



COMMON GROUND

CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES AND ISSUES IN THE TWIN CITIES REGION | SPRING 2011

Mixed Outcomes at the Capitol for **HIRE Minnesota**

By Jeff Bauer, HIRE Minnesota member, Alliance board member and director of public policy and civic engagement at The Family Partnership

Last summer, the Economic Policy Institute released a national report showing that Minnesota has some of the worst employment-related racial disparities in the country. In the months that followed, HIRE Minnesota and our community partners leveraged the EPI findings to build a strong case to fight for equitable job opportunities during the 2011 legislative session. With the EPI's study as irrefutable evidence that Minnesota has a chronic equity problem, the stage was set to push our elected officials to make real change and significant progress this year.



Minnesota has a chronic equity problem, and the stage was set to push our elected officials to make real change.

Our sense of collective optimism quickly faded, however, as it became clear that we were facing a very different Legislature than in previous years; one that was not only indifferent to arguments about equity and racial disparities, but was actually determined to dismantle some of the existing policies and structures to ensure equal opportunity for all and to protect people from discrimination.



HIRE Minnesota supporters gather on the Capitol steps.

Among the most egregious attacks on equal rights were:

- An omnibus public safety bill that slashed the Minnesota Department of Human Rights budget by 65 percent and removed all education and technical assistance from its mission.
- A proposal to repeal the state's gender pay equity law, which ensures that female local government employees are fairly compensated compared to their male peers.

Working alongside our community partners and legislative allies, HIRE Minnesota quickly mobilized to oppose both of these efforts. We joined the Pay Equity coalition to fight the threat to our state's decades-long commitment to eliminating gender bias in local government compensation levels. While gender pay equity may seem like an issue of the past,

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The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition of grassroots organizations that work together to advance racial, economic and environmental justice in the way growth and development occurs in the Twin Cities region.

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The work of the Alliance is generously supported by the following **FUNDERS:**

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*From the Director's Desk***Met Council seeks to chart a new course**

It's been nearly 45 years since the Metropolitan Council was formed and charged with ensuring the orderly and economical development of the Twin Cities region. The council is responsible for coordinating, operating and maintaining our wastewater and sewer system, transit service, airports and regional parks. It also runs a successful affordable housing program, and has a planning and community development division that assists local authorities with anticipating growth, protecting natural areas and setting future housing growth goals.

The council scores well on local opinion polls and, along with numerous civic, business and media organizations, has played an important role in fostering a greater appreciation of the regional perspective related to growth and development. That is, what one community or one municipality does has a broader impact on the whole metro area.

The well-being of our communities and residents improves when the burdens and benefits of new growth and expansion are equally shared. The way our roads are built and maintained, how our lakes and groundwater are protected, and how we regulate activities to eliminate air pollution affect people across city and county lines.

The central organizing principle in this regionalist perspective is that we are all interconnected by geography, government services, neighborhoods, job centers and transportation corridors. At our best, we share resources to achieve efficiencies, to prioritize growth needs and to address stark racial and

The wellbeing of our communities and residents improves when the burdens and benefits of new growth and expansion are equally shared.

economic disparities. At our best, we support communities that are struggling. Our state has always possessed a strong sense of civic spirit and public service. We saw this when the 35W bridge collapsed, and we saw this as neighbors and strangers rushed to help one another after a tornado ripped through north Minneapolis and its surrounding suburbs.

Yet at our worst, we are a region with serious and troubling racial disparities. Disparities that are leaving a major portion of our population behind in educational outcomes, in income, in housing quality and countless other areas important to daily life. At our worst, we prioritize the needs of the individual over the collective needs of the larger community. At our worst we prioritize growth at all costs, or embrace a not-in-my-backyard attitude that impedes the common good.

