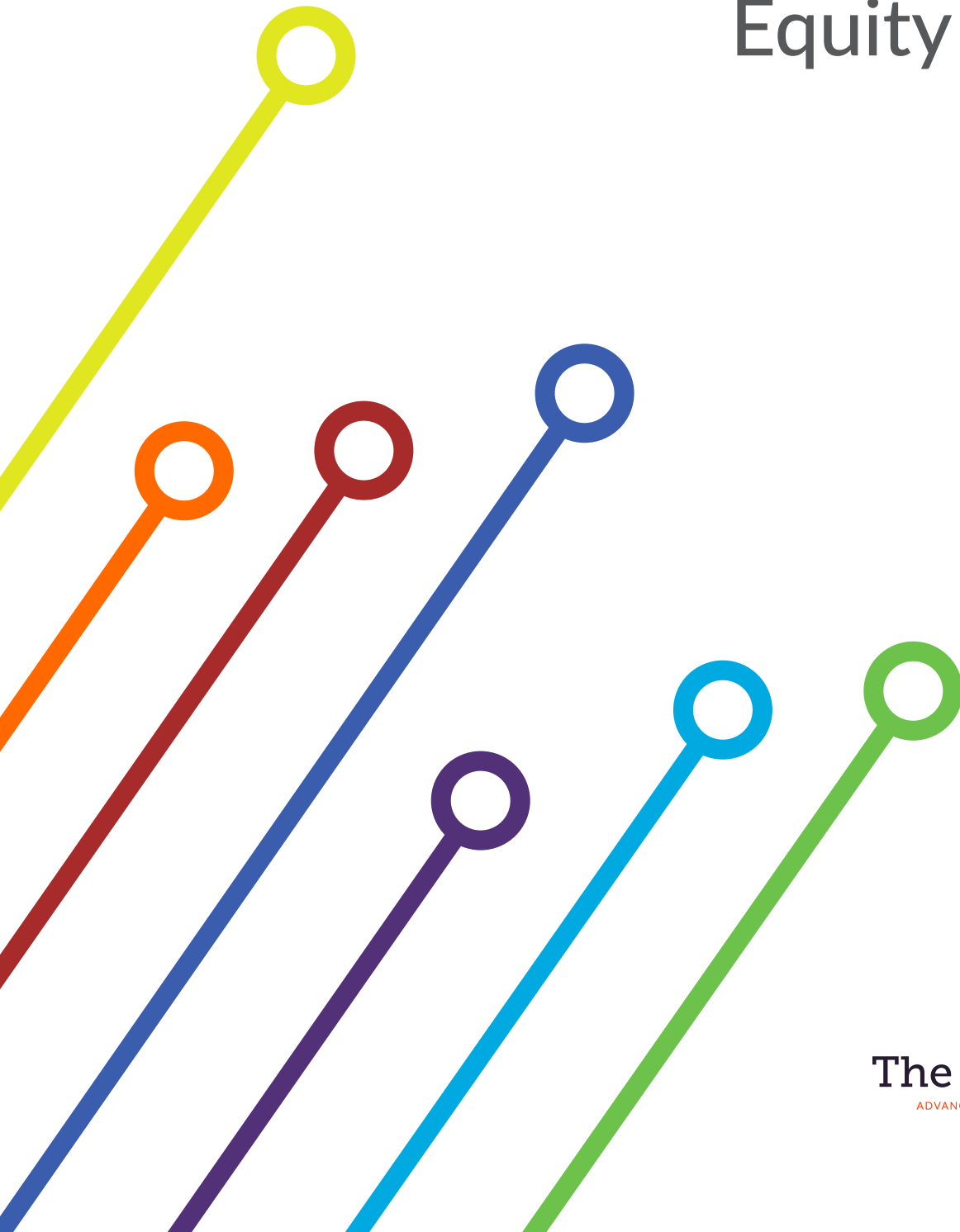


Our AREA 2021

Alliance Regional Equity Agenda



The Alliance
ADVANCING REGIONAL EQUITY



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WHO ARE WE?

The Alliance is a coalition of community-based organizations and advocacy groups building shared power to advance strategic campaigns around the intersections of racial justice, economic justice, environmental justice, and health equity. Our mission is to advance justice and equity in economic growth and land development in the Twin Cities region. Learn more at thealliancetc.org.

INTRODUCTION: 2020 Vision

From housing to public health, community safety to democracy defense, 2020 was an intense and unrelenting year for organizing across every issue in the Twin Cities.

With the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd, it was a year of unprecedented challenges that brought into sharp focus the deep and dangerous inequities in the systems that shape every aspect of our lives. But it was also a year that amplified the voices and expertise of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as essential to our collective and as visionaries for a fundamentally more just future. These unprecedented conditions

brought transformative change into mainstream conversation. Across issues and geographies, we tapped into our ingenuity and resilience to strengthen solidarity and uplift long-voiced values and sustainable solutions that are no longer unthinkable to policymakers and the wider public.

