

# FEED THE ROOTS

December 2015

A HOPE COMMUNITY LISTENING PROJECT REPORT



**"If they want us to be healthier, they  
should have healthy food everywhere."  
-youth, Peavey Park Teen Program**

# HOPE COMMUNITY

In 2009, Hope Community began working with community members to reinvigorate an abandoned community garden. Within 5 years, more than 150 youth and adults were growing food together; activities expanded to include cooking, composting, and youth-focused programming. People talked about how food relates to their health, culture, and community. These conversations sparked other discussions: people wanted to learn how other groups are working with food. They wanted to know how “the food system” works. Most especially, they wanted to know how they could make the food system work better in their own neighborhood. Led by strong community interest, Hope Community staff worked for two years with a team of community members to learn more about what people in Phillips Community, Minneapolis are experiencing, thinking, and doing about food access and food justice. This report is a result of that work.

Established in 1977 as a shelter and hospitality house that, in the mid-1990’s, Hope Community took on a new mission and evolved into a respected community development organization. Hope’s long-term strategy is to build social capital and physical infrastructure by investing in people, community networks, place-making and buildings/public spaces. Transformational change is at the center of Hope’s work, grounded by an approach rooted in diversity, leader development, equity, and community health and resilience. Since 1997, Hope has involved more than 4000 people in Community Listening conversations that shape Hope’s work and inform the work of others.

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## PHILLIPS COMMUNITY MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Hope Community is located in the Phillips Community, one of the most economically challenged and diverse in Minneapolis, just a mile south of downtown. According to most recent census data, there are nearly 20,000 residents in Phillips; about 30% of them are children (compared to 20% of the total population in Minneapolis as a whole). Forty-one percent of the children in the neighborhood live below the poverty line. About 80% of Phillips residents are people of color (compared to fewer than 40% citywide), and 80% are renters (versus 50% citywide). The median household income in Phillips is about half that of the City as a whole. The median income in the neighborhood is only 1/3 that of the metro area.<sup>1</sup> Illegal drug trade, violence and disinvestment in the 1980s-90s had a devastating impact on the community. Today, it’s a major challenge for Phillips residents to obtain affordable healthy food on a reliable and consistent basis. The odds against eating healthy in Phillips are exponentially increased due to challenges related to transportation, financial resources, limited access, and a very real lack of options. While the experiences in this report may be common to many people in Minnesota and beyond, it’s important to acknowledge that the challenges people in Phillips Community face with food are particularly intensified by institutional racism, trauma and well-documented disparities related to race and class a long history of oppression and cultural genocide that is still influencing people today.

## HOPE'S LISTENING APPROACH

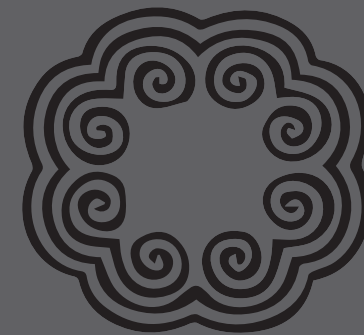
Hope's Community's Listening involves community members in meaningful ways to inform and help lead our work. Since our first Listening Project in 1997, Hope has known:

- ✿ It's not enough to talk with a few people
- ✿ Too many residents are mistrustful of typical public meetings used to inform policy and decision making
- ✿ The majority of people in our community are low-income people from diverse cultures; their voices have to be central in our process
- ✿ There is power in coming together; our primary mode of engaging people is in groups rather than as isolated individuals.

Hope's Community Listening Sessions are not "focus groups" or decision-making meetings. Listening organizers and leaders reach out in ways that build trust, invite broad participation, and ask powerful questions that take community members seriously. Involving people of diverse cultures and ages, Listening Conversations can break down barriers as we talk about our common values, and build energy when we explore what we can do about our common challenges.

## PROJECT APPROACH

In 2013, Hope staff organized a Food Justice Leadership Team made up of community members and organizers who care deeply about food and health. These leaders wanted to learn more and take on key roles to help connect community stories and perspectives to the work of developing solutions. The Team, consisting of Hope staff and community leaders, conducted outreach visits with local cultural organizations, youth programs, at food shelves, and community centers; these lead to collaboration with many different organizations to host listening sessions. The Team facilitated 20 different listening sessions that, along with a community survey and individual interviews, involving 415 people. The Project Team and another group of Community Readers reviewed collected comments (56 pages worth!) to draw out the main themes, lessons and solutions to share with the public.



## THIS REPORT AND COMMUNITY VOICE

It's a difficult and delicate thing to take 56 pages of powerful comments and translate them into a written report. We know that we cannot speak for others. However, involved community members participated with the knowledge that their comments would be used collectively in a report, and community members and food leaders were deeply involved in making meaning out of the collected comments. The comments themselves were so powerful that, in many parts of the report, we simply let them speak for themselves.

## WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH THIS REPORT?

We live in an era of food- and stress-related health crises, increasing disparities, and cultural and environmental erosion. We not only have to find solutions together; we must also honor each other so that we can work together to achieve them. The information contained in this report has already begun to shape Hope Community's work; we urge you actively use it to shape your work, as well. Read it. Discuss it. Allow your assumptions to be challenged and your perceptions to be informed by this report. Then consider the power you have in your world – at work, at home, in your community, in your life – and do something with it. Use it to make healthy food more accessible and more equitable for everyone.



## WHO WAS INVOLVED

cultural workers food workers farmers gardeners community organizers advocates indigenous communities and tribal nations  
immigrants and refugees people of color people of European descent long-term neighborhood residents first and second generations  
elders youth and teens parents and grandparents educators learners people living in poverty people living in emergency  
housing people who use emergency food assistance ricers medicine-makers cooks poets farmers painters writers



# COMMUNITY FOOD EXPERIENCES:

Members of the Phillips Community share their experiences with food

If you think people in Phillips Community don't have a lot to say about the food they eat and why it matters, think again. Throughout this project, we heard a wide range of meanings that food has for people in our community: It builds and heals our bodies; it's how we care and provide for our families and friends. Food is memory; food is family; food is home. It is woven into the fabric of our lives, carrying our culture and our traditions. Food is a way to share wisdom, skills, and history from generation to generation. We're connected to those who bring food to our communities, to stores and restaurants, to homes and tables. With our hands in the dirt, we invest in a relationship with the weather, the seasons, and the land. Food is opportunity: it inspires culinary creativity; we can use it to create jobs and spur development. Food is hope: with food, we nourish our bodies, nurture our young people, and cultivate our future.