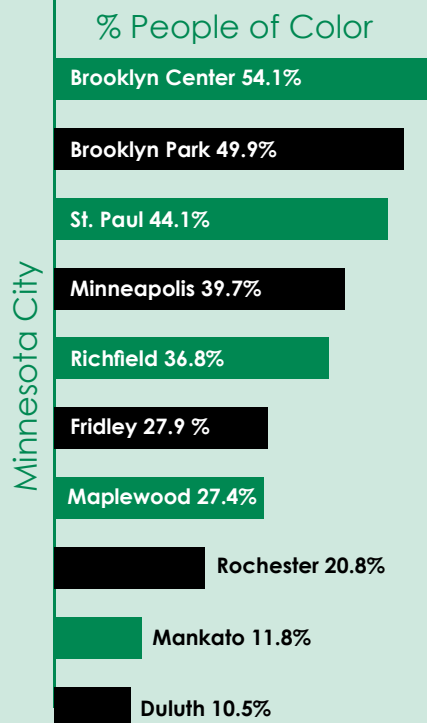
Our new Met Council is well positioned to steer our region's growth in a new direction. One of the most promising aspects of the new council is its diversity. The new Met Council has an improved racial balance, but is also comprised of a mix of social justice, labor, business and public leaders that may allow the body to make more progressive decisions over the next four





New Census Data Reveal A Changing Region

The 2010 census figures reveal a region unlike any other in the country.



The population growth in the core cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis has been virtually stagnant since 2000. "Unlike its top competitors," says Steve Berg in Minnpost, "Minneapolis-St. Paul over the last decade grew solely on its suburban edge while the central cities and inner suburbs continued to lose population and comparative wealth."

What can our local leaders do to revitalize our urban core? Exciting redevelopment opportunities await, such as a major redevelopment plan in Minneapolis's 7-acre Bassett Creek Valley. Yet the Harrison Neighborhood Association has had to remain vigilant to ensure city and county officials adhere to their long-term commitments to job creation and housing development in the valley.

A burgeoning transitway system will also go a long way to connect our region's many resources. But will it be planned primarily as a commuter system that encourages development on the urban fringe? Or will it truly allow people to move about our region, acknowledging that jobs, housing and cultural gems exist throughout our 11-county metro?

One of the most interesting trends revealed in the census data is that we are no longer a homogenous region. Minneapolis and St. Paul are home to around 42 percent people of color, but some suburban communities have now surpassed the urban centers in diversity. Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center in the northwest metro have 50 and 54 percent people of color respectively. Even larger cities in Greater Minnesota such as Rochester, Duluth and Mankato now have populations of color of 10-20 percent. Our region and our state are changing, and if we are to be healthy in the future, our policies will also need to evolve to ensure people of color are not left behind.

years. That must include a commitment to making the Twin Cities one of the most livable regions in the nation.

Already, the new Met Council has negotiated a labor agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union (the drivers and operators of our transit system), avoiding a costly and harmful transit strike. That's a good start for the Met Council, which now counts a plurality of labor supporters.

Still, several storm clouds loom over the Met Council, including a state Legislature that seems committed to starving the transit system of funds for operations and expansion. The council is also facing at least one proposal that is inconsistent with a fix-it-first approach to addressing our region's infrastructure needs. Several high profile public officials are supporting a proposal to build incredibly expensive super highway bridge to replace Stillwater's ailing lift bridge. Proponents of the \$700 million mega-bridge want a second freeway crossing of the St. Croix river, despite the presence of I-94 a mere six miles to the south. Groups like the Sierra Club have proposed a more modest river crossing that would reduce the price of a new bridge by at least one-third, while freeing up substantial funds to address our region's crumbling roads. Additionally, the alternate plan would limit state subsidies that would primarily benefit Wisconsin land owners.

It would be nice to see our Met Council come to the conclusion that the money saved by building a more reasonable bridge in Stillwater could be reinvested on the Northside of Minneapolis, to support projects like the southward extension of Van White Blvd. That project includes a bridge structure that might need a \$5 million infusion to reconnect south and north Minneapolis, creating easier access to educational opportunities at Dunwoody Institute and the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Plus, some of the redirected funds could be targeted to tornado relief efforts, residential rebuilding projects and infrastructure replacement in parts of our metro that could use the attention.

The most critical thing for the new Met Council to take into consideration is that the decisions they make related to growth and development in the Twin Cities – even what seem like local decisions – affect everyone who lives and works in our region. Given that we have some of the worst disparities in the nation, we need to be cognizant that many of the growth decisions the council makes has an effect on low-income people and people of color.

Russ Adams

Using an Opportunities Framework for Community Engagement Along Transit Corridors

By 2030, transportation in the Twin Cities will likely look completely different than it does today. Twenty years from now, a regional network of transitways should be up and running, connecting disparate areas of the Twin Cities through light rail transit, commuter rail, streetcars and bus rapid transit. These expansions would bring our region up-to-speed with others around the country that have had fully developed transit systems for decades.

