In 1994, a handful of activists formed the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability with a bold vision: uniting across issues and geographies to advocate for smarter growth and social justice in the Twin Cities. Since then, thousands of community leaders have worked together to evolve that vision and turn our hopes for a more equitable region into reality — not only securing funding and policy wins but shifting narratives about power, privilege and who deserves to thrive in our neighborhoods.

Over the past 25 years, the Alliance has evolved as an organization to center a race equity analysis in its work, cultivated deep relationships with community-based organizations across issues and geographies in the Twin Cities region, and co-created campaigns and coalitions that have made significant progress in addressing structural racism and centering historically marginalized communities in housing, transportation, land use, economic and workforce development, and other critical regional issues.

To mark our anniversary in 2019, we reflect on 25 Wins for 25 Years.
In its inaugural campaign, the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability worked with suburban organizations to mobilize residents around the Elm Creek Interceptor: a massive sewer investment that would enable sprawling development in Maple Grove without any assurances of affordable housing or access to transit. Setting a new precedent and direction for civic engagement and accountability at the regional level, the Alliance helped to turn attention to the Metropolitan Council, facilitating meetings with key leaders and turning out an unheard-of 225 residents to a Met Council hearing, which ultimately raised the number of affordable units in Maple Grove.
An early turning point for the Alliance and its coalition organizing, the Livable Communities Act resulted in a milestone for regional investments and a new lens on race and redevelopment. The passage of the LCA by the state legislature in 1995 created a new funding source administered by the Met Council that, through 2018, had provided 1,086 grants totaling more than $400 million to scores of communities to facilitate affordable housing, transit-oriented development and environmental clean-up. But, more than that, advocacy around the LCA surfaced and centered the problematic approach of “deconcentrating poverty” — a narrative the Alliance and its coalition organizations have opposed and made strides to eliminate ever since.

KEY PARTNERS: Community Stabilization Project, Citizens for a Better Environment, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing, Minneapolis NAACP, Neighborhood Transportation Network, Office for Social Justice-Catholic Charities, St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance of Congregations (SPEAC), Urban Coalition
In 1996, the Alliance pioneered a new event to highlight urban redevelopment issues, and the consequences and alternatives to urban sprawl. This bike and bus tour of the Twin Cities region attracted hundreds of participants, positive media coverage, and promoted the work of dozens of community-based organizations working for social and environmental justice — both in core urban and suburban locations. The model was adapted by Sierra Club chapters around the country as a venue for raising local land-use, transportation and environmental justice issues. In 2019, continuing the tradition of the Tour de Sprawl, nearly 300 area residents participated in the "Extend the Greenway Ride + Rally," co-hosted by Alliance members organizations, including the Sierra Club and Move MN.
In the late 1990s, the Alliance helped to successfully lobby the state legislature for increased funding to clean up and redevelop polluted land. The Brownfields Campaign was a model for creating a broad-based coalition of city and county officials, business associations, churches, environmentalists concerned with reinvesting in urban neighborhoods, cleaning up blighted and vacant land, revitalizing the urban core’s tax base and generating living wage jobs. The robust effort, which included a demonstration with a dump truck loaded with contaminated soil and yellow-suited clean-up workers, resulted in the historic appropriation of $19.4 million for brownfield clean-up in 1998.

KEY PARTNERS: St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance of Congregations (SPEAC), Interfaith Action, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Citizens for a Better Environment, Twin Cities Unitarian Universalist Metro Stability Task Force
Shifting the narrative about the role of the private market in addressing the affordable housing crisis has been core to the Alliance’s work — including leading the conversation about Inclusionary Zoning, a powerful policy lever that requires new housing production include affordable units. **Over 20 years of advocacy, the Alliance has helped to advance this concept at the local and state level**, from securing $8 million from the state legislature for an initial Inclusionary Housing Program in 1999 to working with community-based organizations and the Make Homes Happen coalition to pass ordinances in cities across the region. On the horizon: A strong, mandatory, region-leading policy from in Minneapolis; and likely a similar IZ ordinance in St. Paul.

