

The Inspiration for Change: Seal Hi-Rise

It all started with a meal. Seal Hi-Rise is a 144 unit Public Housing Authority (PHA) property located in the St. Anthony Park neighborhood of St. Paul. As part of PHA’s mission, its residents are low-income and many in Seal are also disabled and/or elderly. In December 2015, LydiaPlace Collaborative Communities and the St. Anthony Park Community Council (SAPCC) held a holiday party at Seal Hi-Rise Apartments in partnership with Seal’s resident council. Over shared meals, 50+ residents spoke with Lydia and SAPCC members about their specific challenges accessing safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food.

These conversations exposed the deep food insecurity faced by Seal residents, and prompted SAPCC to investigate food access challenges more broadly.



Seal Hi-Rise residents sitting around the “Sunday Table”, a program that brings fresh vegetables from the St. Anthony Park community garden to Seal Hi-Rise during the summer and fall growing seasons.
Credit: Scott Simmons

Project Client: St. Anthony Park Community Council

St. Anthony Park Community Council (SAPCC) is a non-profit responsible for organizing community led initiatives and overseeing long range planning for St. Anthony Park. They do this work by updating and revising area plans, running several issue area committees and sponsoring community-based projects. In 2015, SAPCC adopted a new strategic plan aimed at moving the organization toward its vision for 2020.

“Equity in All We Do”: SAPCC Strategic Goal #3

Since the first critical conversation with Seal, the council has taken several concrete actions to understand the food access challenges in St. Anthony Park.

Past Actions

- Create a standing Board of Directors Committee to execute a long-term inclusion plan.
- SAPCC Equity Committee, formed in 2016
- Learn which cultural groups live in St. Anthony Park and determine how best to represent, engage, and serve them.
- CURA Food Access Survey, 2016
 - UMN GIS Mapping, 2016
 - Neighborhood Revitalization Project, 2016

Present Actions

- Increase awareness, build mutually rewarding relationships, and foster collaboration between diverse communities and those traditionally represented in District 12.
- Lydia Place Collaborative Communities and St. Anthony Park Community Garden Partnership with Seal High Rise

Future Actions

- Identify opportunities for use of kiosks or other public places where information and Council “presence” can be sustained.
- Food Resource Center
 - Year-round Greenhouse
- Continue existing annual events while adding a new annual or biennial event that brings together North and South St. Anthony Park.
- Community meals

Framing Food Equity

The council has clearly taken steps to advance equity, as evidenced through the formation of a standing Equity Committee in 2016. As work in the area of equity progresses in St. Anthony Park, it is important to develop an understanding of “equity” to ensure that future outcomes are “equity-aligned”.

- Currently, St. Anthony Park Community Council uses the Metropolitan Council’s Thrive 2040 regional plan definition: **“Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change.”**
- While a good reference point, **this definition bears little practical relevance when it comes to food systems work that would take place at the local level.** A larger but similar long range planning non-profit, Sustainable Long Island, uses this definition: **“Food equity involves universal access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food, with no neighborhood or community at a disadvantage in the regional food system.”**