To help plan these major developments in a way that produces “sustainable, vibrant and healthy communities,” the Twin Cities region received two three-year grants totaling \$21 million. This Corridors of Opportunity initiative is led by the Met Council in partnership with a broad consortium of policymakers, foundations, community organizations and other leaders. The Corridors of Opportunity Policy Board named the Alliance, the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing (MCNO) and Nexus Community Partners to help form the initiative’s policies around community engagement.

Community engagement is a critical piece of transitway development, which allows residents who will be affected by a transitway and its associated development to have a say in how it is designed, built and operated. The Community Engagement Team (CET) is charged with designing criteria that will inform the Policy Board’s decisions about

allocating \$750,000 to community-based organizations to do community organizing around transitway development. In addition, the CET will make recommendations for how to improve the ways in which our region’s public agencies implement community engagement programs along transitways and incorporate feedback from residents.

“With limited resources to invest in outreach and engagement, and a strong desire to demonstrate successful outcomes, there needs to be a mechanism to prioritize our work over the next several years,” says Margaret Kaplan of MCNO. “We needed to demonstrate a framework for allocating funds, and we are using an opportunities-based approach.”

The opportunities-based framework would identify areas along proposed transitways that have significant populations of low-income people, people of color, disabled people and/or new immigrants, and that offer opportunities to influence policy outcomes. This approach would build or strengthen relationships with existing community-based groups on the ground, connect them to community engagement structures, and prioritize them for funding. Rather than a geography-based approach that would prioritize one specific corridor to receive the majority of the resources, the funding will be spread across corridors where the most opportunity exists to fundamentally transform our region’s approach to community engagement.

The opportunity framework is flexible enough to include all corridors at the decision points when outreach and engagement are most critical. It doesn’t pit one geographic area against another for resources, but

Ways to Participate in Community Engagement Along Transit Corridors

- ▶ **Join** the CET mailing list for updates and event announcements by emailing joan@metrostability.org
- ▶ **Attend** semiannual CET community meetings
- ▶ **Apply** for a community engagement grant
- ▶ **Join** a grassroots organizing campaign along a transit corridor
- ▶ **Serve** on a corridor community advisory committee



Community members gathered at a Corridors of Opportunity community engagement meeting

instead benefits the entire region simultaneously. It also elevates the CET's overarching commitment that engagement of marginalized communities should focus not only on equitable process, but equitable outcomes. Most importantly, it will honor local knowledge and leadership by allowing marginalized communities to articulate the opportunities in their midst.

Another significant benefit to this approach is that it will allow corridors around the region to share information and learn from one another in real time. New relationships can be built between residents, community-based organizations and corridor managers around the region, and new leaders will be elevated for participation in formal community engagement structures like corridor community advisory committees.

As we have learned on the Central Corridor, community engagement must happen early and often to result in a project that meets the needs and expectations of all residents. The CET is committed to designing a process that allows as many points of engagement and includes as many people as possible.

Stops for Us Coalition Honored with National Environmental Justice Award



In 2010, the Stops for Us coalition, of which the Alliance is a member, was chosen as the winner of the U.S. Environment Protection Agency's National Achievements in Environmental Justice Award. The award recognizes the coalition's success in getting three missing stations added to the eastern end of the Central Corridor light rail transit line at Hamline Avenue, Victoria Street and Western Avenue. These stations ensure that east University Avenue neighborhoods have access to the train that will be running through the heart of their communities, as well as benefit from the future development opportunities that the light rail brings.

U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson will be in the Twin Cities this summer to present the coalition with the award and acknowledge all of their important work for racial and environmental justice.

Congratulations and thanks to the Stops for Us coalition members for all of your hard work!

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Development Corporation
Community Stabilization Project
District Councils Collaborative of
St. Paul and Minneapolis
Got Voice, Got Power!
Hmong Business Association
Housing Preservation Project
ISAIAH
Jewish Community Action
Just Equity
MICA
Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo Committee
Saint Paul NAACP
Transit for Livable Communities
UFCW Local 789
University United
University Avenue Business Association**

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HIRE MN UPDATE



“The proposed 65 percent budget cut to the Department of Human Rights is by far the worst to any agency, and it would eviscerate our ability to investigate human rights violations...This I will not allow.” – Gov. Mark Dayton

women are still significantly underpaid in our state. And women of color fare worse: Among the general working population in Minnesota, white women earn 77 cents for every dollar men earn, Native American women earn 69 cents, African-American women earn 61 cents, and Latina women earn 51 cents on the dollar. After working together to raise public awareness of this issue and educating legislators about the importance of the law, our first victory of the legislative session came with the withdrawal of the gender pay equity repeal bill in April.