1998 to present

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**KEY PARTNERS:** Citizens League, Education & Housing Equity Project, Interfaith Action, Jewish Community Action, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing, MN Fair Housing Center, MN Housing Partnership, MPIRG, Fresh Energy, Northeast Metro Coalition for Affordable Housing, Office for Social Justice–Catholic Charities, St. Paul Ecumenical Alliance of Congregations (SPEAC), Twin Cities Unitarian Universalist Metro Stability Task Force, Urban Coalition
In 1999, the Alliance began to convene the Transportation Reform Working Group (TRWG): a broad array of environmental, labor, social justice, senior, faith based community groups and transit advocates to raise the profile of transportation equity issues and challenge policy makers. During the 2000 legislative session the TRWG collaborated with private suburban bus companies and Metro Transit to support Moving MN. Utilizing direct flyering, transit proponents blanketed every Park and Ride lot in the metro area with materials, including 12,000 lobbying postcards. **In 2000, $67 million in state funding was secured for selected projects**, including transit stations, new buses and a dedicated busway for St Paul.

**1999-2000 Multi-sector Campaign Moves MN Lawmakers to Invest in Transit**

Photos above: [left] A very pro-transit Governor (and ex pro wrestler) is featured on campaign postcards and [right] Coalition representatives speak at a press conference and demand more transportation choices.

KEY PARTNERS: Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, First Universalist Church, ISAIAH, League of Women Voters, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Fresh Energy, Office for Social Justice-Catholic Charities, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Transit for Livable Communities, 1000 Friends of MN, University United, Urban Coalition
In 2003, the Smart Growth Organizing Project was created to better connect and align different organizing efforts around regional growth in the Twin Cities. As the convener, the Alliance worked to integrate principles of environmental justice — including “confronting issues of race, privilege, culture, and ethnicity and developing a strong understanding about how these issues and disparities manifest themselves within growth and development policies and decisions.” Over several years, the Smart Growth Organizing Project not only reshaped the broader, regional narrative, moving away from a focus on “smart growth” to equitable development, but centered the essential role of grassroots, community organizing.
With a dedication to building the field, the Alliance launched its first Organizers Roundtables in 2003, creating space for organizers throughout the region to **build relationships, share knowledge and strategize together in our shared work** to change the policies and systems that influence racial, economic, environmental, and health equity. From the very first session on “Mobilizing vs Deep Organizing” to our most recent event on “Creating our Vision for Equitable Housing,” the series has convened thousands of organizers and allied stakeholders representing diverse issues and sectors throughout the region to engage in dialogue and collective problem-solving around timely regional challenges.
In 2004, the Brooklyn Park City Council put a bond referendum on the ballot to raise $35 million to purchase and demolish 900 affordable housing units. Building on relationships with member organizations, the Alliance co-convened a grassroots coalition that engaged tenants and impacted community, centering their issues and leadership in outreach to media, policymakers and the general public. The ballot measure was defeated by 20,000 to 12,000 votes, saving more than $84 million in affordable housing stock in the city.

2004 Campaign Saves Affordable Homes in Brooklyn Park

ATTENTION BROOKLYN PARK RESIDENTS

IF YOU CURRENTLY LIVE IN ONE OF THE APARTMENT BUILDINGS THAT HAS BEEN TARGETED FOR DEMOLITION:

YOU MAY BE FORCED TO MOVE!!!

On November 2nd YOU, the residents of Brooklyn Park, will vote whether or not to demolish 900 apartments along Zane.