However, the value of what food means to our communities is not reflected in how easily we can get to it, if we can afford to buy the food we need and if we have the resources to produce it and benefit from



it ourselves. People also shared their experiences of food as a weapon. Throughout history and today, food (or lack of it) has been used to punish, to manipulate, to dominate and control. The type of food we are able to get is a clear indication of status, opportunity, and power. We are what we eat. And when we can't get the food we need to be healthy, it shapes our perceptions, the practical realities, and the possibilities of and what we can be.

**"What is healthy food to you?"**  
People said: Fruits and vegetables, fresh meats, organic food, natural, foods from the ground, fresh!, wild rice and buffalo, food from my country, food I make myself, what I cook with my sister, food that was grown, medicine, food that reminds me of my homeland, not too many chips, vegetarian, crisp, expensive, outside of my community, hard to get to, not sugary, tastes good, food that is not abused, food I want more of, I am learning about it.

WHAT IS THE "FOOD ENVIRONMENT" – AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?  
The grocery stores, corner stores, gas stations and convenience stores, "big box" stores (such as Target, Walmart, Costco), restaurants, delis, bakeries, shops, cafeterias at school or work, vending machines, farmers markets, gardens, community centers, daycare centers, food shelves and pantries, community kitchens, kitchen tables and dinner tables – all the places we get food add up to our "food environment". This influences the choices we have about what we eat. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Food environment factors—such as store and restaurant proximity, food prices, food and nutrition assistance programs, and community characteristics—interact to influence food choices and diet quality."<sup>2</sup> There are also other critical factors that shape our food options: What kind of food is available within a few minutes

of where you live? Do you have easy access to a vehicle? Do you take the bus? Can you ride a bike or walk to get food in your neighborhood? How does having young children influence how and where you get your food? Do you have land where you can grow food? Do you choose the food you eat, or do others choose what's on your plate? How much time, effort, and planning ahead does it take for you to obtain the food that you want to keep yourself and your family healthy? When these factors are added to the picture, it becomes clear that our food environments can be diverse, complex, and quite personal. It also illuminates why our food environment can have a dramatic effect on how easy (and thus how likely) it is for anyone to eat healthy.

FOOD AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY: "SEPARATE AND NOT EQUAL"  
We heard clearly that availability and affordability are practical realities that, in the Phillips food environment, make getting healthy food harder to get than its unhealthy counterparts.

GETTING TO FOOD  
A common theme was that Phillips Community has few stores offering quality fresh foods. For many in Phillips, getting the high quality, fresh and natural foods they want to eat requires significant travel – people often voiced that the stores they would prefer to shop (cooperative groceries, other stores offering natural foods, and larger chain groceries or big-box stores with a wide variety of fresh produce and meats) are in other communities. One consumer strategy is to make fewer, bigger trips to stock up on items from these "better" stores; however, many people in Phillips don't have that option. With 4 out of 10 residents not able to access a vehicle,<sup>3</sup> making big grocery trips (especially with children or with limited physical mobility) becomes an expedition requiring significant advance planning, expense, and time.

"Healthy food? How far do you have to travel to get it and can you afford it? It's not close to me. City planners rarely look out for people."

"Vegetables and fruits, you have to drive too far to get them; fast food is more convenient."

"My transportation defines my food system; corner stores are close, co-ops are not."

"[The] problem is also about having good transportation to get the food we want. Older seniors who can't get around are paying souped-up prices at corner stores. Handicap vans cost \$3 for just one way."

Without affordable, convenient, and safe transportation, the food environment shrinks dramatically for many Phillips residents. If it's too hard to get high quality food, people are left with what's available within their reach. Small scale groceries, mini marts, convenience stores and gas stations are widespread in Phillips, and people spoke of shopping at those stores even when the price or quality is not good. While some convenience stores specialize in certain cultural foods, reflecting ethnic populations living in the Phillips Community, an overwhelming number of comments spoke to relying on convenience stores because they had to, not because they wanted to.



THE COST OF FOOD  
A major theme was that healthy and natural foods cost more than people can afford to pay. **With almost half of Phillips households living below the poverty line, and 6 out of 10 earning less than \$35,000 a year, it's not surprising that choosing between quality and quantity is on people's minds.**<sup>4</sup> People spoke of stretching their food dollars by shopping at big box stores, where cheaper prices mean they can buy more food, even if it is of lower quality. Other comments reflected how affordability and shelf life impact shopping choices; for example: canned (non-perishable, highly processed) vegetables cost less and last longer than fresh vegetables. Considering budget priorities such as rent, medicine and energy bills, many Phillips residents spoke of food value in terms of

volume and shelf-life rather than nutrition. In general, many people in Phillips expressed a belief that having enough money to buy healthy, unprocessed and organic food is a privilege that many people don't have.

“If you tell me organic is better but I can't afford to buy it, I will buy the burger I know I can afford for a dollar.”

“We get \$40/week to spend on food. I try to buy all natural foods from the earth, but I get less than others. Healthy food is more expensive at the stores than other foods. There's chocolate everywhere but few carrots.”

“My family buys a lot of carbs because it's cheap and fills you up.”

“The Co-op, where you can get organic and healthy options, it's impossible. I can eat for a day, but I will starve the next six days... You think about survival and also eating healthy.”

grocery stores, corner stores and convenience stores, minimarts, gas stations, schools, community centers, fast food and take-out restaurants, even at non-food stores like house-ware and office supply stores.

People fear the negative health impacts junk food has on their lives and, in particular, on youth and small children who are just developing a sense of what tastes good to them. People see that young people are presented in so many ways with an overwhelming amount of unhealthy food, and they view this as a serious danger to the future of their communities. Community members described their food environment as “dangerous.” Many comments from youth show a keen awareness of the health implications of the food they eat. As one youth stated, “The food that's bad, that can kill you – it's easy to get.”

