENT ETHNIC/TRIBAL BURMESE GROUPS IN BATTLE CREEK • DOCUMENTATION AND EXHIBITION OF BURMESE ARTIFACTS, STORIES, AND EXPERIENCES OF BURMESE PEOPLE



5 / Organizational Infrastructure

TO ALIGN VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE ORGANIZATION WITH THE STRATEGIC PLAN IN A WAY THAT IS SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE, ENSURING THE ORGANIZATION CONTINUES TO BE ABLE TO SUPPORT THE BURMESE COMMUNITY.

OBJECTIVES	OUTCOMES
OBJECTIVE 1 DIVERSIFY AND AUGMENT REVENUE STREAMS TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC PLAN	• DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A FUND DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO ADVANCE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES • LAUNCH CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT, RENOVATIONS, HEATING, AND COOLING NEEDS
OBJECTIVE 2 ALIGN STAFFING POSITIONS & CAPACITY TO STATED GOALS & STRATEGIES	• STAFF ENGAGE IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES & TRAINING • STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT AND HIRING OF STAFFING POSITIONS OUTLINED IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN
OBJECTIVE 3 THE BURMA CENTER'S GOVERNANCE AND BOARD MEMBERS SUPPORT STAFF IN ACHIEVING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GROWTH	• 100% OF BOARD MEMBERS GIVE ANNUALLY • THE BOARD GROWS TO 12 MEMBERS WITH A ROBUST COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP PIPELINE • BOARD MEMBERS ENGAGE IN BOARD DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING
OBJECTIVE 4 DETERMINE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN FOR THE BUILDING & LAND THAT IS PROFIT-GENERATING AND ALIGNS WITH STRATEGIC PLAN	• CREATE A FACILITY TASK FORCE TO CHAMPION THIS PROCESS • IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE BUSINESS MODEL FOR BUILDING AND LAND • BEAUTIFY COURTYARD AND GROUNDS • COMPLETE COMMERCIAL KITCHEN

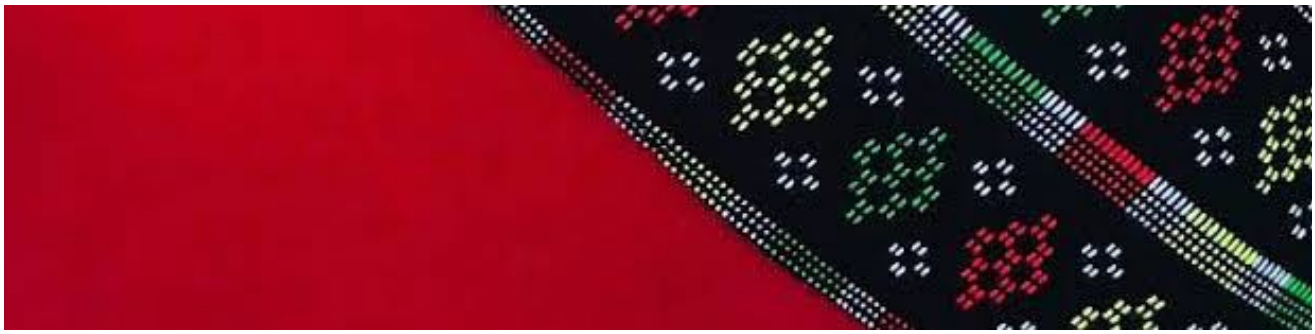
WEAVING IT ALL TOGETHER

Integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs into the Burma Center's Strategic Plan

The Burma Center is committed to honoring the dignity and range of experiences of all Burmese community members in the Battle Creek area. According to the CDC's website, between 2008-2014, 117,433 refugees came to the United States from Burma (also known as Myanmar) via refugee camps in Thailand and Malaysia. Out of this total, 3,743 people relocated to Michigan. The majority of Burmese refugees in Michigan have established themselves and their families in the Battle Creek area. In 2019, the Asian population in Calhoun County was 3,804, or 2.8% of the total population. There are approximately 340 Burmese students in Lakeview School District and almost 100 Burmese students in Battle Creek Public Schools.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, refugees are people who have left their country of origin due to actually experiencing persecution or for having "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."

In Burma there are 135 distinct ethnic groups that the government officially recognizes, each with its own different culture, dialect, and customs. Most Burmese people in Battle Creek are from the Chin state, a mostly Christian region of Burma, close to the border with India. The Chin ethnic identity includes the following tribes: Falam, Hakha, Mizo, Zomi, and Mindat. Much like the Muslim Rohingya, the Chin people have been violently persecuted for their religion in a majority Buddhist country. Battle Creek's Burmese community is not a monolith; each



tribe and its members' experiences are unique. Other Burmese ethic groups living in Battle Creek includes Kachin, Karen, and Bamar.

A recent journal article on refugees and Maslow's hierarchy of needs states that refugees face "many challenges, including language and cultural barriers [that] stem from the resettlement and post-migration experience... Common challenges include: pressure to assimilate to the new culture, xenophobia, prejudice and discrimination, understanding legal practices, a decline in ethnic identity, changes in family dynamics, and financial stress. These difficulties hinder psychological, biological, and social development and may exacerbate post-migration anxiety, feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, intergenerational conflict, and physical illness... Existing trauma may be compounded by any or all of these factors."

A Western Michigan University Public Radio segment from April 2018 noted, "The trauma of fleeing a country in conflict can often turn into mental illness, even years later. But the Western concept of mental health doesn't exist in Burmese culture. Words like 'depression' often don't translate. As a result, some Burmese refugees aren't getting the care they need." This segment spotlighted community leaders Martha Thawnghmung, founder of the Burma Center, and Elizabeth Lian. Elizabeth said, "Mental health is a concept that is still very new to a point where we don't even have terms for it. Even 'mental health' those two words are non-existent."

Burmese refugees and their descendants each have a unique story, originating with their ties to Burma. The Burma Center's recent strategic planning process reflected a participatory, community engagement methodology that is rooted in the organization's values of community, empowerment, justice, compassion, integrity, sustainability, excellence, and responsibility. This strategic framework is grounded in Maslow's hierarchy of needs in a way that is informed by the refugee and immigrant experience, amplifying a shared experience of collective resilience and healing.

While Maslow designed this framework originally in 1943 as a hierarchy, the Burma Center's application reflects a fluid and holistic approach to the human experience, recognizing an overlapping of stages that is better described as multi-directional. The resulting strategic plan weaves this philosophical grounding into the priorities that the community emphasized, including: health and wellbeing, education, ongoing community building and strengthening, and family empowerment.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With generous support from our funders, including the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, and the Battle Creek Community Foundation, the Burma Center is well poised and committed to continuing to partner on the strategies reflected in this plan. We strongly believe that this strategic plan will help lead us into a future with a thriving Burmese community, demonstrating our collective passion, resilience, integrity, and strength.

We offer enormous gratitude to everyone who contributed to this strategic planning process. Kathy Grosso, our strategic planning consultant, led a very thoughtful and community-based process. With her guidance, developing this plan was a collaborative effort. Collaboratively, we will also work to implement the plan and bring our shared vision to fruition.