



# Actualizing Equity 2019 : From Principles to Practice

## Securing Strong Community Benefits

From community benefits to co-creation, local organizing is beginning to shift the calculations around large-scale developments, pressing government officials and private developers to consider and address the potential impacts of their investments on local residents and businesses. In St. Paul, the construction of Allianz Field has raised concerns about the impact of the soccer stadium on affordable housing, small businesses and the communities of color that have long called the area home.

At our **June 2019 Actualizing Equity** event, Tia Williams and Caty Royce, Co-Directors of Frogtown Neighborhood Association; Mitra Jalali Nelson, St Paul City Councilmember for Ward 4; MaiChong Xiong, Legislative Aide to Ward 1 Councilmember Dai Thao and engaged community members discussed challenges and opportunities to create and implement effective community benefit agreements for large-scale developments.

### Essential building blocks of community benefits

**Shared knowledge:** Community members must have timely and comprehensive access to information to come to the negotiating table in a powerful and impactful way.

**Transparency:** Community is often asked to respond to an idea or agreement that happened behind closed doors between government and developers without full context or understanding.

**Sustained engagement:** Private interests are adept at navigating current systems that preference their expertise. Community must be engaged in ways that build leaders and grow knowledge over the long term, rather than episodic involvement where community participants face a steep learning curve.

**Race equity:** At decisionmaking tables, leaders of color must be able to bring their full identities and expertise without an expectation of teaching white people about white supremacy.

**Proactive approach:** Community must be able to set visions and identify needs before decisions about large projects are made to ensure residents are able to preserve community assets and mitigate displacement before the rapid pace of change from development.

**Targeted input:** Engagement around community benefits must be specific and intentional about gaining and centering input from those most impacted – most notably low-wealth communities of color with the most significant barriers to participation. This requires strategies beyond traditional “open house” processes.

**Shared definitions:** Critical concepts must be in line with community needs. For instance, “affordable housing” must be assessed and set at levels accessible to local community members.

**Strong, binding language:** What isn't mandated won't materialize. Many past examples show that simply *encouraging* rather than *requiring* community benefits isn't effective. Language in community benefits agreements, resolutions and contracts must be clear and binding, using words like “will” and “must” with public, transparent accountability mechanisms to monitor and ensure compliance.

## Moving upstream to integrate community power and vision

Rather than engaging with each individual development project in a reactive way, communities and government agencies can integrate processes and procedures that proactively set guidelines around resident and stakeholder engagement and community benefits.

### TOOL: Equitable Development Principles and Scorecard

The Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard was created by Twin Cities community leaders to ensure that the principles and practices of equitable development, environmental justice, and affordability are applied in all communities as they plan for economic development and wealth creation that benefits everyone. It can be adapted and applied to meet the specific needs, interests and issues of a community or organization and, to date, has been leveraged around housing, transportation, parks and green infrastructure projects.

[thealliancetc.org/equitable-development-scorecard](https://thealliancetc.org/equitable-development-scorecard)

### EXAMPLE: Minneapolis Midtown Exchange Request for Proposals

In 2003, the City of Minneapolis released a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the Sears Retail and Warehouse Building. The RFP specifically called out **as requirements** proven experience in effective community engagement with culturally diverse stakeholders and other community benefits related to the future tenants and businesses owners in the space, which ultimately became the Midtown Global Market.

[thealliancetc.org/global-market-rfp](https://thealliancetc.org/global-market-rfp)

## Actualizing equity in community benefits agreements

Community benefits agreements can be a powerful tool to ensure that public investments have an equitable impact on the lives of local people. In the Twin Cities and nationwide, there is a growing number of CBAs that are making sure community members and stakeholders reap the economic returns and positive impacts of new development.

### EXAMPLE: Vikings Stadium Hiring and Recruitment

Thanks to organizing by HIRE Minnesota, the state legislature passed a bill in 2012 outlining specific requirements around recruitment, hiring and workforce goals for the Vikings Stadium in Minneapolis, including “goals for construction contracts to be awarded to women- and minority-owned businesses will be in a percentage at least equal to the minimum used for city of Minneapolis development projects, and the other construction workforce will establish workforce utilization goals... [that] include workers from city zip codes that have high rates of poverty and unemployment.”

[thealliancetc.org/vikings-stadium-hiring](https://thealliancetc.org/vikings-stadium-hiring)

### EXAMPLE: Nashville MLS Soccer Community Benefits Agreement

Stand Up Nashville is a coalition of community organizations and labor unions that represent the working people of Nashville who have seen their city transformed by development without sharing in the benefits of that growth. After intense negotiations throughout 2018, the group secured a landmark community benefits agreement with a Major League Soccer franchise that included provisions around affordable housing, community services, wages and workforce, and more.

[thealliancetc.org/nashville-mls](https://thealliancetc.org/nashville-mls)

### TOOL: Community Benefits Agreements: Growing a Movement in Minnesota

In 2008, the Alliance released a report on community benefits agreements to further develop local understanding of the CBA’s potential to yield significant, community-desired results from large-scale redevelopments and other projects. More and more organizations and coalitions are turning to the CBA model to produce meaningful — and, perhaps more importantly, enforceable — outcomes for low-income people and communities of color. [thealliancetc.org/cba-report](https://thealliancetc.org/cba-report)