“There are differences in the stores based on whether the area is wealthy or poor, and stereo-types about what people will want or buy.”



“Some people have the money to get whatever they want and some do not. The neighborhood shows this division. The opportunities are not equal.”

JUNK FOOD IS ALL AROUND US: IT'S “A TICKING TIME BOMB FOR THE FUTURE” Residents in the community feel flooded with cheap, unhealthy foods that are addictive and aggressively advertised to youth and families. Foods high in additives, sugars, and salts while low in nutrients are available: at

“I see corner stores and gas station foods, fried chicken, hohos, pizza pockets, pizza rolls, a community reliant on corner store foods. The foods that I see around me are bad, America wants me to be fat.”

“My four year old grandson loves hot things (like Hot Cheetos). He sees other kids with them and he wants them too. They're in the stores, right where kids can get at them.”

“The foods that I see around me are bad, America wants me to be fat.”

“If they want us to be healthier, they should have healthy food everywhere.”

DON'T BLAME PEOPLE; CHANGE THE SYSTEM! People spoke of being judged and feeling shame when they don't have enough food or don't eat what are commonly considered “healthy” options. Many felt the inability to get healthy food on a regular basis is treated as the fault of people with low incomes, or of certain ethnic groups, rather than a larger societal problem of a broken system we should all be concerned with fixing. Many felt that racial and class-based bias and oppression are at the root of striking inequalities related to food access and healthy eating.

“Not everyone has access to good food. We are raised up in a pattern of thinking, a poverty of the mind. Symptoms come from this and people acting like ‘it's your own issue, deal with it.’”

“In the inner-city the wealthy keep us right on the edge—we get handouts, expired and second hand foods. Is it because we don't vote? Don't matter? Kids are killed every day. We are like the cast offs. Everywhere we got to get the left overs, the scraps of the upper class.”

“Sugar and salts are part of the bad carb addiction of the western diet pushed on American Indians from reservations.”

HEALTH, STRESS AND STRUGGLE Food and diet-related health problems are a major concern in Phillips. People are seeing more family members and friends struggle with diabetes, obesity, and heart disease, all causing increased stresses and insecurity about the future. In very direct ways, inability to access healthy food is threatening people's ability to work and provide for their families, learn and develop strong minds and bodies, and actively participate in family and community life. This has serious implications on public health, at the personal and community level. Many spoke of how changes in traditional diets have resulted in health problems for their cultural communities. Some expressed a desire to know more about nutrition and how our bodies react to different

foods and chemicals. At the same time, people also spoke of food as medicine, and how good nutrition can be a strategy to cope with challenges and hardships.

“If you eat a whole bag of chips you can't finish your homework.”

“Usually something has to happen before a change is made. We eat a lot of fried food and rice. I worry about my parents' health. I worry about my daughter. It's hard for kids to say no.”

“My mom has dementia and her mom had it too and I've read a lot about it. I think about myself and so now I eat more fruits and vegetables. You have to be mindful about what you eat. You hear about former classmates dying and you want to live and feel better.”

“I have to watch what I eat. I have high cholesterol and diabetes. I stay away from food that is bad [for me], like sugar, eggs and junk foods. I have to look at the labels, carbs and calories. It's a hassle, but worth it.”

HUNGER AND “THE EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM” Hunger is not about not having enough food, it's about poverty. “Chronic hunger has a range of causes, but global food scarcity is not one of them. According to the World Food Program, we produce enough to feed the global population of 7 billion people. The vast majority of people who go hungry cannot afford to purchase nutritious food or to secure conditions in which they can produce food for themselves.”<sup>5</sup>

Many people we heard from get a significant portion of their food from food shelves and pantries, meal programs, and other food assistance programs. Many people expressed gratitude for these resources, which have been essential for survival. However, people also spoke to ways in which the “emergency food system” is not working.

Food shelf and food pantry users commented on the extraordinary length of time the food distribution process takes – as much as 3 hours at some distribution sites. Others commented on the inconsistency of staple food items that would be useful and the inability to opt out of receiving items they don't want, such as doughnuts. A food pantry worker participating in a Listening Session explained that many food shelves and pantries often rely on donated, nonperishable food

items, which are often canned and highly processed to provide for a long shelf life. As well, donations often include food that's past its expiration date and can no longer be sold in stores. In addition, food donations rarely provide for health restrictions or cultural, ethnic, or dietary preferences such as Halal, Kosher, vegetarian, and low-sodium. A typical grocery bag from a food shelf often has far fewer healthy options than many people would choose if they were buying their food for themselves.

For many, these realities combine to send a message that, because they have low incomes, people who rely on emergency food resources are less deserving of healthy food than others who can afford to pay for what they eat.

In addition to serving people in short-term, emergency situations, many people are now relying on food shelves food pantries on a regular basis for longer periods of time to supplement monthly shortfalls in food.<sup>6</sup> This reflects a much larger issue: systems originally designed to fill temporary gaps for struggling individuals and families are now becoming a core part of a long-term strategy for many people who simply can't afford to pay for all of the food they need.

"We have a lot of different cultures. The community needs to start understanding and educating itself about diversity. Then we can reach out. For example, you don't see a lot of Muslim or Somali people here because maybe they think pork would be served."

"We get here [to the food pantry] at 8am, stand in line for a long time and then we sit for 1 hour. It should be less time consuming, it takes three or more hours, that's too long."

"Do food shelves check expiration dates? I've gotten pretty sick from old foods at food shelves and now I have less options than I did before. Not only can I not buy what I want, the free food at the food shelves is often expired."

"We get the scraps of food from society at the food pantry; we got to bow down and kiss the ring."



CHANGING FOOD, CHANGING CULTURE:  
FOOD IS CULTURE  
In Listening Sessions, many people reminisced about traditional cultural practices for growing and cooking food and creating plant-based medicines, stating that these practices had once been much bigger parts of family and community life. Many people made direct connections between loss of cultural foods and food practices used in the past and the rise of health concerns in their communities today.

