

Hope Community

Impacts and opportunities: Results from a discussion of Hope Community's community engagement and organizing work around healthy eating, active living, and creating safe and healthy community environments

In 2013, Hope Community, Inc. (Hope) received funding from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota to implement policy, systems, and environmental changes to address health inequities experienced by residents of the neighborhood surrounding Hope in South Minneapolis.

In March 2015, a group of 21 project stakeholders were invited to a Ripple Effect Mapping discussion about the project's impact in the community, and 14 attended the session. Participants included Hope staff and interns; staff from partner organizations connected to Hope's HEiP activities such as the Land Stewardship Project, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency/MNGreen Corps, Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI), Minneapolis Bike Coalition, and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board; and community members including residents, program participants, volunteers, and members of Hope's Food Justice Leadership Team. The Food Justice Leadership Team is a group of community members who have come together to support Hope's Food Justice Listening Project. The team strives to learn from the community about important food and food access issues and build capacity of community leaders to act on these issues. The Ripple Effect Mapping discussion was intended to not only provide the participants a chance to consider how successful the project has been in achieving its intended goals, but also to identify the indirect or unexpected project impacts. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with four staff members from three partner organizations who were not able to attend the discussion, but who had been involved in Hope's work for the Health Equity in Prevention contract.

PROJECT IMPACTS

During the discussion, all participants had opportunities to describe Hope's achievements and to discuss the indirect impacts of their work. The participants grouped each of these observed impacts into seven main types of changes that had taken place as a result of the project: building or strengthening connections, advocating for policy change, supporting leadership development, working differently in communities, promoting changes to the physical environment, contributing to new knowledge, skills, or awareness, and supporting youth engagement. Participants were not asked to rank the relative importance of these impacts in relationship to one another. However, the graphic included in this summary does show how many times the participants identified a change in each key area and offers a few examples of key impacts identified by the participants. A summary of the discussion related to each area of change is included in the document, and the specific impacts identified by the participants during the mind mapping exercise are listed in the appendix.

What is Ripple Effect Mapping?

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) is an evaluation tool used to better understand the intended and unintended impacts of a project. It is particularly helpful when evaluating complex initiatives that both influence, and are impacted by, the community. REM is a facilitated discussion with project staff and local stakeholders that creates a visual "mind map" during the discussion that shows the linkages between program activities and resulting changes in the community.

This approach is intended to help demonstrate the project's impacts more holistically and to describe the degree to which different types of impacts are observed by project staff and community stakeholders.

Ripple Effects Mapping: Hope Community



BUILDING OR STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

Through their partnership for the Open Streets project, Hope worked with the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) to produce a pop-up Four Sisters Farmers Market for local growers.

Hope community members have worked with multiple other organizations to support healthy eating and urban agriculture issues.

38%



ADVOCATING FOR POLICY CHANGE

Hope's advocacy efforts contributed to racial equity language being included in the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan.

Staff and residents were invited to comment on the Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance and now have a seat on the implementation committee.

18%



CONTRIBUTING TO NEW KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, OR AWARENESS

Through the Food Justice Leadership Team and other activities, community members have learned how to speak publicly for what they believe in.

Hope's conversation about urban agriculture has spread throughout the community and elevated other conversations of food equity.

9%



SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Community members have taken on new roles in leadership through the gardening work at Hope.

Residents have participated in leadership training at Hope and partner organizations.

9%



SUPPORTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Gardening work has welcomed young participants with many coming back each summer and the older youth being mentors to the younger participants.

10%



PROMOTING CHANGES TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Hope has expanded urban agriculture space in the neighborhood, including the new 5,000 square foot garden at the new housing development, The Rose.

6%



WORKING DIFFERENTLY IN COMMUNITIES

Hope's work has led to different conversations in the community about healthy living, healthy eating, and food justice.

9%

Hope
Community
and Land
Stewardship
Project

Advocating for policy change

One in five (18%) of the changes identified by the group participants related to Hope's work advocating for policy change. The first identified change reflected the work on the Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance, the effort to make healthier food available and affordable at licensed grocery stores and corner markets. Community and staff members of Hope and its partner, the Land Stewardship Project (LSP), commented on the draft plan and moving forward, two members of the Food Justice Leadership Team will sit on the implementation committee.