Our AREA: The Alliance Regional Equity Agenda debuted in 2018 as a living document articulating shared strategies from member organizations and key stakeholders. Through our Actualizing Equity event series in 2020, we heard from leaders representing 34 organizations, capturing their input and expertise to evolve *Our AREA* with narratives and strategies for 2021 and beyond.

2020 Speakers

- » Chauntyll Allen, St. Paul School Board and Love First Community Engagement
- » Bahieh Hartshorn and LyLy Vang Yang, Take Action MN
- » MK Nguyen, Nexus Community Partners (previously St. Paul Promise Neighborhood)
- » Nelsie Yang, St. Paul Ward 6 City Councilmember
- » Amity Foster, Twin Cities Transit Riders Union
- » Charles Frempong-Longdon and Dominique Diaddigo-Cash, Sierra Club North Star Chapter
- » Finn McGarrity, Move Minnesota
- » Martin Hernandez, West Side Community Organization
- » Nikki Villavicencio, disability rights activist and ADAPT member
- » Hamza Hassan and Nelima Sitati Munene, African Career, Education and Resource Inc (ACER)
- » Emilia Gonzalez Avalos, Unidos MN
- » Marque Jensen, Urban Homeworks
- » Shannon Smith Jones, Hope Community
- » Mercedes Jaime, Latino Economic Development Center
- » Idris Mohamed, African Economic Development Solutions of MN
- » Tabitha Montgomery, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association
- » Va-Megn Thoj, Asian Economic Development Association
- » Mysti Babineau and Sam Grant, MN350
- » Nazir Khan, BIPOC Environmental Justice Table
- » Kathryn Hoffman, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
- » Janiece Watts, Fresh Energy
- » Alfredo Trujillo and Yusra Murad, Minneapolis Sanctuary Movement
- » Danielle Swift, Frogtown Neighborhood Association
- » Samantha Vang, State Representative, HOME Line staff
- » Shaquonna Jackson, Southeast Community Organization (St Paul)
- » Ebony Adedayo, City of Minneapolis Division of Race and Equity's ReCAST Program
- » Isabel Chanslor, Midway Rise Up
- » Jamie Kavanah, Jewish Community Action
- » Nekessa Opoti, Black Immigrant Collective
- » Ash Narayanan and Cindy Vue, Our Streets Minneapolis
- » Eleonore Wesslerle, Narrative Justice League
- » Gabriella Anais Deal-Marquez, Voices for Racial Justice
- » Abdulrahman Wako, Union Park District Council
- » Brian Rosas, Minnesota Youth Collective

CORE PRINCIPLES

Implicit and essential to each Our AREA strategy are four underlying principles.

1

EQUITY MUST BE CLAIMED AND DEFINED BY THOSE MOST HARMED BY SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION. The inequities in our region are rooted in an imbalance of power between white people and people of color, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities. This imbalance of power occurs across systems and decision-making spheres, effectively omitting our communities from visions of a prosperous region.

2

WORK TOWARD EQUITY MUST FUNDAMENTALLY BE ABOUT BUILDING POWER, capacity, and leadership to annul structural and institutional racism. Thus, *Our AREA* strategies all implicitly center the engagement and inclusion of people of color, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities to assert power and mitigate further harm, while promoting healing from past harm with targeted strategies for our communities' well-being.

3

EQUITY EFFORTS MUST BE INTERSECTIONAL. People's identities are made up of many overlapping pieces such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, and ethnicity. Thus, patterns of oppression are interrelated and bound together. To undo one form of oppression, we must fight all its forms.

4

EQUITY IS A HUMAN RIGHT. It is about providing opportunities and creating positive outcomes for everyone. Policies and practices that restrict or exclude certain communities in order to maintain the status quo violate this principle. *Our AREA* strategies assume communities have the right to safe, healthy, and dignified housing, employment, and neighborhoods. It promotes practices that support healing from centuries of dispiriting and destructive policies and establishes our right to stay in, or move to, our chosen communities.

OUR AREA NARRATIVES & STRATEGIES

The regional equity strategies presented in *Our AREA* focus on communities that live at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression. We recognize the historic and ongoing violence of patriarchy, colonialism, and white supremacy that has created systems of exclusion and harm. *Our AREA* offers opportunities to heal from these traumas through transformative strategies that will advance prosperity for people of color, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities of the Twin Cities region. In this edition of *Our AREA* we recommend strategies to advance regional equity in Community Engagement, Housing, Economic Development, Transit and Environmental Justice. We also reflect on how these issue areas connect to Community Safety and Wellness and Sustainable Movement Building.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CO-GOVERNANCE

Community engagement must be a mandatory, embedded, and ongoing process that guides all institutional work. Within this framework, communities are respected as experts who define the problems, design the solutions, and evaluate the outcomes.



VALUES

Representation in positions of power is essential but not enough.

We support and elect more Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrant and low-income leaders at all levels — and reframe our perspective on representative democracy from being spoken for to being in ongoing relationship and continuous conversation to build trust and accountability with elected allies.