Many indigenous and immigrant community members spoke of the struggle to maintain their cultural traditions, cooking practices, and farming methods in the face of what they see as modern American food and, as one person put it "the [sugar] spike and crash" diet.<sup>8</sup> A high-carb, high sugar diet dominates the landscape of people's daily lives. In stores, at school, surrounded by fast food restaurants, through advertising, people are being conditioned to eat unhealthy food. As one person put it, for better or worse, "Our food is part of our cultural programming."

"In our culture we bonded over food. We couldn't afford presents but had food. Our culture was food. Food as presents; hunting; sharing food with family; exchanging and trading food and knowledge."

"I was back home at a birthday party at Red Lake and the food was all pop, carbs, sugar, and pasta. I looked around at the youth, my cousins and saw only these foods. What happened to our cultural foods?"

"There is a connection between our bad health and lack of traditional medicines, herbal teas, and healers. Folks want to take a pill to "fix" a problem but will not change their diet."

"When I was back at Pine Ridge for a funeral – a cultural tradition was to give the family of the deceased a quilt. Now that's too expensive, so at the funerals we have large sheet cakes with the quilt design on the cakes. Crappy food."

"Food is part of our environment ... People become accustomed to traditional diet, when diet is switched, we have problems. We have major problems with western diet in American Indian culture, this causes us to have poor health."

"The problem of disconnecting American Indians from a traditional diet started long before the reservation, it was part of colonialism. Most American Indians should be gluten free due to wheat allergies."

DISCONNECT WITH FOOD AND THE BIGGER SYSTEM  
Community members spoke to feeling disconnected from where their food comes from and knowing little about the larger systems and policies that affect their food options and habits. Some community members spoke of the more direct relationships their elders and ancestors had with food because they farmed, cooked from garden harvests, saved seeds and preserved food. Many people talked about personally connecting to their food as consumers who are not able to afford or easily obtain food that is fresh and healthy, but few spoke to the labor and environmental costs to grow and distribute it. A few community members acknowledged the link between their ability to buy food at a low cost and the exploitation of farm workers, saying that food workers should be paid more for their labor. Many people were aware that "the food system" has a big impact on how they eat, and wanted to learn more about how the system works and who profits from it. People also asked about how they could be part of creating systems for food that are fair and connected to community.

"I was born on a farm, (we) ate a lot of chicken and butchering was part of life. Our family would come in and bond over cooking and making food."  
"The price of food has to do with farming and the costs associated with that. Prices affect farmers too."

FOOD, LAND, AND PLACE  
People spoke about land as an important resource for growing food, supporting culture and traditions, learning, and connecting people to place. Having

access to land, knowledge, and tools makes it possible to grow food and eat better for less money. However, much of the soil in Phillips Community has been heavily contaminated and requires specific care over time before it can be safe for growing food. Without resources to bring in clean soil, or a reasonable expectation of staying in the same place long enough to build good soil, a backyard garden is not a viable option. Many people spoke of developing community gardens; however, some had experienced difficulties negotiating use of city-owned vacant lots; others shared stories of sudden disruption or outright destruction of gardens that had been established over time. Even so, people saw community gardens as an important strategy with benefits that go far beyond food production. People value gardens as important spaces for community gatherings, learning places for youth, and places for cooking and eating and sharing and building relationships with neighbors.

"It would be beautiful to see dedicated community gardens for each neighborhood. My friends can find a lot of fresh food that way all summer long, which cuts down on my grocery budget. One of my friends has a free plot and he lets people who are willing to help grow on there get some."



"I used to live where there was a huge garden and people in the neighborhood grew food there. I moved and now I live in a place where the yard has been mistreated, the soil is bad and we can't grow there."

"I used to garden on a vacant lot. We planted strawberries and they grew. After 3 years the city came and plowed everything up. We tried to talk to them and they just laughed at us."

TIME CRUNCH

A lack of time was pointed to as a major barrier to getting and eating healthy food: Growing food takes time. Shopping for food takes time. Planning and cooking a healthy meal takes time. Most people we talked with feel the stress of busy lives and major responsibilities, and spoke of compromises on what and how they eat in order to balance everything. There were differing opinions about this strategy. Some had strong opinions about people not prioritizing their own health, or how planning and cooking meals can make healthier eating more possible. Many others believe it to be more complicated than just planning ahead and listed many factors that can affect how people use the time they have available: Family responsibilities, where and what type of food is available, type of employment and wage, time required to connect with social services, medical appointments, if you are in school, transportation options – all were mentioned as factors that make time management a complex challenge.

“Food nurtures survival. In this world we are busy and we do forget to take care of ourselves and our food intake.”

“Food intersects with all we’re trying to balance. When will I have time to eat, to plan?”

“It takes a lot of planning based on what I have available. If I want to incorporate healthy snacks, I must think ahead to anticipate.... Think ahead so I’m not in a crunch and want to go to the corner store and get chips or candy.”

“For me it’s a lack of time-to get, prepare, store, sit and enjoy food. I spend time growing food but don’t have time to prepare it. I need food and feel tired and hungry, so I go to McDonalds after working on a farm all day.”

From what we heard, eating healthy in the Phillips Community is an overwhelming challenge for many people. These experiences aren’t unique; many people in many places across the country experience challenges to healthy eating. However, the degree of difficulty and the resources to address the complexity of these challenges are not the same for all people. The conditions in Phillips and in similar communities are particularly shaped by a long history of decisions, actions, and attitudes that in turn have been shaped by racial and class bias sanctioned by public and private institutions, policies, and practices.



# HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Reflections on historical context, policy, and systems that impact our food



# Battle Soul British Milking. Digital image. The Guardian, 2 Oct. 2014. Web.

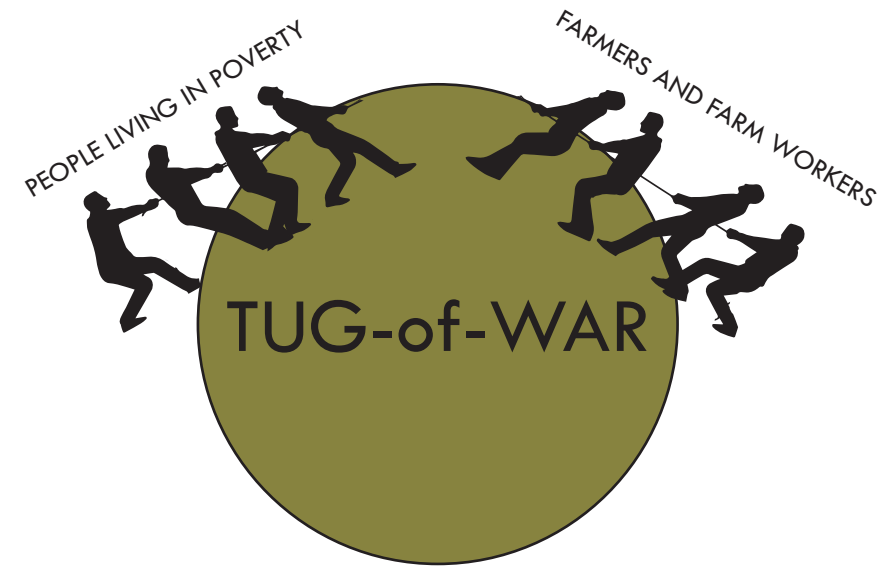
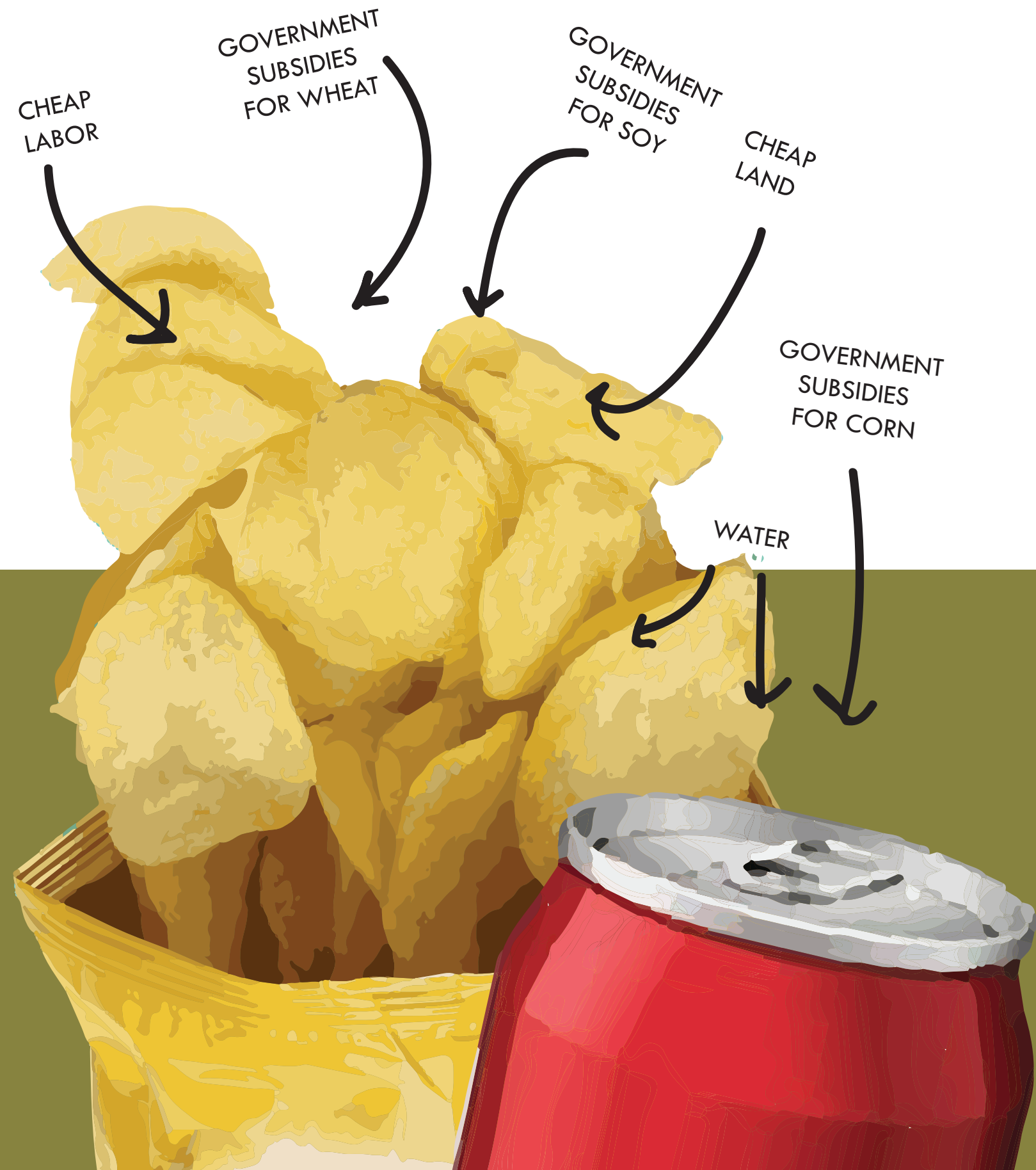
LARGER FORCES AT PLAY

While we all need to take an amount of personal responsibility for what we eat, how we invest our resources in health, and working as a community towards a healthy future, many of the people we spoke to have a sense that there are larger forces and systems at play, beyond our control, that greatly impact the health, culture and long-term sustainability of our communities and our world.

When it came time to make meaning out of the collected comments from the hundreds of people involved in this project, community member readers felt strongly that, to understand what’s happening today with food in Phillips Community (and in other communities with similar stories), it’s important to look at things through a lens that includes history, race, culture, land, and class.



# A RECIPE FOR CHEAP FOOD



## EXPLOITATION OF LABOR VS. AFFORDABLE FOOD

Due to the exploitation and abuse of farmers, food workers and natural resources world wide, many of us have become unaware of the true costs of food. When we do not make enough to pay all of our bills we want food at a lower cost. But this perspective feeds an increasingly abusive system for farm & food workers (often women and children are among the lowest paid workers of any employment sector)<sup>10</sup>, and our environment. Instead, people need to earn wages enough to afford the real costs of good food.

