

### PROBLEM

A new client family came to us with an existing plan to develop a vacant plot of land into a community center in their home town. The project had many moving parts and projections of the budget had ballooned to over \$50 million. The family wanted to find a way to put its wealth to work in the community, but was struggling with the scale and complexities of the chosen path. We wondered whether this path was fully aligned with their goals.

### SOLUTION

In the initial phase of our work together, we led family members through a series of activities to learn more about their values and long-term goals. One activity involved an exercise developed by the non-profit organization 21/64 that resonated with this family. It involved each family member selecting images that symbolically represented different values and beliefs. Interestingly, we found that the family shared two important values: simplicity and freedom. In our subsequent discussions, we reminded them that their financial choices should support these values rather than conflict with them. Over time, the family agreed that this project did not align with their goals and we helped them to consider less-complicated alternatives for having impact in their community. This represented a significant clarification of family goals as well as a significant change in direction, made more difficult by the “sunk costs” of time and funds already invested in the community center project.



### RESULT

As a principle, we focus on understanding values and promoting cohesion in our work with families. In this case, the use of exercises to tease out values and goals helped the family clarify what was important and what was not working. With this foundation, we were able to help the family move forward on a new path by finding a buyer for the land who had a similar vision for a community center, eliminating further hassle and expense on the existing project, and clarifying new plans for achieving positive impact in the community.