The campaign to save the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, however, promises to continue until a final budget resolution is reached between Governor Dayton and the Legislature. MDHR is a critical ally in the fight to end racial and gender-based employment disparities in Minnesota, as it is the only state agency charged with eliminating discrimination in our state. The agency’s ability to manage its caseload is already compromised by significant budget cuts in previous years, but staff estimate that the average amount of time to resolve a case will triple if these budget cuts are enacted. What’s worse, the proposed policy changes to MDHR’s mission would also eliminate its ability to help businesses proactively diversify their workforce and hold state contractors accountable to the state’s equal opportunity laws.



HIRE Minnesota held a joint public action at the state Capitol with the AFFIRM Coalition. We presented the governor with a letter signed by dozens of HIRE Minnesota partner organizations and community leaders asking him to stand firm in his commitment to fully fund MDHR for the next biennium. We also held a community meeting in early June to engender more community support for MDHR, amplifying the



Above and lower left: HIRE Minnesota supporters gather on the Capitol steps to support Gov. Dayton’s demand that MDHR be fully funded.

echo chamber of voices that are calling for full funding of the agency.

Emboldened by our support, Governor Dayton vetoed the omnibus public safety bill containing the massive cut to MDHR in late May. In his response to the Legislature, Gov. Dayton provided a powerful statement about the importance of MDHR’s work: “The proposed 65 percent cut to the Department of Human Rights is by far the worst to any agency, and it would eviscerate our ability to investigate human rights violations...(The Legislature’s) extreme cut in funding, along with your policy language, would weaken the Human Rights Act and lessen the effectiveness of the Department of Human Rights. This I will not allow.”

HIRE Minnesota will continue to fight until funding is restored, and the power to educate, assist and vigorously enforce the state’s equal opportunity laws is restored. To learn more and join our efforts, visit www.hiremn.org.



Governor Dayton Commits to Addressing Minnesota's Racial Economic Disparities

Minnesota has a long way to go to address our prevailing racial economic disparities. Fortunately, Gov. Mark Dayton took an important step toward doing so this spring by acknowledging that racial equity is a priority of his administration. Following up on a campaign promise, Gov. Dayton visited North Minneapolis for the Black Economic Summit in March. The summit provided hundreds of community members an opportunity to meet with the governor and describe the stark realities of the economic situation for African Americans in Minnesota. Many community leaders were also able to make recommendations for what the state government could do to close the gap.

"There seem to be two Minnesotas. One black, one white, both separate and unequal."

– Prof. Nekima Levy-Pounds

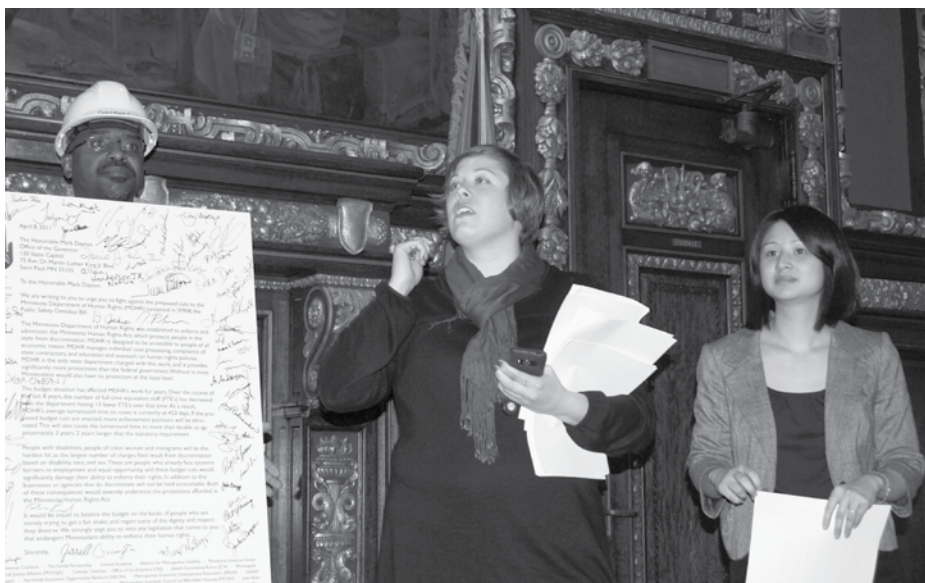
Professor Nekima Levy-Pounds of the University of St. Thomas started off by describing the stark realities of the economic situation for African Americans in Minnesota. "There seem to be two Minnesotas. One black, one white, both separate and unequal," said Levy-Pounds.