## THE HUNGER-JUNK FOOD CONNECTION

Hunger is not about not having enough food, It's about poverty. "Chronic hunger has a range of causes, but global food scarcity is not one of them. According to the World Food Program, we produce enough to feed the global population of 7 billion people. The vast majority of people who go hungry cannot afford to purchase food."<sup>11</sup>

What does it say about the larger economic system that people make so little they cannot afford to pay of the basic essentials of life?

Anti-hunger advocates fight to ensure that all people have access to emergency food assistance and food shelves – but some say too many solutions focus on supporting systems of charity rather than addressing the reasons that people remain impoverished.

### ALIENATION OF PEOPLE FROM LAND



### PEOPLE FROM FOOD



### PEOPLE FROM FARMERS



### PEOPLE FROM CULTURE



More than 500 years of American settlement history includes genocide, colonization, slavery, and exploitation and has resulted in the separation of indigenous and land-based people from basic resources that had traditionally sustained their communities. In many cases in history, oppressors have used the withholding food as punishment and offered food as a means of reward and coercion. Communities were moved away from hunting, fishing, agriculture, grinding grains, and preserving and storing meats and produce, and were moved towards a dependency on large corporations for food. This legacy has had a particularly strong impact on native people and people of color, which still reverberates today.<sup>9</sup>

# RACE, LABOR, AND FOOD TIMELINE IN THE US:

This timeline highlights some of the significant policies, practices and events that continue to shape the food system in the United States

**1492-1650**- Christopher Columbus lands in present day Bahamas and sets off a wave of European invasions, conquests and settlements, against indigenous people. Slavery was legalized in Virginia and then in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

**1700s**—Large scale Irish and Scottish immigration begins to eastern states (**1718**). The American Revolutionary Wars begins (**1755**). U.S. Congress passes the Naturalization Act (**1790**) denying citizenship to anyone who is not a free white person.

**1800s**—The U.S. acquires Louisiana, Missouri, Arkansas and Florida from France with the Louisiana Purchase (**1803**). The Indian Removal Act becomes law (**1803**) and the U.S. forces Native Americans from their homelands to federal territories west of the Mississippi River. The Mexican-American War ends (**1848**), the U.S. acquires about half of Mexico including present-day California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, and parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming.

The Homestead Act passes (**1860s**) taking millions of acres of land promised to Native Americans and redistributing it mostly to whites.

The American Civil War begins (**1861**), the Emancipation Proclamation and passing of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution (**1865**) and U.S. Reconstruction Plan calls to abolish slavery of 4 million African American slaves; however, policy repeals (Fugitive Slave Law) and reversals (Sherman's Field Order 15, **1865**) strengthen slave-owners rights and return most lands given to freed slaves be returned to plantation owners.

The country's first labor federation (National Labor Union **1866**) is established and campaigns to exclude Chinese workers, mostly agricultural or railroad workers, from citizenship and labor rights.

**1900s**—Food worker organizing in meat processing and Upton Sinclair's book, *The Jungle*, exposes unsafe working conditions in the meatpacking industry and prompts the Federal Meat Inspection Act (**1906**) instituting food safety regulations for meat and meat processing.



The Great Migration, where 6 million African Americans fled the South over 6 decades, to live in the urban Northeast, Midwest and West. Many blacks left rural areas for factory and meat packing jobs available due to labor shortages during WWI and WWII.

The Federal Farm Loan Act (**1916**) promises credit to farmers at reasonable rates, but systematically discriminates against non-white farmers. In **1920**, Black farmers owned about 14 percent of the nation's farms, compared with less than 1 percent today.

The National Labor Relations Act passes promises protections for workers' rights but excludes agricultural and domestic (mostly black, Mexican and Asian) workers. The Fair Labor Standards Act (**1938**) creates the first minimum wage (\$0.25/hr), 40hr. work week, and overtime pay. U.S. permits Mexican farm workers to work amid WWII shortages but severe exploitation ignites organizing among Mexican and other exploited farmworkers.

National organizing for civil and economic rights for African Americans and immigrants prompts national Civil Rights policies (Civil Rights Act **1964**) and the Immigration and Nationality Act (**1965**). Filipino and Mexican farmworkers work with consumers to boycott Delano Grapes to protest for basic labor rights.

The Black Panther Party launches its Free Breakfast for School Children Program (**1969**) in Oakland, California. Feeding more than 10,000 inner-city children breakfast across the U.S. each day, and prompting the federal government to adopt a similar program in public schools.

Cesar Chavez leads a march of 60 united farmer worker supporters on a 1,000-mile march across California to rally the state's farm workers (**1975**).

Immigration Reform and Control Act (**1986**) makes hiring undocumented workers illegal and marks the first time it is a crime to work without immigration authorization.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act passes (**2007**) for the first time in 10 years, raising the minimum wage to \$7.25.

# GROWING AROUND

## OBSTACLES: Nurturing Seeds of Change

Community voiced solutions & calls to action

Change is sprouting all around us: Despite the obstacles and inequality people in Phillips face, the overwhelming majority of people spoke to the many reasons why they are hopeful. In the face of potentially overwhelming challenges, Phillips residents and organizations are inspired by visions of a community in which young people are thriving, strong cultural traditions are alive, people know their neighbors and look out for each other, and health is a right that all enjoy. As people in Phillips build towards that future, community groups are growing food, (re)discovering plant-based medicines, cultivating traditional crops and exchanging food traditions and culture. They host cooking clubs and workshops to share wisdom about dirt and bees and water and seeds, and how these things make it possible for all of us to eat. People are talking with each other about food and land and culture, sharing stories and relearning wisdom that has been unlearned over generations. In many ways large and small, people in Phillips Community are creating a sense of place and community around food.

“We’ve had a long time disconnected from food and culture and now are trying to eat a decolonized diet.”

“We must decolonize our food! Returning to growing traditional crops and cooking.”



“We’re learning about foraging for edible plants, learning about edible weeds.”

We all need water; it’s medicine. It has its own life and we are killing/poisoning it. How do we get real fresh water? Wild rice can only grow there.”

“We need more things like the Karma Market (at the Mashkiikii Gitigan 24th St. Urban Farm), people pay what they can for food.”