KEY PARTNERS: Community Stabilization Project, HOME Line, Housing Justice Center, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing’s Organizing Project for African-American Congregations, the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, SEIU Local 26, Family Housing Fund
Nearly 15 years ago, the Alliance presented at and organized a delegation of 60 Twin Cities leaders at the second National Equity Summit convened by Policy Link. Recognizing the benefits of connecting community-based groups across geographic and cultural communities — and supporting the developing a stronger set of relationships, collaborations, best practices, and understanding of collective power — the Alliance has continued to support hundreds of local advocates to attend the Policy Link Equity Summit every three years since 2005. In 2018, more than 225 local leaders attended the event in Chicago.
Recognizing the growing — and racialized — gap in households with access to the internet, the Alliance co-convened community roundtables in 2005 and 2006 to explore the social and economic implications of a plan to cover the City of Minneapolis with a broadband wireless network. This work resulted in the release of detailed Recommendations for the Wireless Minneapolis Community Benefits Agreement, which advocated for the city to demand benefits for taxpayers in the vendor contract. Many of these recommendations were adopted in the final contract between the city and US Internet, committing more than $11 million for digital inclusion efforts in Minneapolis and many other benefits.
The Alliance has held at its core the belief that development must yield equitable benefits to low-wealth communities of color — residents who have historically been most impacted by these projects. In 2007, after years of working with community-based organizations to center the voices and codify the needs of local residents in major development projects, the Alliance released a report lifting up community benefits agreements as an important tool in the growing Twin Cities equity movement and highlighting six local examples, from the Harrison Neighborhood in Minneapolis to St. Paul’s University Avenue. More than a decade later, the Alliance is still engaged across the metro to ensure communities that have been marginalized and actively disinvested-in have meaningful ways to capture benefits from economic investments in their neighborhoods.
In deep collaboration with the Transit Partners coalition, the Alliance helped to pass the Transportation Choices 2020 bill in 2008, securing more than $1 billion to expand public transit and make needed transportation infrastructure repairs. The bill passed in dramatic fashion when the House and Senate managed to override the short sighted veto of the spending bill by Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s. The result of years of grassroots organizing led by groups like Transit for Livable Communities, the historic bill included a significant, dedicated source of transit funding that helped to construct eight new dedicated transitways; create better transit facilities and new Park & Ride capacity; provide revenue to local governments for bicycle and pedestrian projects; and expand transit in Greater Minnesota.

KEY PARTNERS: Transit for Livable Communities, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Minnesota Senior Federation, Fresh Energy, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005, the Minnesota Transportation Alliance, Minnesota Public Transit Association, Minnesota Environmental Partnership.
Since 2009, the Alliance has provided organizing support to HIRE Minnesota, a campaign founded by Summit Academy OIC, to decrease racial disparities in employment. Results include: **$2.5 million for green jobs training programs** and community outreach about energy-efficiency programs for low-income people and people of color; a **189% increase in the number of people of color hired by the Minnesota Department of Transportation on projects** between 2009 and 2012; and getting (and meeting) the goal for workers of color raised from 11% to 18% on the Central Corridor LRT construction. HIRE led community efforts to ensure success on the massive U.S. Bank Stadium project. People of color worked 1.4 million hours — 37 percent of the total hours — on the project, generating nearly **$41 million in wages for households of color in our region.** HIRE also successfully advocated for the Minnesota Department of Human Rights to raise **hiring goals for people of color on regional construction projects from 11% to 32%**. Using our innovative workforce projection tool and other best practices learned from years of tenacious organizing and advocacy, HIRE continues our work to ensure that these goals are met and exceeded.

Beginning in 2007, organizers in St. Paul built on existing University Avenue Community Coalition relationships to mobilize around a glaring omission in plans for what would become the Green Line light rail: the lack of stops at Western Avenue, Victoria Street and Hamline Avenue, locations that would serve neighborhoods with populations exceeding 50% people of color. While key decision-makers initially opposed community demands, the Stop for Us coalition and campaign was able to build community power at the local, regional and federal level to make sure the $1 billion investment in the Central Corridor didn’t bypass communities of color. Nearly 10 years later, the Alliance is working with many of those same partners to ensure that these critical investments and access to transit don’t result in those very same communities being displaced by gentrification.