HIRE Minnesota founder Louis J. King of Summit Academy OIC was invited to make a presentation about our state's unacceptable employment disparities. Recent studies have shown that black people in Minnesota are more than three times as likely to be unemployed as whites, even after controlling for education levels.

King articulated HIRE Minnesota's position that all public policies designed to create jobs must have explicit goals for hiring people of color. He also provided specific actions that state agencies like the Department of Transportation, the Department of Employment and Economic Development and the Department of Human Rights could take to proactively improve their own hiring diversity and that of the businesses they oversee.

Gov. Dayton provided a 17-page response to the recommendations made by HIRE Minnesota and other community leaders, which detailed the first steps the administration is prepared to take to correct this problem. HIRE Minnesota is preparing a more detailed set of recommendations for the governor's office, which will outline what would really need to happen to make a significant dent in our state's employment disparities.

To read more about the summit, HIRE Minnesota's recommendations and the governor's response, visit www.hiremn.org.



Gov. Dayton's staff thank HIRE Minnesota for supporting the Department of Human Rights.



HIRE MN UPDATE

Tornado Relief Efforts Must Bring Jobs to Northside Communities

North Minneapolis is facing an estimated \$166 million in damages from the May 22 tornado that tore through the heart of the Near North neighborhoods. HIRE Minnesota and other community leaders are gathering in support of the We Care Northside! coalition to ensure that a significant amount of the rebuilding work is contracted with local and minority firms and creates new employment opportunities for Northside residents and people of color.

"A core value of this effort is that the economic exchange that will occur because of the rebuilding will remain in this community," said Louis King in a June 2 interview with MPR News. King is the founder of HIRE Minnesota, and one of several HIRE leaders who have been supporting community efforts to connect rebuilding efforts to an economic boost for the Northside.

The first effort already underway is to go door-to-door in the affected areas, offering homeowners a list all of the Northside businesses qualified to assist residents. The coalition has also set up hotlines for business and social service referrals.

To learn more about We Care Northside!, visit <http://bit.ly/kWUcOW>.

Push to Hold MnDOT Accountable Continues

Summer is finally here, and that means Minnesota's heaviest months for highway construction have also arrived. After last year's tremendous progress to set stronger standards for highway contractors' hiring procedures, HIRE Minnesota is gearing up for a busy summer working with MnDOT to meet the agency's hiring goals for women and people of color for the first time.

In its 20th year of tracking hiring demographics, MnDOT has an opportunity to actually meet its goals to hire 6 percent women and 11 percent people of color in the 11-county metro area this summer. That could bring an estimated 375 more family-sustaining jobs to these populations each year. HIRE will be monitoring hiring progress on our region's top 10 construction projects monthly, and remains committed to working with other stakeholders to implement any necessary course corrections on a timely basis.

With HIRE MN's help, CCLRT Contractors Meeting Goals

It will be years before trains are rolling down University Avenue, but heavy construction on the Central Corridor LRT is well underway. And there's good news. After months of meeting with HIRE and other concerned community members, the major contractors are now reporting that they are meeting their hiring goals for women and people of color.

Along with other community organizations, HIRE Minnesota has been working with the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Human Rights to put systems in place that will help the contractors stay on track. Contractors are now required to complete monthly hiring reports that give the community immediate feedback on the number of



jobs reaching women and people of color. We're also working on a forecasting model that will help all stakeholders evaluate contractors' past hiring performance against remaining contract hours, to ensure that they will realistically be able to fulfill hiring obligations.

Meanwhile, the Met Council reports that more than 1,000 workers have entered their information into the CCLRT Works database (www.lrtworks.org). The goal of the database is to allow employers to search for skilled workers who can help them meet their hiring goals of 18 percent people of color and 6 percent women.

HIRE Minnesota is encouraged by our early progress toward meeting these hiring goals. We thank all of the community members who have already joined us to make their voice heard on the importance of a diverse CCLRT workforce.