“Hope is an example of where I can eat, where it comes from the ground. This is my first experience of something like that. I wanted to be in the community, get to that point, to help other people, invite kids to the garden to get food.”

### MODELS OF WHAT’S WORKING FOR THE COMMUNITY

#### Mashkiikii Gitigan (Medicine Garden)/24th St. Urban Farm

“I love the Grow-Your-Own classes.”

“I’ve learned a lot here. I didn’t know gardening before. It saved my life getting reconnected with mother earth and . . . healed my hurt. I miss it when I’m not there.”

“The garden is relaxing. I learned about edible weeds.”

“How much the community can pull together and teach each other. Everyone coming from all around Phillips. I like that.”

“The comfort and peace is the same as when I’m alone in the woods. Seeing birds, bees, and garden life. After 40 years I know about ricing. I can share that here, the relationship between me in the woods, garden, ricing. I see more about how we are all interconnected.”

#### Little Earth Urban Agriculture Program

“It’s inspiring to see examples as Little Earth Urban Agriculture and metro urban ag to access traditional foods. Youth are seed saving and taking part in growing heritage seeds and traditional foods.”

“Our food is part of our cultural programing – can be learned and relearned.”

#### Hope Community’s Community Food Listening

“Hope empowers the people. We need to go to the people who aren’t in this circle.”

“Things like this help remind me to eat what’s right and stay involved.”

“It’s nice to see I’m not the only one dealing with balancing things, food spoiling, etc.”

“I enjoyed hearing about what other’s think is important, that they’re willing to commit to things I think about, and that they think about it too.”



“People want to live, live long and eat healthy. We can learn from each other to make it happen.”

“In groups there is power.”

“Thank you!” “We need more things that build relationships, more time together.”

“Each listening session is an opportunity for people to share and build together.”

#### FOOD COOPERATIVES – AS A MODEL... HOW CAN WE MAKE THEM WORK IN THIS COMMUNITY?

Many talked about food co-ops and cooperative grocery stores as sources of high quality, healthy food. People value the nutritious food and special diet options to be found at co-ops, as well as having access to knowledgeable staff and even educational classes for shoppers. However, most comments referred to food co-ops as too expensive. Other comments referred to distance as an obstacle, along with a sense of not belonging or being welcome. Many said they used to shop at or belong to a food co-op in the past “when [co-ops] were more affordable.”<sup>7</sup> There was a sense that food co-ops are a model for ethical practices around food production and distribution, as well as a successful business model; in fact, many people wanted to learn about how co-ops work and how to start them in Phillips. However, most people didn’t know how to go about learning more, and felt that information is not readily available.

“I don’t drive. I was homeless until May, Rainbow was the closest store – now I walk to Aldis. Cubs is expensive. WIC is very specific about what foods you can and cannot buy. There is a connection of food and poverty... I cannot shop at the Co-op as (that) food is expensive.”

“Co-ops were once the affordable place to buy food now they are yuppie and expensive – we need to look at seasonal food the 12-month foods.”

“Education is key, it’s not necessarily from the government though. Co-ops do good education but have outpriced most of the neighborhood. The co-op workers have the knowledge though. We need less big government programs funded by corporations and more things like Umi’s nutrition class at Seward Co-op,”

“I wonder if it would be possible to organize a food Co-op for low-income folks in our community? Have organic and healthy stuff but also affordable stuff. “

“The food co-ops are making a lot of money -- they are fancy and convenient.”

COMMUNITY-VOICED SOLUTIONS AND CALLS TO ACTION:

Change is critical. The health of our community is in crisis, the gap between those who can afford healthy food and those who can't is getting wider, and the land and water we depend upon for our food is at risk. People are working for change - in the Phillips Community and in other communities in the Twin cities, in the country, and across the world. It's happening on the ground, in backyards, on empty lots, at cultural centers, at schools and community organizations.

The measures that people are taking, in their own lives and in their communities, are not small, or random, or disconnected. They're part of a long history of people doing what is possible with the resources they have in order to survive. They're not happening in isolation; people are working together on solutions that grow up, around, and despite obstacles. One of the goals for this report was to lift up what community members actually said in the community listening sessions to those who would listen.

The following statements, challenges, and solutions are calls to action that came directly from Phillips community residents.

LEARNING WHAT IS RELEVANT AND USEFUL

“Education about food system, food and farming and how it has changed over time”

“Understanding the chemistry of food and how it impacts your body when you eat”

“Overcoming the mis-education of the corporate food marketing people”

“Tell our own stories”

“Teach indigenous ways traditional ways of growing, cooking and eating, preserving, seed saving, follow the seasons, herbal medicines”

“Community information networks to share what we know, not from institutions”

“Support programs that build relationships between people”

“Cooking show run by good low income cooks”

“Community led education- we need to teach our own traditions and knowledge”

“Support community gardeners in building systems of harvesting and distribution to get food to people.”

ON FOOD CO-OPS:

“Study circles on how to start coops”

“Education is key, it's not necessarily from the government though. Co-ops do good education but have outpriced most of the neighborhood. The co-op workers have the knowledge though. We need less big government programs funded by corporations and more things like Umi's nutrition class at Seward Co-op,”

“I wonder if it would be possible to organize a food Coop for low-income folks in our community? Have organic and healthy stuff but also affordable stuff. “

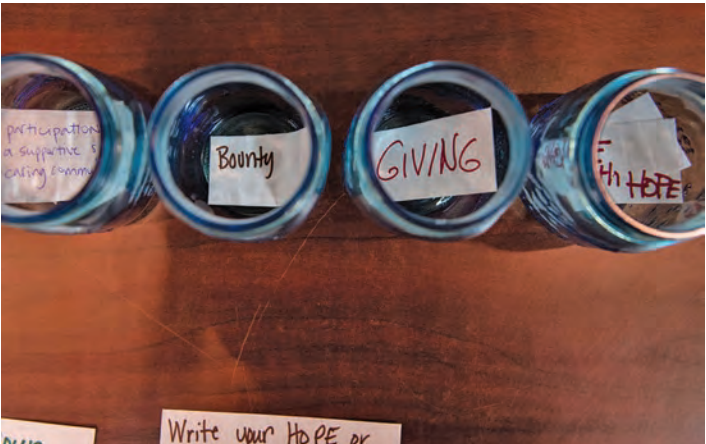
“There's a lack of conversation about what we eat, and ignorance about the business side of things. I don't know how coops work. It makes me want to know but there is no access to that knowledge. Where's money going, how does it operate in a low-income neighborhood?”