A second advocacy change highlighted the work related to including racial equity language in the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. When the plan was presented without including racial equity, Hope and LSP staff, community members from Hope, and staff/community members from several partner agencies spoke at the meeting. As a result of the presentations, the plan was tabled and later amended to include racial equity.

Hope and LSP were invited to comment on the new Staple Food Ordinance, which requires licensed grocery and corner stores to have more healthy foods. Five people attended and advocated for affordable and edible foods, fair price comparisons, support for local farmers, and incentives for food stamp use for healthy foods at corner stores.

Hope's advocacy efforts contributed to including racial equity language into the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board's (MPRB) Urban Agriculture Activity Plan.

Contributing to new knowledge, skills, or awareness

The discussion participants shared how Hope's work has encouraged the community to think about food in a different way (9%). They said the listening sessions hosted by Hope gave people the opportunity to share their experiences and struggles with food security, which highlighted some of the bigger structural issues related to food equity. The information will continue to support programming and advocacy work.

They also said Hope's information on healthy eating and food systems has spread through the community and been integrated into other community projects such as housing development, biking, and transportation.

Through the listening sessions, the Food Justice Leadership Team heard people talk about food in a different way, share common struggles and shame around food and the ways that shame has been internalized, which brought to light bigger structural issues.

Hope's position on healthy eating and food systems has focused conversations throughout the Phillips community. It has elevated conversations and brought food issues into the other community transformation projects (such as transportation and housing development). They have brought other organizations to think about food as transformative.

Supporting leadership development

Participants also identified ways Hope has supported leadership development (9%). The gardening work began in response to residents expressing interest in gardening as a way they could be involved in their community. As Hope began work to conduct a major (2-year) Listening Project focused on food, gardeners and other community members became a part of a Food Justice Leadership Team to learn together and guide the Listening Project activities. This team has also been involved in advocating for the gardens at Hope and urban agriculture in general. Members of this group were among the community members who advocated for adding racial equity to the Park and Recreation Boards Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. In addition to mentoring from staff in the context of Hope's healthy food and active living work, community members of Hope have taken opportunities to receive additional training from partner organizations like the Permaculture Research Institute, Sustainable Progress through Engaging Active Citizens (SPEAC), and MN Green Corps.

The garden evolved from a garden group to a leadership development group. We responded to what the community wanted. People have been gaining skills and knowledge about what food justice means and connecting people to local and national work, which helps situate our work policy.

Working differently in communities

Session participants also discussed how Hope is working differently with community members and partner organizations (9%). The gardens started at Hope because community members were asked what interested them and how they wanted to be involved. This process has increased residents' engagement as they developed the community-led initiative that has steadily expanded the gardens and helped community members develop new skills.

Participants also described how other agencies are working differently in the community because of Hope's work. For example, in the Park and Recreation Board's planning for South Minneapolis, Hope has connected park staff with communities that have not always been involved in planning. Similarly, Hope helped communicate new park policies around healthy eating and healthy options in the parks to community residents. Another comment from the mapping session described how Hope's work has led to different conversations in the community about healthy living, healthy eating, and food justice.

Deeper connections between the Park Board and the Hope staff who have helped in planning efforts, especially in the area of master planning efforts around South Minneapolis. They have helped the Park Board broaden our practices around community involvement. Hope has helped open the door to communities that governments do not have access to.

As a result of Hope's work we have different conversations in the community that include healthy living, healthy eating, and food justice being discussed at meetings.

Promoting changes to the physical environment

Throughout the discussion, participants noted the changes to the physical environment as a result of Hope's work (6%). They described the expanding garden space at Hope, including the new 5,000 square foot garden at the newest housing complex known as The Rose. One participant also mentioned the addition of compost bins that allow residents to recycle and make their own soil.

The work is not just about food and policies, it is also about how Hope can be an example about taking care of the land... like how our property managers work with the land and make a healthier ecosystem.