KEY PARTNERS: Asian Economic Development Association, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Community Stabilization Project, District Councils Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Got Voice? Got Power!, Housing Justice Center, ISAIAH, Jewish Community Action, Minnesota Center for, Environmental Advocacy, Model Cities, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing, Preserve and Benefit Historic Rondo, Rondo Library, Saint Paul NAACP, Saint Paul Urban League, Transit for Liveable Communities, UFCW Local 789, University Dale Apartments, University UNITED, University Avenue Business Association
In 2012, the Alliance developed a series of Race and Regionalism reports exploring how public policy has favored, either intentionally or as a byproduct of poor decision-making, the needs of white people over those of people of color and indigenous people. From housing subsidies to hiring guidelines, the report series not only revealed past failures and problematic approaches, but showcased ways communities and decision-makers are paving an equitable path forward. In 2019, recognizing the need to reframe public policy and perception around issues of fair housing, the Alliance published the first of a new Race & Regionalism series — Intentional Exclusion — that will continue in 2020.
Healthy green space and safe pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians should be accessible to all residents. In 2013, as the City of Minneapolis explored converting low-traffic streets in north Minneapolis into a 3-mile greenway, the Alliance supported North Minneapolis leaders in working to design a greenway that would encourage healthier living on the Northside. By engaging organizations led by and representing people of color and directing more than $115,000 in micro-grants to such groups, public engagement in 2014 and 2015 saw far higher levels of response from people of color. To date, the vision for a North Minneapolis Greenway is still unrealized but the community support and advocacy continues with rides and events supported by the volunteer Northside Greenway Now group.

KEY PARTNERS: Northside Greenway Coalition members, Minneapolis Youth Congress, Lao Assistance Center of MN, Camden Neighborhood Center, Jordan Area Community Council, Pillsbury United Communities, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Project Sweetie Pie, Project Superman, Major Taylor Bicycling Club of Minnesota, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Redeemer Center for Life, Hmong American Mutual Assistance Association, Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research, Environmental Justice Advocates of MN, Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, Juxtaposition Arts, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, Summit Academy OIC, Heritage Park Neighborhood Association, Minneapolis Peace Collaborative, Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition, Hmong American Partnership, City of Minneapolis Department of Health
In 2011, the Alliance, Nexus Community Partners, and the Minnesota Center for Neighborhood Organizing began to lead a Community Engagement Team to ensure communities of color along emerging transitways have a voice and a strong role in planning for the future of their neighborhoods. Using a community panel to articulate criteria and make selections, the CET awarded more than $720,000 in federal funds to 19 community organizations to do outreach around transportation corridor planning. Based on the success of the CET efforts, the McKnight Foundation provided an additional $250,000 for a final round of community-led grant making and Metro Transit used the same model to invest $229,000 in community-based organizations to lead engagement in bus planning.
Starting in 2012, the Alliance partnered with a wealth of community-based organizations to create the Equitable Development Principles & Scorecard, which helps communities ensure that the principles and practices of equitable development, environmental justice, and affordability are available to all residents. In recent years, the Alliance has worked with West Side Community Organization, Cycles for Change, Metro Blooms and others to showcase how their communities and organizations are adapting and leveraging the scorecard for their issues and geographies. From grassroots organizers to government staff, more than 120 leaders have joined the Scorecard Enthusiasts table, an opportunity to come together on a regular basis to share their successes and learnings.
In 2012, as the Metropolitan Council engaged in the creation of its Fair Housing and Equity Assessment, the Alliance convened a table of grassroots stakeholders to ensure true community engagement was conducted and to push back against the deficit-based frames that reinforce racist and classist tropes about residents in communities of color and suggest solutions that fail to address the systemic causes of poverty. As a result, the Met Council not only eliminated the "racially concentrated areas of poverty" language in a robust Fair Housing analysis, but also began intentional steps toward integrating equity goals in key strategic documents. Now called Equity in Place, that table of leaders from communities of color continues to be a powerful voice in local, regional and state policies that dictate how our public dollars are spent.