PLAN AND BUILD COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY EATING AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

“Prioritize locally owned business development as a part of economic development”

“Transportation and development planning that connects people with food”

“Work with community to plan, we know what our communities need”



“Prioritize community gardens in the city”

SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT FOR EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

“Invest in strategies that build equity, income and assets for local communities.”

“Pressure colleges and hospitals to buy local and fight for procurement from small and local farms”

“Instead of placing second tier bog box grocery stores, Invest in locally owned businesses. Create community-owned food stores that provide quality food, good jobs, and social and economic benefits to the community”

“Have farmers markets more days a week and during hours that people can come after work. Have winter markets for local food”

“More green spaces for people to get together and get to know each other”

“Vacant land should be used for urban gardening and farming”

“Make developers invest in local community where they are building.”

“Cooperative business education for communities of color”

“Farmers should be paid fair prices for their food.”

“Start a Phillips food cooperative that is affordable”

“I wonder if it would be possible to organize a food Coop for low-income folks in our community? Have organic and healthy stuff but also affordable stuff. “

MAKE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT HEALTHY EATING FOR EVERYONE

“Reallocate public money to invest in local fresh produce production.”

“Provide income support for organic veggie farmers”

“Stop subsidizing corn, soy and sugar with tax dollars.”

“More people of color at the table, making decisions, changing policy, running for office.”

“Policies that allow more small farmers and more fresh

food producers to accept WIC, SNAP/EBT”

“Support policies that support living wages that allow people to afford high quality food at fair prices for farmers.”

SPECIFICALLY FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS, NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, AND FOUNDATIONS

“Listen to the community.”

“Invest in community led strategies that build equity and assets.”

“Support community skill sharing”

“Support cooperative gardening, agriculture, cooking, preserving and eating”

“Cooking in communities programs like cooking clubs and cooking classes”

“In Toronto, they have a community kitchen for single parents. One night a week parents gather and cook for the whole week. People go home with their food”

“Programs that offer 10% off coupons for food co-ops.”

“We need to do cultural work to value making home cooked food”

“Complete list of all food shelves, gleaning gardens, food distributions”

“Programs that help community controlled gardens create system for harvesting and distributing food to people”

“Instead of Programs that focus on individual behavior change without increasing access to healthy food. Support programs that focus on Increasing wages, affordability, and access to healthy food “

“Fight to end target marketing of junk foods to low-income people of color and teens”

“Support community policy education and creation”

“Support community led education, study circles, community experts teaching”

“Support community organizing between different sectors (i.e. food chain workers and living wage organizers, youth development organizing and community-based planning)”

FOR EMERGENCY FOOD SHELVES AND FOOD PANTRIES

“Have periodic surveys with food pantry users to know what works better for them and how to waste less”

”Carry more fresh food and less canned or boxed foods”

“Expand donations to include more culturally appropriate foods”

“Education of donors about what things are healthier for people in need.”

“Raise money to buy more local food from small produce growers”

“Have family size tickets, big families need more and single people need less”

“Make the process take less time”

FOOD JUSTICE FOR THOUGHT

We heard from the community that working towards justice requires not only a call to action but also a call to expand our perspectives on how we see eachother and ourselves as we do the work. The following sentiments were expressed by community members “as food for thought” for those of us working to make food and health more equitable.

Many Sticks In A Bundle Are Hard To Break:

There are so many relevant and useful strategies

\* Food Pantry Bags. Digital image. All Events in Alexandria, June 2015. Web.  
1 Minnesota Compass, Wilder Research. Phillips Community Profile. <http://www.mncompass.org/profiles/communities/minneapolis/phillips>  
2. Economic Research Service (ERS), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food Environment Atlas. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas.aspx>.  
3. Minnesota Compass, Wilder Research.  
4. Minnesota Compass, Wilder Research.  
5. Kweifio-Okai, Carla. (17 October 2014). World food day: 10 myths about hunger. The Guardian <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/oct/16/world-food-day-10-myths-hunger>  
6. Food Banks: Hunger’s New Staple Feeding America research brief, 2010.

to achieve food justice and health equity. We are stronger if we work together.

The Non-Dominant Perspective Is Essential:

The larger local food movement has often had a blind spot when it comes to powerful work being done by communities of color. Communities of color have particular perspectives, different from that of the dominant culture, which must be valued in their own right and not as a sideline to the larger movement.

Put Yourself In Someone Else’s Shoes:

Learn about food experiences other than your own. “Try going grocery shopping for the week taking only public transportation, walking or biking”; “Try going food shopping on \$40 a week”; “Learn about indigenous and traditional ethnic foods and diets and try to locate places that sell those foods.”

All Struggle Is Connected:

Food Justice is not an isolated issue. It’s part of a larger chain of justice work, alive in our history, that we must carry into the future.

Youth Are Seeds Of Change:

Youth are the seeds of change in their families and communities. Invest in them!

Don’t Judge The Person, Fix The System

Stop blaming individuals for the effects of failed policies, systems, and environments that actively undermine a person’s ability to make healthy choices: For many years, health food advocates and the medical community have focused on the need for individuals to make better choices to improve their personal health. With many diet related illnesses on the rise, the public health community has to recognize that larger systemic issues, such as economic and social disparities, impact food choices and health.

7. Personal Communication. This quote as all other quotes from community members came from the Community Listening Session Dialogue Notes  
8. Personal Communication. Community Listening Session Dialogue Notes  
9. Khanna, N. Mapping the Food Movement Ecosystem to Develop Winning Strategy.  
10. Albritton, R. Let Them Eat Junk: How Capitalism Creates Hunger and Obesity. (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2009)  
11. Kweifio-Okai, 2014.  
12. Adapted from Race, Labor and Food in the United States, Center for New Community, <http://newcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/US-Food-Labor-Race-Timeline.pdf>

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