Supporting youth engagement

Group participants provided examples of how youth are involved in the gardening work at Hope (10%). They described how the space gives youth, and their families, a place to be and how the youth are taking ownership of "their" garden plots. There are also opportunities for older youth to serve as mentors for younger participants. In addition, Hope sponsors Step-Up workers from the City of Minneapolis Youth Employment Program to help in the gardens.

For the last year, the same group of 10 youth between the ages of 5 and 15 has been coming to the garden program, exploring food and garden, and figuring out how to be a human in the natural environment.

Building or strengthening connections

Two out of five changes identified by group participants related to how residents and partner organizations have strengthened relationships. Connections with other organizations including MN Green Corps, Waite House, Appetite for Change, Land Stewardship Project, Native American Community Development Institute, and Project Sweetie Pie were all mentioned. These connections have provided opportunities for staff and residents to receive training and mentorship, and the development of new activities such as a pop-up farmers market at Open Streets.

At the individual level, participants spoke about the connections between residents and how the garden work brings people of different cultures and ages together. They described how the bike program, gardening, and cooking classes have also provided opportunities to meet new people and share ideas. They also commented that participants are inviting new people to join activities.

This work helps neighbors representing different ages, cultures, and world-views meet and better understand each other.

Hope Community; home of people involved; community; I have lived here for five years; the farther I go the more I appreciate it; with each year there are new opportunities for me and my neighbors; they look out for each other; there is fellowship; in the community garden people can play in the dirt and get dirty; plant healthy foods; there is love and security in my home and the community.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Participants' responses during the discussion illustrate the strong community-based work Hope and its partners are doing to promote healthy community environments. The following questions may be helpful for Hope and its partners to consider in planning future work:

- How can Hope build upon the relationships it has created with organizations and community members to further advance policy, systems, and environmental changes?
- What opportunities are there to work with other groups in the neighborhood surrounding Hope to promote additional community engagement in health equity work?
- What has Hope learned about engaging partners and community members in HEiP funded work that can be applied to other community initiatives?

APPENDIX: Project impacts identified by discussion participants

ADVOCATING FOR POLICY CHANGE

Hope and LSP were invited to comment on the new Staple Food Ordinance, which requires licensed grocery and corner stores to have more healthy foods. Five people attended and advocated for affordable and edible foods, fair price comparisons, support for local farmers, and incentives for food stamp use for healthy foods at corner stores.

Two Food Justice Leadership Team members are going to be on the committee to help guide the implementation of the Staple Food Ordinance.

Hope Community has been gracious enough to join the implementation group of the plan. They were instrumental around the evaluation measures which will be hard to measure. They stepped up and maintained involvement.

Hope's advocacy efforts contributed to racial equity language being included into the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board's (MPRB) Urban Agriculture Activity Plan.

Hope had people participate in groups that MPRB organized and Hope also hosted an early focus group about the plan. Racial equity came up as a strong theme in both of these settings.

The draft form of the plan did not include racial equity. MPRB organized a South Minneapolis input session in collaboration with Waite House, Gardening Matters, and Hope, which 40 people attended, but MPRB wanted participants to focus only on three goals. Participants in the input session wanted to add racial equity as a fourth goal.

The plan came out for final approval and racial equity was not included at all. Hope helped bring in 48 people to the MPRB meeting, with 35 speaking against adoption of the plan until the plan included language about racial equity. MPRB ended up not approving the plan as a result of these efforts, and they spent time with Hope and LSP leaders to work out how to include language in the plan related to racial equity that had teeth to it.

Some community members were initially upset with the efforts to oppose the plan because it was interfering with the passage of the plan, but then they saw that it was the right thing to do.

Some organizations also called LSP and expressed that they wanted to pass the plan in its original form and racial equity could be addressed at a later date. Hope and LSP are looking at how to guide more policy rather than being reactive.

The Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council now wants to get involved with the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan as a result of the racial equity advocacy efforts.

We got up and talked about racial equity. It made me feel like I had a voice at the table. We got to see peers also talk about racial equity and their experiences.

