

Transformative Equitable Development for Healthy Communities

VIBRANT, LIVING ECONOMIES

Thriving, healthy communities are often characterized by the presence of jobs, affordable housing opportunities, connections to regional transportation systems, quality education, and availability of health care services. In addition, research by the Greater Good Science Center found that “people tend to be healthier when they feel connected to their life’s purpose, each other, and the natural world, and when they are being generous.”¹ These conditions contribute to the overall well-being of communities and improve human health. In their absence, chronic disease, feelings of being unsafe, and economic instability are prevalent.

So how do we foster these attributes of a thriving community? Infrastructure investments can help. But many people overlook the fact that communities of color can create and sustain vibrant, living economies on their own. Throughout every corner of our region, communities of color are harnessing the potential of existing assets and creating pathways to enhance the local economy. These community-based, living economies create jobs, provide new opportunities for ownership, and keep capital in the community. When money and jobs stay in the community, more residents build wealth and position themselves as decision-makers for the future of their neighborhoods.

1 Balle, *The Future of Health is Local: A Field Guide for Health Sector Leadership*

The Alliance
ADVANCING REGIONAL EQUITY



The Alliance for Metropolitan Stability is a coalition comprised of 34 members working to advance racial, economic, and environmental equity in the way growth and development occurs in the Twin Cities region. We work at the intersection of these issues, understanding that a holistic approach to equity will lead to a more vibrant region. Our integrated approach has secured major victories for transformative equitable development.

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Strong local economies also contribute to more equitable, sustainable growth. In her research on Local Living Economies, Judy Wicks states that:

“The local living economy movement is building an alternative to corporate globalization—a decentralized global network of local living economies comprised of independent, community-based businesses. While continuing to teach sustainable business practices, the new movement focuses attention on issues of scale, ownership, and place, and the importance of working outside of our companies, often with competitors, to build a living economy. Rather than growing larger and larger, new business models remain human-scaled and locally owned, fostering direct, authentic and meaningful relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, neighbors, and the local habitat, which add to the quality of life in our community.”²

At the Alliance’s fourth session in our Transformative Equitable Development series, presenters discussed several community-based enterprises that are contributing to vibrant local economies in the Twin Cities: the Midtown Global Market, the City of Lakes Land Trust, Appetite for Change, and the HAFA Farm.

MIDTOWN GLOBAL MARKET:

In the heart of Midtown Minneapolis, an old Sears department store property sat dormant for 10 years. A Chicago-based developer expressed interest in the site, but his plan was to tear everything down and replace it with a one-story strip mall—the kind of low-density development that had popped up all over this once-thriving commercial corridor.

Local community leaders and elected officials balked at that plan and demanded something special for the site. The community rose up, participated in many of the planning and development decisions, and secured an amazing vision for the property: the Midtown Global Market.

Developed by the nonprofit Neighborhood Development Center, the Midtown Global Market opened in 2006 in South Minneapolis. The market is a business incubator which provides opportunities to budding entrepreneurs of color. It is home to 40 small businesses that employ 200 people, as well as associated residential and commercial space that offer 219 mixed income rental units, 88 loft condos, and 54 townhomes, and larger tenants such as Allina Healthcare, the Sheraton hotel, and a Hennepin County Service Center.

The public market builds upon the existing economic and cultural assets within the surrounding community by training entrepreneurs and providing capital loans. NDC also strives to keep rents low so that businesses have an opportunity to grow and make profit.

The \$18 million startup costs for the market included funds from the Latino Economic Development Center, the African Development Center, and Powderhorn Phillips Central Wellness Center. This unique partnership has leveraged over \$100 million in sales since the opening of the Midtown Global Market.

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CITY OF LAKES COMMUNITY LAND TRUST:

The City of Lakes Community Land Trust (CLCLT) provides affordable and inclusive homeownership opportunities for low- to moderate-income families. Unlike mainstream homeownership models, CLCLT owns the land and the buyer owns the home. Eliminating land ownership significantly reduces costs for new homeowners. This model also ensures that homes stay affordable in perpetuity—moving homeowners are asked to sell at an affordable rate to other income-qualified households.