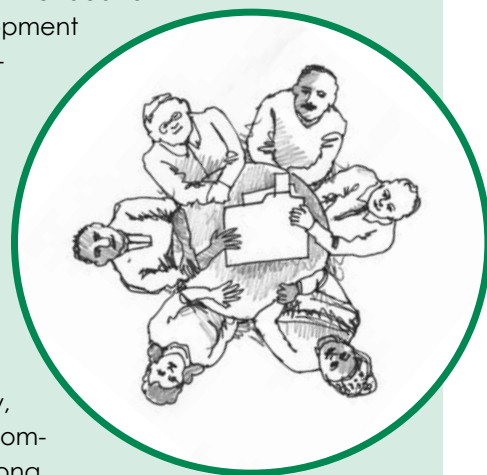


Local Organizing for the Environment, Energy and the Earth

Each month, the Alliance brings together metro-area organizers for discussions intended to build a network of organizers that work on issues related to growth and development in the Twin Cities. Our May 2011 Organizer Roundtable focused on Local Organizing for the Environment, Energy and the Earth. Organizers from around the region shared why they are compelled to fight for environmental justice and what they've learned through their efforts.

Organizers from the Women's Environmental Institute, the Indigenous People's Green Jobs Coalition, the West Side Citizens Organization, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's Center for Earth, Energy and Democracy, and Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota shared lessons from their grassroots campaigns for environmental justice.

Although each presenter represented a different organization and community, the common thread woven throughout was the need for capacity building. Communities of color have been left out of the environmental conversation for so long, yet they are often the most affected by our societal choices around environmental issues. Communities of color must be at the table, must make their voice and ideas heard, and must play a key decision-making role. The future of our communities depends on it.



Member Spotlight:

Aurora Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation

At our annual meeting in March, the Alliance's members voted to add the Aurora Saint Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation (ASANDC) as our newest member.

ASANDC is a community development organization that addresses neighborhood quality of life issues through advocacy and organizing, providing community, economic and housing development. ASANDC has been serving the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhood communities of St. Paul for more than 30 years. Its services include rehabilitating affordable housing, providing training to small business owners, keeping the neighborhood safe and building leadership capacity among residents and youth.

ASANDC provides a wealth of resources to improve the social and economic well being of the community. Staff recently worked with partners to develop **Frogtown Square**, which offers affordable senior housing as well as retail space for locally owned businesses. In collaboration with Model Cities, ASANDC developed the **MCASA Homes** program to address homeownership disparities between white families and families of color. ASANDC's **Brotherhood Inc.** program, modeled after California's Homeboy Industries, provides legal aid and entrepreneurial opportunities to African American youth who have been through the juvenile justice system. **The Summer of Peace** is a program designed to in-



ASANDC staff Dennis Presley Sr. and Vaughn Larry

crease safety in the neighborhood during the summer. And finally, their **Got Voice? Got Power!** focuses on increasing the community's political engagement.

The Alliance developed a close working relationship with ASANDC through our work along the Central Corridor. Together, we worked to secure community benefits through the University Avenue Community Coalition. We were also both deeply involved with the Stops for Us campaign to secure three missing stations in communities of color for the Central Corridor LRT. We're very excited to welcome ASANDC as the newest member of our coalition to advance racial, economic and environmental justice in Twin Cities growth and development!

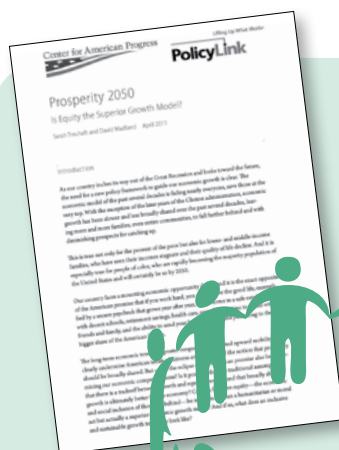
New Board Members Join the Alliance

Each spring, the Alliance has the pleasure of welcoming a new class of board members to help govern the organization. This year's new members bring a wealth of knowledge about transit organizing, community development and racial equity.