MPRB did not seem to be interested in community input at the initial information sessions, but looking instead for a rubber stamp and that they could check the box that they had engaged the community. The Parks Board is now taking a different approach to engagement, which is a "huge systems change for this organization."

Hope has been standing up for what we believe is important.

The Food Justice Leadership Team work has extended to other projects. I have worked with other people from Hope and other people Hope has connected me to, especially at the public policy tables.

CONTRIBUTING TO NEW KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, OR AWARENESS

Through the listening sessions, the Food Justice Leadership Team heard people talk about food in a different way, share common struggles and shame around food and the ways that shame has been internalized, which brought to light bigger structural issues.

The team will present the information from the listening sessions and use it to guide and support programming and advocacy efforts.

Listening session participants learned facilitation skills.

Participants involved in the advocacy efforts related to including racial equity language in the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan learned public speaking and direct action skills.

A representative from the Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition shared appreciation that Hope provides a good balance to their knowledge about bike advocacy by including the pedestrian perspective.

The bike program has also been used to help residents access healthy foods.

Hope moves conversations about how urban agriculture can make a difference in food deserts. It reminds us that biking and gardening is a necessity for helping people survive and not just nice things to do.

Hope's position on healthy eating and food systems has focused conversations throughout the Phillips community. It has elevated conversations and brought food issues into the other community transformation projects (such as transportation and housing development). They have brought other organizations to think about food as transformative.



SUPPORTING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The garden evolved from a garden group to a leadership development group. We responded to what the community wanted. People have been gaining skills and knowledge about what food justice means and connecting people to local and national work, which helps situate our work.

The Food Justice Leadership Team's work has allowed members to take on new opportunities such as the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, building on conversations they have started at Hope.

People on the team have stayed together through the process and continue to be involved.

Hope also gets people to show up, not only stand up. They help organizations and people follow through and show up.

Hope also connected a participant to Sustainable Progress through Engaging Active Citizens (SPEAC), which provides training and support to community activists around organizing. This group opened my eyes about government and provided me with a language.

Initially trained one person through the Permaculture Research Institute, then trained additional community members who have gone on to work with other urban agriculture spaces and train others. There are plans to secure additional funds to continue training.

The Food Justice Leadership team has changed the way we look at data and how we collect it. We have been building our data through narrative and storytelling and that changes how community organizers can use the data. Using stories to tell people's connections to food systems and what they need to be secure is asset based and powerful.



WORKING DIFFERENTLY IN COMMUNITIES

There have been bumps along the way; it is important to recognize that this work did not happen easily.

Hope is now working from a framework of resiliency. In the past, they had approached the work more from a framework of sustainability.

There is the structure and then there is the community and the people. Hope focuses on the structure (i.e. housing) and the community. Hope has focused on the community that supports the structures. What is the role that HOPE should play in addressing health equity? A lot of it is about relationships; how do you stay relevant and true to the people while working on the mission?

As a result of Hope's work we have different conversations in the community that include healthy living, healthy eating, and food justice being discussed at meetings.

Deeper connections between the Park Board and the Hope staff who have helped in planning efforts especially in the area of master planning efforts around South Minneapolis. They have helped the Park Board broaden our practices around community involvement. Hope has helped open the door to communities that governments do not have access to.

Because Hope Community works with staff from the park system they are better able to educate residents about what the park system does about healthy eating and providing healthy options in park spaces. They are acting as a conduit for public education. For instance, the park passed a healthy eating policy and Hope has helped communicate it.

Hope has developed a community led initiative through their listening session process. Hope stays in touch with the community. There is increased engagement from the community. There is more opportunity for leadership.



PROMOTING CHANGES TO THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical space surrounding Hope Community has been transformed through the Community Teaching Garden at the Rose and the gardens on Hope's property.

The work is not just about food and policies, it is also about how Hope can be an example about taking care of the land... like how our property managers work with the land and make a healthier ecosystem.

The Rose Garden will be established in a new building as part of a mandate through the Living Building Challenge (a design framework).

However, Hope has emphasized that they are not just going to accept the mandate, but are going to respect the work that is already going on and talk to the community about what they want the garden to be.