Deep listening to impacted communities is a responsibility and starting point for all policymaking.

Beyond organizations or institutions that speak on behalf of community, outreach and engagement around policy and projects listen deeply to those most directly impacted — as a responsibility not an option.

Community members have power and leadership, not just input.

Our communities have the expertise and the solutions to create equitable outcomes and have not just input but real agency and authority in directing the policies that shape our lives.

VISION

White supremacy is eliminated from government spaces.

Elected officials visibilize and uproot the ways white supremacy and systems of oppression are embedded in government structures and processes.

Systems of care and wellness make civic participation possible and fulfilling.

Community engagement strategies recognize and address the systemic barriers to participation, by not just providing childcare or transportation stipends, but prioritizing living wage jobs and affordable housing as an integral aspect of making civic participation possible.

Community members have spaces to strengthen our capacity and vision to shape change.

Political education begins in spaces of trust and healing that acknowledge and validate past harms and distrust and create networks for community to feel supported and powerful.

Our sense of home extends beyond our household to our schools, our cities and our halls of government.

Our communities feel a sense of belonging in places of political power and see the change we envision come to fruition, expanding our sense of collective and co-governance across civic institutions.

HOW WE GET THERE



CREATING DEDICATED SPACES FOR MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES TO LEARN, GROW AND LEAD

“How do folks who have deep knowledge but who have been taught to be severely passive find spaces where we can practice and build our muscles for shaping our destiny?” asked MK Nguyen, previously at St. Paul Promise Neighborhood. Through programs like “We Got This,” a group of Frogtown neighbors, who are parents and caregivers, who come together to break bread — and break down the concept of governance. And through initiatives like the Indigenous Women and Women of Color (IWWOC) table at the West Side Community Organization that creates intentional, nurturing space for leadership development.



ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

While community engagement has become integral to many government processes, the prevailing approaches put the burden on individuals instead of the system. “When I hear decisionmakers say, *People aren’t showing up* they’re thinking *What’s wrong with that individual or that community?*” Bahieh Hartshorn from Take Action MN said. “If we want more people to show up, we actually have to create the systems that will allow people to show up, like living wage jobs and childcare.”



CULTIVATING BELONGING AND DIVERSE AVENUES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Instead of *telling people* how to be involved, St. Paul City Councilmember Nelise Yang has adopted the practice of *asking people* how they want to be engaged. “For some people that means being in the room,” Yang said. “Some people say *I would love to send you a Facebook message and have you care about what I have to say*. We have a very patriarchal expectation around communication and have to radically change what it means to ‘show up’ to be heard.” She also cultivates a sense of belonging through simple practices like keeping snacks and toys in her office for families to feel welcomed and at home.



RESOURCING COMMUNITY OVER CONSULTANTS

To demonstrate the recognition of their expertise, community members must be compensated for their time and insight and resources for consultants must prioritize community-based organizations over professionalized service providers or corporations.

We Got This: Organizing from Our Position and Place Workshop Series

The St. Paul Promise Neighborhood brought together parents and partners for four weeks, over food and fellowship, to unpack why people don’t “get into politics,” explore the power of storytelling, and connect values, vision and voices to the issues at the 2020 legislative session.

New Electeds of Color and Leading with Equity

In recent election cycles, local organizing efforts and groundbreaking campaigns have elevated leaders of color to local, county and regional policy making positions in the Twin Cities. At our March 2019 Actualizing Equity event, Hennepin County Commissioner Angela Conley, Richfield Mayor Maria Regan Gonzalez, and Brooklyn Park City Councilmember Wynfred Russell discussed their impetus for running and approaches to policymaking.

SMALL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

For a prosperous and sustainable region, economic development must prioritize resourcing people of color, Indigenous, immigrant, and low-income communities. This requires intentionality behind investments to resource and grow locally-owned small businesses.



VALUES

Our communities contain brilliant business acumen & entrepreneurial talent.

While the models and processes may look different than white-normative American capitalism, BIPOC and immigrant business owners and entrepreneurs are creative, effective and innovative.

Our communities do not need to conform; economic systems need to adapt.

Our communities and businesses do not need programs and technical assistance to assimilate; we need real and meaningful resources to thrive on our own terms.

Our businesses are the heart of our cultural communities.

The products and services our businesses provide are the material sustenance and spirit that sustain our cultures and traditions.

Our cultural corridors are essential to the vitality of our cities and region.

We are invaluable anchors for employment, commerce and community spaces that cement the viability of our cities and region.

VISION

Government systems move from wealth extraction to targeted investment.

Public resources for economic growth shift from supporting large corporations and development projects to systemic and sustained investment in small, BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses.

Our businesses and entrepreneurs have access to capital and financing that meet their needs.

Lending institutions recognize racial disparities and honor cultural differences to provide financing and loans that meet the needs of our businesses and entrepreneurs.

Our communities have ownership of property and land to create resiliency for our businesses and cultural corridors.

Our businesses, entrepreneurs and artists do not fear displacement because they are anchored in place by ownership stakes in the physical spaces that support their commerce and craft.