KEY PARTNERS: African Career, Education, and Resources, Inc., American Indian Family Center, Community Stabilization Project, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Hope Community, Housing Justice Center, Jewish Community Action, Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, Minnesotans Standing Together to End Poverty and Homelessness, Native American Community Development Institute, New American Development Center, Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza, Urban Homeworks, West Side Community Organization
As a result of the momentum and relationships built during the Corridors of Opportunity initiative, the Alliance continued to convene a Community Engagement Steering Committee that shaped community engagement standards for the Metropolitan Council and successfully advocated for the creation of an Equity Advisory Committee (EAC). Those standards now guide the Council’s public participation plan and the EAC reviews the equity impact of all of the Met Council's work and includes Met Council members, geographic representatives, and community-based leaders to ensure that it reflects the region's diversity.
In 2016, the Alliance’s Transformative Equitable Development for Healthy Communities series gave space to community leaders and practitioners to share their experience and intentionally strategize on ways to anchor community-led, transformative equitable development in our region. The series highlighted the existing assets in communities, as well as the opportunities to build stronger together in our future. Through the 8-part series, the resulting resources demonstrated how transformative equitable development can create better outcomes for low-wealth communities and communities of color.

KEY PARTNERS: Urban Homeworks, Juxtaposition Arts, Asian Economic Development Association, Victoria Theatre Arts Initiative, Northside Greenway Project, North Market, Commons at Penn, Neighborhood Development Center, City of Lakes Community Land Trust, Appetite for Change, Hmong American Farmers Association, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, African Economic Development Solutions, Native American Community Development Institute, HIRE Minnesota, Community Engagement Steering Committee, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, Corcoran Neighborhood Association, Bryant Neighborhood Organization, Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization, Black Women’s Wealth Alliance
In 2017, the Alliance convened a campaign table that successfully persuaded the City of Saint Paul to include affordable housing requirements in the historic Ford auto plant redevelopment site. This table united community-based organizations, neighborhood residents, pro-density activists, and environmental, transit and housing advocacy groups that secured significant commitments for affordable housing, green space, multi-modal/transit benefits and higher densities. Because of their advocacy, city officials passed a plan that requires **20% of all residential units to be affordable, half of which will be affordable at 30% of AMI (for a total of 760 affordable housing units)**. The victory will serve as a model for future large-scale developments in the Twin Cities region.

**2017 Affordable Housing Included at the St. Paul Ford Plant Site**

KEY PARTNERS: La Asamblea de Derechos Civiles, Community Stabilization Project, Fresh Energy, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, HOME Line, Housing Justice Center, Inquilidxs Unidxs por Justicia, Jewish Community Action, Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, Move MN, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, Sustain Ward 3
Developed through conversations with local leaders and released in 2018, Our AREA: The Alliance Regional Equity Agenda highlights the strategies Alliance members and partners are using and calls for further collective action to heal communities, stimulate regenerative power, dismantle structural racism, and end the displacement and gentrification of our communities. With overarching principles and targeted policy recommendations, this living agenda moves toward reclaiming the term "equity" and defining it in our terms through our strategies.

KEY PARTNERS: Asad Aliweyd, Caty Royce, Jim Erkel, Metric Giles, Suyapa Miranda, All Parks Alliance for Change, Asamblea de Derechos Civiles, Aurora St. Anthony Neighborhood Development Corporation, Black Women’s Wealth Alliance, Community Stabilization Project, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Harrison Neighborhood Association, Housing Justice Center, Lutheran Social Services—East Side Financial Center, Minnesota Center For Environmental Advocacy, Native American Community Development Institute, New American Development Center, PRG Inc, Sierra Club North Star Chapter, Move Minnesota, Urban Homeworks, and West Side Community Organization
Over the past 25 years, the Alliance has been privileged to exist in and help nourish a community of practice that is full of passionate and talented organizers and advocates. Our collective work has been led by ever-deepening relationships in the field, our evolving membership, and our amazing Board of Directors, which continues to grow in its wealth of diverse experience and knowledge. In 2019, the Alliance staff team also possesses our broadest range of skills and relationships to date — growing our capacity to support coalition work that builds community power.