In addition to buying homes, CLCLT helps its homebuyers maintain and stay in their homes through rehab grants, technical assistance, and financial expertise. While discriminatory lending practices forced many homeowners out the foreclosure crisis nearly a decade ago, the majority of CLCLT's homeowners were able to stay in their homes.

CLCLT's model is a great benefit to families of color and American Indian families that are typically left out of the homebuying process as a result of economic barriers, underwriting bias, and in too many cases, structural racism. While Minnesota tops the charts nationwide in terms of homeownership, only 46 percent of people of color and American Indians own their home. In Minneapolis, only 12 percent of African Americans own their home. CLCLT's work is reversing this trend, providing affordable home ownership to more than 200 families to date.

APPETITE FOR CHANGE:

Appetite for Change is a nonprofit that uses food as a tool to build health, wealth, and social change. The organization, based in North Minneapolis, builds power by providing youth training opportunities. Youth acquire the skills to make change in their neighborhood through a multifaceted, holistic approach:

Community Cooks Workshops: Community Cooks brings people together to connect over food, learn how to feed their families, and talk about the change they want to see in the community.

The Fresh Corner: Appetite for Change grows fresh, local produce that is contributing to a community-owned food system. Through an initiative called the Fresh Corner, farmers who work with the organization sell their goods to corner stores and restaurants in the neighborhood. This provides a source of local income while increasing healthy food access in North Minneapolis.

The Good Food Movement: Appetite for Change advocates for policy change that will sustain a healthy food culture in North Minneapolis. The organization trains and develops leaders, including youth, to lead direct actions that hold decision makers and business leaders accountable. Actions have included pushing a grocery store in the neighborhood to sell fresher food and advocating for the Staple Foods Ordinance, which requires stores (including corner stores, gas stations, dollar stores, and pharmacies) to sell fresh, healthy food.

Social Enterprises: Appetite for Change supports social enterprises like Kindred Kitchen, which provides commercial kitchen space to food trucks and caterers, and Breaking Bread, a cafe that offers locally sourced comfort food. Social enterprises create sustainable revenue sources for the organization, as well as employing many young people in the community.

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Appetite for Change's work is important because North Minneapolis is considered by some to be a food desert. The community lacks quality grocery stores and there are 38 fast food restaurants on Broadway Avenue alone. Appetite for Change is providing alternatives, giving people healthy choices that meet their needs, and showing that it is possible to make money by selling food.

THE HAFA FARM:

The Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) is committed to increasing and sustaining the prosperity of Hmong farmers. Though Hmong farmers have bolstered Minnesota's local food economy, they often face barriers to land access and financing that can create sustainable family businesses for generations.

Several years ago, HAFA launched a 155-acre incubator and research farm in Vermillion Township, which is providing Hmong farmers with long-term access to land that is accessible and affordable. The HAFA Farm is providing access to new markets that augment the income Hmong farmers have traditionally earned at local farmers markets.

HAFA's community-driven model allows farmers to sell cooperatively to markets such as schools, government programs, and hospitals. By aggregating produce and sharing production costs, farmers are able to access accounts that no single business would be able to serve alone. For example, instead of one business paying for a refrigerated truck for delivery, the farmers pool their resources to rent or purchase a truck. After just two growing seasons, HAFA's farmers had nearly reached parity with the per-acre revenues of Minnesota's mainstream vegetable farmers.

In 2014, HAFA launched a business development program with the Eastside Financial Center to increase access to credit and capital for Hmong farmers. This program provides financial training and coaching to farmers. Participating farmers also can access a matched savings program to increase their assets.

HAFA is working to change Minnesota laws to increase land access for cooperative farmers. In Minnesota, it is against the law for more than five people to own farmland together if they are not related, (this is an anti-corporate farming law that HAFA generally supports). Despite its good intentions, the law also prevents cooperative farming efforts like the HAFA from jointly owning land, which would substantially increase farmers' assets.

LOCAL ECONOMIES ADVANCE LOCAL PRIORITIES

Because they were developed locally and feature community-led initiatives, Midtown Global Market, the City of Lakes Land Trust, Appetite for Change, and the HAFA Farm are uniquely positioned to leverage neighborhood priorities and meet collective needs. Unlike traditional business models, a successful living economy is deeply linked with its community in such a way that it can grow and change, expanding and shifting to support local residents for years to come.