We embrace and engage in collaboration across cultural communities.

Our communities work together to understand shared barriers but ensure that our unique cultures are elevated not essentialized into broad BIPOC categories that uphold white dominance.

"We've been trying to squeeze diverse communities into the construct that you should already have all you need to thrive, and we miss the real needs of our communities." Tabitha Montgomery, Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association

HOW WE GET THERE



Dedicating state funding

Small, BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses play an essential role in the economic and civic health of our communities, providing significant employment and cultural resources. Like the arts and environment, Minnesota should have a **dedicated funding source** to support, sustain and grow our small businesses.



Increasing power over planning

Minnesota should establish a **Metropolitan Area Redevelopment Corporation** to create community redevelopment plans that foster equitable economic development and prevent displacement of low-income residents, and our small businesses. This body must be comprised **entirely of BIPOC and immigrant leaders**.



Centering cultural knowledge

Simply translating materials into additional languages is not adequate outreach — or an expression of equity. Our businesses must have access to **technical assistance and engagement** that is *from* and *by* our communities and programs that **build our unique capacity**, not expect our businesses to fit into dominant models.



Flipping local funding formulas

In many cities, public resources and economic development programs are heavily weighted towards larger corporations and downtown districts. These programs must **flip the eligibility, scoring and funding formulas** to prioritize our cultural corridors and small, BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses, including micro businesses and sole proprietors.



Expanding access to capital

Access to capital is a chronic challenge for small BIPOC and immigrant businesses. Lenders, including Community Development Financing Institutions, must **radically reform financial products** to recognize cultural relationships to debt and historical barriers to credit, and fill the lending gap for micro-businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups.

Strategies to support BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses in relief & recovery efforts

A coalition of nearly 20 organizations that focus on supporting and growing BIPOC- and immigrant-owned businesses sent a letter to Governor Walz' administration in late 2020 calling for intentionality in small business relief and recovery efforts to ensure our businesses and communities are not overlooked. The group identified key elements that must frame any funding process or business support programming, including

- intentionally naming micro-enterprises, self-employed, sole proprietorships, creative businesses, and home-based businesses in the definition of "small business"

- providing technical assistance resources within historic Black, immigrant, African, Asian, Latinx and Indigenous communities to bridge the access gap between government program and our communities
- extended timelines for relief applications with flexible financial documentation options for business
- creating intentionality to direct and prioritize current and future state spending with BIPOC businesses to put money into BIPOC communities and economies

Read the full letter at thealliancetc.org/bipoc-biz

GENTRIFICATION

by Fazayah Rose Augustana

Please leave us in peace.

*Please let us raise our children, keep
our keys in hand, we never did trust
the White Man but daaaaamn.*

*Don't prove us right! I mean, those
kids need stability, familiar faces,
protecting eyes, man that's our
birthright.*

*BBQ's and trust, our land notices us!
We wild, but still on one accord. We
have one concern, our community.
We love cus, love is all we can afford.*

*Life ain't never been easy, living
always been a fight, maybe there'll be
food to eat, shiiiiit.... Even if it's just
rice.*

*I'm trying to be alright but it's
all about collective chemistry
and without community I am
an unguided thing, without aim,
creating a ministry of misery.*

*We have a right to be safe, a right to
cultivate community. We have a right
to BBQ on Wednesdays! Man, y'all
ain't hearing me!*

*We tired of running, tired of being
less than, yo the old lady down the
hall with the bird, that's my best
friend!*

*Leave us out of the politics of greed,
SO WE CAN BE OUR BEST, MAN!*

*We just wanna wake up to Al Green
playing outside on loudspeakers,
watching the dude walk by every
morning with the tiny dog and dope
sneakers.*

*Greeting neighbors who watched
me grow from a victim to concerned
citizen!*

*And now I'm back again, wack again,
feeling victimized by these hungry
heartless men. I just want to lose in
peace.*

*Don't silence this symphony, this
collective, magnificent thing. We
co-create each other, mutually
exchanging, beautifully rearranging.*

*Lifting each other up with our shared
love for us.*

*I just want to lose in peace. Honestly,
we still fighting to stay alive and this
war for riches ain't mine to fight. We
just wanna lose in peace.*

*Laying our heads on the same pillow,
in the same place, every night. We
just want to lose in peace, cause
peace is our birthright.*



Top: Organizers and renters from across Minneapolis advocating for a renter protections ordinance in Minneapolis in 2019; **left:** Hamza Hasan, former housing organizer for African Career, Education and Resource Inc (ACER) with tenant leaders at Huntington Place in Brooklyn Park, who successfully organized to ensure their buildings were sold to a buyer who would keep rents affordable; **right:** organizers with Housing Equity Now St. Paul at a rally advocating for the passage of a renter protections ordinance in St. Paul.

HOUSING EQUITY

Housing is a human right. Individuals and families need the opportunity to stay in their neighborhoods without fear of being displaced or forced to endure appalling living conditions for lack of better choices. Policies and practices must honor our right to stay in or move to any community that positions us to thrive.