Owen Duckworth is a community organizer for Transit for Livable Communities (TLC), an organization that promotes a balanced transportation system that encourages transit, walking, bicycling and thoughtful development. Growing up in a biracial family in the segregated city of Milwaukee, Owen desired to understand race and space, culture and politics early in his life. His curiosity led him to pursue a B.A. in political science at Macalester College. Since then, Owen has worked on various campaigns, including the 2008 Obama campaign and a successful transit organizing campaign. He has been with TLC since August 2009, and finds his work there rewarding since he is able to work with community members toward a common goal of good transportation access and social justice. Owen will jump in head first as the Alliance's new board president.

Daniel Yang is a community engagement specialist for the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI), an organization that builds capacity in American Indian communities. In this capacity, he spends his time identifying emerging American Indian leaders and mid-level professionals, enabling them to take on greater leadership roles within the community. He also promotes the American Indian Community Blueprint, which envisions a vibrant, healthy, and balanced community where there are economic opportunities for American Indian people and where American Indian cultures are celebrated, honored and shared with the greater metropolitan community. Prior to his time at NACDI, Daniel worked with the United Nations as a human rights officer in Kenya and Sudan. He also spent time working for Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez fighting for communal land titles for indigenous communities.



Is Equity a Superior Growth Model?

This joint report from **PolicyLink** and the **Center for American Progress** demonstrates how a commitment to racial equity in our public policies can lead to unprecedented economic growth in this country. The just and fair inclusion of all is not only preferable from an equity perspective, but is also the key to remaining globally competitive and strengthening the weakened middle class. In fact, mass inequality and ineffectual distribution of income has led to the economic downturn that we now face. This level of inequity is unsustainable, and only creates a persistent wealth gap that will impact our economy for generations to come. To read the full report, go to <http://bit.ly/jUmcwu>.



New Staff Join the Alliance

The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability welcomed two new staff members in April.



Avi Viswanathan is the new HIRE Minnesota coalition organizer. Avi brings a wealth of political knowledge and legal expertise to the Alliance. As a graduate of Suffolk University Law School, Avi has worked for legal aid in disability advocacy and low-income housing issues. He has also provided legal consultation for domestic violence and child custody issues, and has organized for statewide

policy coalitions. Just prior to the Alliance, Avi worked for Senator Al Franken's office.

Avi strongly believes in movement building, viewing it as the only means to make a lasting change in society, particularly for people of color. He looks forward to working with HIRE Minnesota leaders to advance racial justice and eliminate racial employment disparities in Minnesota.

The Alliance extends a huge thank you to outgoing HIRE Minnesota Coalition Organizer **Marcus Harcus** for everything he did to keep the coalition moving forward. We wish you the best in your academic pursuits!



Ebony Adedayo joined the Alliance in the newly created position of program coordinator. She brings both experience and education in social justice work. Ebony is from Milwaukee, WI, but came to Minnesota to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Pastoral Studies in 2001. After receiving her BA, she went on to seminary to pursue a Master's of Divinity. While there she had a life changing experience as the

result of traveling to Rwanda in 2007 where she saw the genocide memorial and mass graves. This had a great impact on Ebony, and she decided to change her focus in seminary to missions with an emphasis on social justice and reconciliation. Ebony put this passion into action while working for Bread for the World, an organization committed to ending hunger at home and abroad.

As the program coordinator, Ebony has the opportunity to have a hand in all the racial, economic and environmental justice work of the Alliance and to learn more about the current state of policy and organizing in these areas. Ebony hopes to be able to move to Africa eventually, and to continue applying what she has learned about social justice and development there.



Minneapolis Takes on White Privilege

This spring, the annual White Privilege Conference was held in Minneapolis. The Alliance was able to attend the conference, which brings people from all walks of life together to explore the structure of systemic white privilege and how that dynamic manifests in organizations, policies, communities and individuals of all races. The main objective of the conference is to generate discussion and offer team-building strategies that will propel us into a more equitable world.

Alliance staff attended the conference, along with many of our board members and allies, as part of our ongoing work to become an anti-racist organization. After conducting an evaluation of our racial justice work late last year, we recommitted to the ongoing self-reflection necessary to being strong allies to communities of color and organizations led by and for people of color. The conference provided our staff with opportunities to analyze both our personal and organizational journeys, and offered a variety of resources that will help us further our understanding of the imbedded racial constructs in our society. To read post-conference reflections from Alliance staff and board members, visit <http://bit.ly/kXLexr>.

To learn more about the 2012 White Privilege Conference to be held in Albuquerque, visit whiteprivilegeconference.com.



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