The expansion of urban agriculture space at Hope and in the community and the addition of compost bins.



SUPPORTING YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

More youth have come down to the garden and parents have supported their participation, and some parents have even started participating themselves.

This changed the block. More people were volunteering in the garden, more kids were becoming involved.

For the last year, the same group of 10 youth between the ages of 5 and 15 has been coming to the garden program, exploring food and gardens and figuring out how to be a human in the natural environment.

The program is focusing on leadership with younger and older youth.

Some of the older kids are excited to be my assistant; they are seeing the opportunity for leadership and stepping up.

The program is going to have STEP-UP workers, an older crew to help build capacity of younger youth in the garden. STEP-UP is the City of Minneapolis's summer youth employment program.

The youth are taking ownership of the garden, seeing it as "This is our space."

The youth want to know where their garden space is for the season and are becoming their own experts around food.



BUILDING OR STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS

MN Green Corps has worked closely with Hope Community (Hope) over the past four years.

We have changed our trainings as a result of working with Hope. Mentorship has been a key component of working with Hope. The listening and the learning pieces are key in doing this work. They will continue to be my touchstones.

The relationships that Hope has with other organizations in the Twin Cities have helped MN Green Corp members connect with these organizations and do their work better.

Many MN Green Corps members have remained connected to the community in which they worked and have gone on to work with other food and advocacy organizations.

People from the listening sessions remember key staff from the discussions, but there are opportunities to do a better job of following up with people who attend and continue to engage them in the work.

A former employee of a partner organization indicated that being able to stay connected to so many people through the Food Justice Leadership Team has allowed her to keep contributing to the work.

Hope is helping to build a community at a larger level

Hope leverages different initiatives and creates connections, creating community around healthy eating and developing relationships among partners.

Hope, Waite House, and Appetite for Change worked together to bring people in to testify about the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan and supported the development of a metric to measure racial equity.

This work helps neighbors representing different ages, cultures, and world-views meet and better understand each other.

Hope Community; home of people involved; community; I have lived here for five years; the farther I go the more I appreciate it; with each year there are new opportunities for me and my neighbors; they look out for each other; there is fellowship; in the community garden people can play in the dirt and get dirty; plant healthy foods; there is love and security in my home and the community.

We plan community events that the community wants to see. We have a party. People get to know one another and this shows that Hope is a community organization.

The activities in the garden, the cooking classes, and bike program helped a participant get to know her neighbors. She observed increased communication and connections across neighbors from different cultures.

The resident observed that safety in the neighborhood by these relationships.

The neighborhood used to be rough, but it has changed over the last seven years. People are more involved. The community sees the opportunity at Hope. They don't have to leave the area.

A former garden participant reported that through the garden, he made closer friends to whom he is still connected.

The former garden participant also reported that churches would sometimes visit the garden.

People are inviting others to participate in the garden.

It is about being out there in the community and being present. A garden is the space to be public.

Hope and Waite House are working more closely, which has not always been easy to achieve.

Having some common assumptions about policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes through work under the Health Equity in Prevention (HEIP) initiative gave the organizations a good jumping off point for working together.

Hope worked with the Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) to produce a pop-up Four Sisters Farmers Market during Open Streets. The event focused on local growers selling food.

The Four Sisters Farmers Market partnered with Children's Hospital to have coupons for people to use to buy food.

The Four Sisters Farmers Market also included active yoga and Zumba at Waite Park.

The partnership of Hope, LSP, and NACDI is now piloting a summer Four Sisters Farmers Market with eight market days, focusing on growers of color providing healthy, culturally appropriate food.

Hope has developed funding to support the work of NACDI.

The process of planning for Open Streets deepened connections to other community agencies and brought conversations around healthy living

The listening sessions have also supported deeper connections among organizations represented on the Food Justice Leadership Team.

Hope has helped make introductions across local groups working in bicycle advocacy, including the Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition, Cycles for Change, and Spokes. "Hope has been a good facilitator at helping these groups to find a common goal. We can go to the city or a county as a unified group with a clear goal."

By training community members, PRI has gained connections to Project Sweetie Pie in North Minneapolis.