VALUES

Home is more than a physical space.

We recognize that many of our migrant neighbors have been pushed out of their homes because of colonization, and economic and political exploitation. We honor that complexity and reject barriers to housing or social belonging based on immigrant status.

We have enough for everyone to be housed.

Our communities are abundant. We do not lack resources; we lack systems and institutions that prioritize those resources to meet our needs and visions.

Housing is not an individual challenge; it's a collective responsibility.

Housing instability is the intentional result of systemic exclusion and capitalism, not individual behavior. We affirm the need for a collective response that creates a different model and approach to ensure housing for all.

Housing is a human right.

We believe that safe, dignified, adequate housing is foundational to our ability to survive and thrive — and justice and humanity demand that it not be denied to anyone because of their identity or ability to pay.

VISION

We can dream a different future.

Everything that exists today came from a place of imagination. Our communities need the time, resources and care to break out of the mental constraints imposed by colonization and capitalism.

Housing is a community resource, not a market commodity.

Our homes, in the communities we choose, are a universal right and source of sanctuary, not a mechanism for private profit. We envision models that cultivate community ownership and cooperation.

Public resources support our people, not corporate bail-outs.

Public resources secure our communities and keep people in their homes to *prevent* mass displacement, rather than bailing out banks in the aftermath of a housing crisis.

Housing needs are recognized and addressed across a continuum.

Our communities are diverse and our approaches to housing must be, too. There are no universal solutions or approaches that support renters and leaders across the housing justice ecosystem working to meet our community needs.

Housing is part of an interconnected web of human needs.

Systems of care — including living wages, affordable healthcare and free internet — are recognized and prioritized as essential elements of housing stability.

HOW WE GET THERE

In 2019, Equity in Place identified **Five Pillars of Affordable Housing Policy** to advance equitable housing and housing justice, which are all the more relevant and essential as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic to create a fundamentally different approach to housing and community development.



POWER

Renters and communities most impacted and historically marginalized must be centered in and have lasting influence on the decision-making processes that impact their housing stability. We must **decentralize power** from 1) property owners through policies like rent stabilization that pull back their authority to dictate the market rate for our living and 2) banks through near-term reforms and the creation of community-owned financial institutions.



PLACEMENT

The location and type of housing must be directed by communities most impacted and provide access to essential daily needs like transit and healthy foods. We must **keep people and community assets in place** by 1) passing policies that prevent mass evictions, displacement and home foreclosures due to COVID-19 and other economic attacks and 2) ensuring relief and recovery efforts prioritize BIPOC renters, homeowners and businesses.



PROTECTION

Existing renters and homeowners must have the tools and rights to remain in their homes and not experience the impacts of housing instability or displacement. We must also **decolonize our approach to livability issues**, like occupancy limits that disproportionately harm and are enforced against immigrant and households of color.



PRESERVATION

Existing affordable housing must be maintained at truly affordable levels and improved as needed to remain safe, livable and healthy for the same residents. We must **shift to community ownership and other social and public housing models**, and pass tenant opportunity to purchase rather than relying on private or nonprofit developers.



PRODUCTION

New housing units must be produced at a diversity of affordability levels with a commitment to use **public resources for the most deeply affordable housing**.

Equity in Place Policy Agenda

Informed by communities most impacted by housing injustice and instability, Equity in Place identified four areas for housing policy change, including housing access, housing stability, community ownership and community investment. This Policy Agenda outlines specific policy solutions, citing examples and resources for each.

Race & Regionalism: Intentional Exclusion

Using a massive tract of undeveloped land in Arden Hills as a case study, this report examines how and why cities must ensure that new developments — particularly those subsidized by taxpayer dollars — do not continue the disturbing legacy of intentional exclusion of low-wealth families from their communities and instead actively provide housing options that meet the real affordability needs of the region.

Equitable Housing means...

Stability

Respectful **management** practices that create **safety** from landlord **harassment**, minimize **evictions**, and ensure access to legal **protections**

Access

The ability to **choose** where you live

Paying an amount for housing that is **truly affordable**

Living in a space that is **large enough** for your household

Reasonable **screening criteria** and security deposits that make housing attainable

regardless of **immigration status**



ility

A sense of **belonging**, in a beautiful and **well-maintained** space that supports the needs of **all abilities**, ages and cultures with **dignity**



Systems

Preserving area culture and the right to stay for current residents is the highest and best use of land and development dollars; and political and financial systems are intentionally oriented toward that goal.

Community

Close to **transit, jobs**, groceries, healthcare and other needs

In the same area as friends, **family** members and other support networks

Walkable neighborhood with welcoming **green spaces** for families and kids

Community is reflective of households' **culture, race, ethnicity**

and provides opportunity for **community ownership**

TRANSIT EQUITY

Transit systems are essential links between individuals and the community. Respecting and prioritizing the dignity of riders by providing transit that is accessible, convenient and welcoming to all plays a central role in connecting our communities to daily needs and opportunities to grow and thrive.



VALUES

Transit riders are essential members of our communities.

Dignity, respect and access to a full and vibrant life must be independent of access to an automobile.

Transit is critical infrastructure.

Our economies and our communities rely on the people — disproportionately communities of color — who rely on public transit. It is a fundamental piece of our society and must be resourced as such.

Transit is not a business; it's a public service.

Like the fire department or school system, we cannot expect our trains and buses to make a profit or for users to pay a significant portion of the cost.

Transit is more than transportation; it's a community.

As transit riders, we find joy, connection and empathy from the human interaction on buses and trains.

We need to ask, "Who are the perpetual winners and how is our infrastructure set with inequity as a baseline?" Charles Frempong-Longdon, Sierra Club North Star Chapter

VISION

A transit system that is accessible to all.

Everyone, regardless of income or physical ability, has a right to mobility whether or not they can pay a fare. Transit should be free.

A transit system that centers communities of color in defining safety.

Our safety is rooted in collective care, not more policing and enforcement that criminalizes poverty and profiles people of color.

A transit system that recognizes our full humanity.

As transit riders, all of our trips are important and integral to our lives, not just commuting to jobs.

A transit system that incorporates a reparations lens.

Historically disinvested communities must have priority in resource allocation, in ways that prevent displacement.

"Transit isn't just about going to and from work. My family uses the bus to live our lives. When it works, it brings a type of security to our life. When it doesn't, it brings another dynamic of trauma that tells me, as a person with a disability, that I'm not supposed to be in society. As we move forward, we need to work toward a system that is far more inclusive of everyone."

Nikki Villavicencio, disability rights advocate and ADAPT member

HOW WE GET THERE



Dedicating funding at a scale that recognizes the essential nature of transit to our communities and economy.

Transit has been consistently and systemically under-resourced at the state and federal levels for decades. We need policymakers to prioritize significant and sustained funding — for capital expenses and operations — at a scale that is commensurate with providing quality, reliable service, not just for commuting, but for the full spectrum of community needs.



Prioritizing bus rapid transit (BRT) on high volume routes that serve communities of color.

In the Twin Cities, there are shovel-ready projects that would increase and improve service for communities that utilize and rely on transit the most. These projects and others that address historic disinvestment and environmental harms should be first in line for funding.



Decriminalizing fare evasion and reducing police on transit.

Due to generations of wealth extraction and structural racism, communities of color are more likely to utilize transit — and are more likely to be targeted and ticketed by law enforcement. Rather than growing the number of transit police, we need to invest in alternatives, like community ambassadors, to reduce the trauma of engaging with police and decriminalize infractions that can have a devastating and disproportionate impact on riders of color.



Creating a fare-free system that is accessible to all.

In contrast to Minnesota, where fares have been increased in recent years, many transit agencies across the nation are implementing fare-free systems. We need to identify revenue streams that do not rely on the most economically marginalized to pay for a public service that is critical to the functioning of our economy and society.



Respecting the dignity of riders and resourcing community organizing.

Making transit a convenient, safe and viable option requires cross-agency partnership to ensure bus stops not only have dignified amenities, like shelters, but also sidewalks and crossings that connect residents to transit. Transit riders are a community and know best the solutions to make our system work. Like housing or other advocacy, we need resources for community organizing.

"Personally, I need the bus to get to class and work and doctor's appointments. If I don't have transit service, I don't have access to higher education, my job and healthcare. Mobility justice is environmental justice, it's gender justice, it's racial justice — and we need to center that because access to mobility informs access to all aspects of society and whether that will be equitable or not." Finn McGarrity, Move Minnesota

WHERE'S THE COMMOTION?

by Abdulrahman Wako

Where is the commotion?

The oceans of emotion
The voices of a whirlwind.
Feel for a second,
The war wins
And the world ends
The world cringes,
On a single strand of hope
The world is hinged.

Why is there the notion?

Someone else will mix up some magic potion.

Are we too broken?

Can we not feel the hurt and the homeless?

Rotating globes
Black robes
Gavels are bold
To send a soul to rot
In a dark lonely world.

Is this the dark world?
Is this what we want?

What is a degree, what is a family, what is a job,
a house?
If the world doesn't sleep like you sleep,
Right.

Like rabbits we escape deep into our holes
And leave our goat friends to hyenas
Hungry for a mole.

Where is the creation?

The created,
The creating some change
And the League of Nations
For Earth and her natives.

The One Human Racist.

We kill the one alien
And we lose a part of the Human Face.

One species especially made special,
Our differences make us equal.

Today's individual is a reflection of our world
view,
A residual of the human condition.

Our belief is our bodies
And our view is skewed
Too fat to lose
So we que like clueless fools to remove
A part of us we don't want viewed.
Just to change others view of
Our unwanted hues.
Scarred by the light skinned
Dark point of view,

Why must you look at me As if I Am not you?

Why compare your **Self** to my **Self**
And say your **Self** is better than my **Self**
When our **Self**, is just **Self**.
A different book
From the **same shelf**.

Do we really need to be the same To Be Equal?

Wouldn't it be boring to read the same story With no sequel?

You see we are beautiful just the way we are
The thought of our perfection is a hard
perception.

A blessing stuck in a sandglass
Too afraid to break open the present.

I say, I Am just the way I Am and that is Perfect.

Just for once look outside your window pains
Your mailbox is broken.
Brimmed up to your doorway
Your doorsteps overloaded.



June 2020: The mostly immigrant Mixto Art Crew poses in front of the George Floyd mural on E Lake Street. Poet Abdulrahman Wako (far right) incorporated poetry into the mural during the closing ceremony by performing "Where is the Commotion?" In that powerful moment, we transcended from just creating art to addressing healing, thanks to Wako's vision. - Ricardo Perez, artist and Alliance Coalition Organizer

One Day, This Day Open One Mail,

read what it says.

Where is your compassion?

A Blind Eye

You won't cross to see a dying companion
You're passing your passion on the possible
wealth.

Too sick to pursue a probable health.
From the iPhone 6th to the iPhone 12th
But you're still poorer than your Gucci belt.

Right-click
Click garbage

Do you not Love your Self?

If you **Love** your **Self**
You'd have **Love** for your other **Self**,
Your other brother and your other sister, your
other health.

Can I tell you that love has no ending?

Just first you must feed your **Self-Love**,
Self-Love is what we are missing.

You are alive but you are not living.
This is why you are not giving.

What we need the most
Is what we already have.

What we need to give the most
Is what we think we don't have.

Fear or **Love**

You choose what you want.
Just know silence is still a choice.
And the choice is yours
Choose wisely cuz we are all chosen.
Let's not wait for one great hope
Realize that we create what we want.

I Am Wordy (Wako)

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

We must recreate our built environment to be more energy efficient and transition from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to one based on clean, renewable energy sources that provide living wage jobs and opportunities for ownership in communities most impacted by pollution and climate change.



VALUES

We recognize and honor the wisdom and legacy of Native and Indigenous peoples living with and caring for the earth.

Our environmental and climate crises are a direct result of white supremacy, genocide and colonization of Native peoples who lived in deep connection to the land, water and air for generations. Our environmental strategies must be grounded in Indigenous knowledge, healing and transformative justice.

Human and environmental issues are one and the same.

What's happening in people's lives is inextricably connected to what's happening in our ecosystems. What hurts the earth, hurts our bodies. What hurts our bodies, hurts the earth.

Environmental justice is racial justice.

At the individual and community scale, Black and Indigenous bodies are hurting the most — and must be centered, prioritized and resourced to lead this work.

We connect through our shared values

Revolution begins and is alive in our bodies and spirits. Moving intentionally from love, making and holding space with one another is itself the work of co-creating a sustainable and vibrant future.

VISION

Environment and climate campaigns center people not places.

Shifting from a focus on pristine parks or wilderness conservation, our efforts start from the experiences of the *people* in our most impacted communities.

Our work is rooted in an anti-racist and working class analysis.

From policy recommendations to campaign decisions, our efforts grow from the voices and needs of low-wealth, immigrant and communities of color, and a recognition that we must dramatically remake our economy to sustain our people and planet.

We make change by building people power.

We need more than the right solutions; we need robust people power. We focus our energy not just at policymakers, but invest in deep and sustained community and worker organizing.

Our expertise is essential.

We know that current political systems and funding streams, prioritize the lawyer over the mother, the nonprofit with "staff capacity" over frontline collectives. We call out the assumptions about whose work is valued and resourced and hold organizations and institutions accountable to breaking these patterns of marginalization.

HOW WE GET THERE



Radical solidarity

"There is a cultural revolution that is necessary in humanity to organize at the depth of solidarity this moment requires of us," Sam Grant, Executive Director of MN350, emphasized. "White-led organizations have to stop asking us to help them and turn around and ask *How can I practice deep, meaningful solidarity with you now and always?* Part of solidarity is that you will listen to me at all times, not just when I sugarcoat my words."



Intersectional organizing

Because our environment is tied to every aspect of our wellbeing, we need intersectional organizing that recognizes the leadership of communities most impacted. This looks like working in solidarity with janitors fighting for a Green Demand in their contract negotiations and amplifying Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives campaigns to push back against extractive industries that put Native women at risk.



Centering equity in energy efficiency

Energy efficiency programs can lower energy bills for customers and reduce climate impact — but these programs must prioritize equitable investments for marginalized communities and under-resourced customers. They also must integrate the input and needs of renters, who are too often left out of these conversations, and have less agency over energy decisions or technology in their unit or building.



Community ownership and workforce development in renewable energy

It is not enough to transition to 100% renewable energy. We need a just transition that ensures clean energy provides opportunities for community ownership and intentionality around workforce development that creates and sustains living wage jobs for low-income, immigrant and people of color.



Prioritizing clean technology in marginalized communities

For generations, waste sites and polluting industries have been located in communities of color, impacting the health of residents and access to outdoor and green spaces. In addition to closing these dangerous facilities — for instance, the HERC waste incineration plant in North Minneapolis — we must prioritize clean technology, like electric buses, in communities most directly impacted by environmental injustice.

Climate Equity Table Strategic Plan Report

This report outlines the four-month strategic planning process for the Minnesota Climate Equity Table, which focused on: "How can we build a truly equitable coalition that is directed by Black, Indigenous and people of color leadership and frontline communities, and what will that require of us?"

Just Transition Framework

Just Transition is a framework developed by the trade union movement to encompass a range of social interventions needed to secure workers' rights and livelihoods when economies are shifting to sustainable production, primarily combating climate change and protecting biodiversity

COMMUNITY SAFETY

The murder of George Floyd amplified the generations' long efforts of Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities to seek justice for the devastating impacts of racist policing and envision new social systems to keep our communities safe, healthy and thriving. We know this comes, not from a reliance on policing, but from meeting fundamental human needs, like housing, jobs and transit. In this way, advancing regional equity is integral to cultivating community safety — and community safety is essential to actualizing equity.

Systems of Harm

Controlling Black, brown and immigrant bodies

Police have done devastating harm to communities of color. Our systems of law enforcement are rooted in the legacy of slavery and have evolved in ways that continue to prioritize controlling Black and brown bodies to maintain the comfort and property of white people. This control extends to our immigration system, in which people of color are criminalized and detained for civil infractions.

Displacement from homes and businesses

Generations of BIPOC families have been traumatized by the loss of their homes or businesses as intentional policies have prioritized the needs and profits of those outside our communities. This ongoing assault on our housing stability and the capacity of our businesses to build wealth is a critical barrier to cultivating community safety.

Disconnection from land and community resources

Because of environmental racism, our neighborhoods often bear the brunt of unhealthy pollution, while dangerously-designed streets and lack of transit make it difficult to access basic necessities. While connecting with neighbors and having access to the outdoors plays a key role in mental and physical health, over-policing often makes public spaces and gatherings feel unsafe.

Steps Toward Safety

Addressing embodied white supremacy in governments and public institutions

While government systems like policing cause external harm to the community, public institutions also inflict trauma internally. Reckoning with the embodied aspects of white supremacy is critical to creating environments that eliminate daily trauma for staff and communities of color. White staff and leadership must take seriously their responsibility to heal the ways white supremacy manifests within them to reduce harm to colleagues and community.

Rooting and growing our families and businesses in our communities

In 2020, organizers mobilized to keep families in their homes during a global pandemic and find ways to prevent the unprecedented loss of BIPOC-owned businesses amidst an economic crisis. Connecting housing to public health and community wealth to wellbeing has seeded critical connections in our discussions about the key components of true safety.

Cultivating inclusive and culturally centered spaces and systems

Our communities need spaces to process trauma, cultivate healing and simply feel safe from the constant strain of white supremacy, and over-policing. This means creating public systems that are culturally centered, and supporting opportunities for community ownership of the places that are sacred or essential to our wellbeing. It means our families feel free to come together to express our joy and creativity without fear of surveillance or control.

Read more and find additional resources at
thealliancetc.org/actualizing-equity-recap-community-safety

SUSTAINING OURSELVES & OUR MOVEMENTS

Community organizing is essential to advancing policy change for regional equity. For generations, leaders of color have mobilized our communities across issues and identities to advance bold visions for the future, but the unrelenting challenges of 2020 emphasized the necessity for self-care and healing to sustain ourselves and our movements. What strategies and practices can we carry forward from 2020 to ensure we never go back to a “normal” that isn’t liberatory for both ourselves and our communities?

Strategies and principles we’re taking from 2020



Reconnecting to our lineages, and reflecting on their strategies to move through crisis



Actively and authentically engaging youth leadership



Articulating and taking action for what we truly desire and deserve



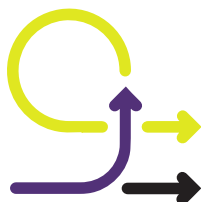
Defying acceleration and urgency by slowing down and grounding in our bodies



Listening to and honoring our bodies, including the need to rest — and dream



Taking care of our minds and protecting our mental space to cultivate balance and sustainability



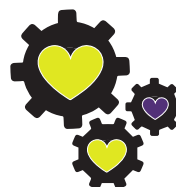
Embracing constant change, and releasing perfectionism



Finding the roles that serve and sustain our bodies — and our movements



Actively cultivating and centering community care for ourselves and in our organizing



Integrating care into our organizational structures

Read more and find additional resources at
thealliancet.org/actualizing-equity-recap-sustaining-ourselves-our-movements

Learn more and download *Our AREA 2018* at
thealliancetc.org/our-work/our-area

See more resources from *Actualizing Equity 2020* at
thealliancetc.org/resources/event-resources

Join us for *Actualizing Equity 2021*
thealliancetc.org/actualizing-equity



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