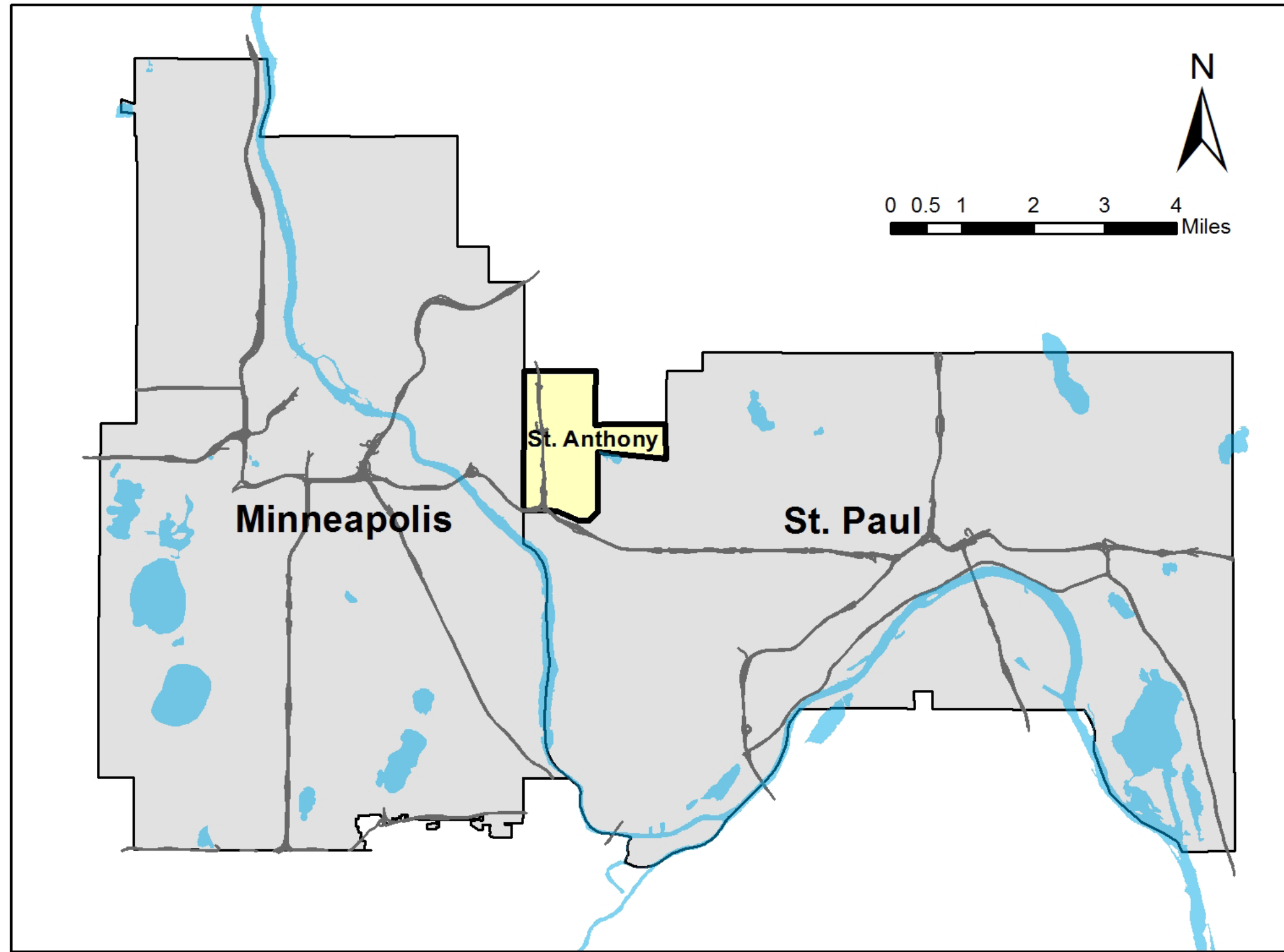
How can SAPCC ensure “universal access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food, with...no community at a disadvantage”?

This Question will be addressed in these seven posters through the following research methods...



A Tale of Two St. Anthony Parks

The imperative for food equity in St. Anthony Park grew out of conversations between the council and Seal residents, highlighting not only unequal access to healthy food, but also a social divide between neighbors in St. Anthony Park. What if the first critical conversation had not taken place? More importantly, *why did the issue stay hidden for so long?* One reason is the geographic separation that defines social boundaries in the area. This poster maps the spatial disparities between North and South St. Anthony Park in terms of income, race, unemployment, homeownership and land use to show how the neighborhood is divided in St. Anthony Park.



St. Anthony Park is situated between downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis. It has a rich history of community activism. The area is home to a wide range of educational, religious, social service, and arts institutions. There are two vibrant business districts, one near the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus and one near University Avenue. These are assets to be celebrated.

While St. Anthony Park is home to prominent institutions and a long-standing group of civically engaged citizens, there are also pockets of poverty and varying degrees of racial segregation throughout the neighborhood that must be addressed by the council. **People of color--27% of the overall population--are mostly concentrated in South St. Anthony Park, and have far fewer financial resources than their neighbors in North St. Anthony Park.**

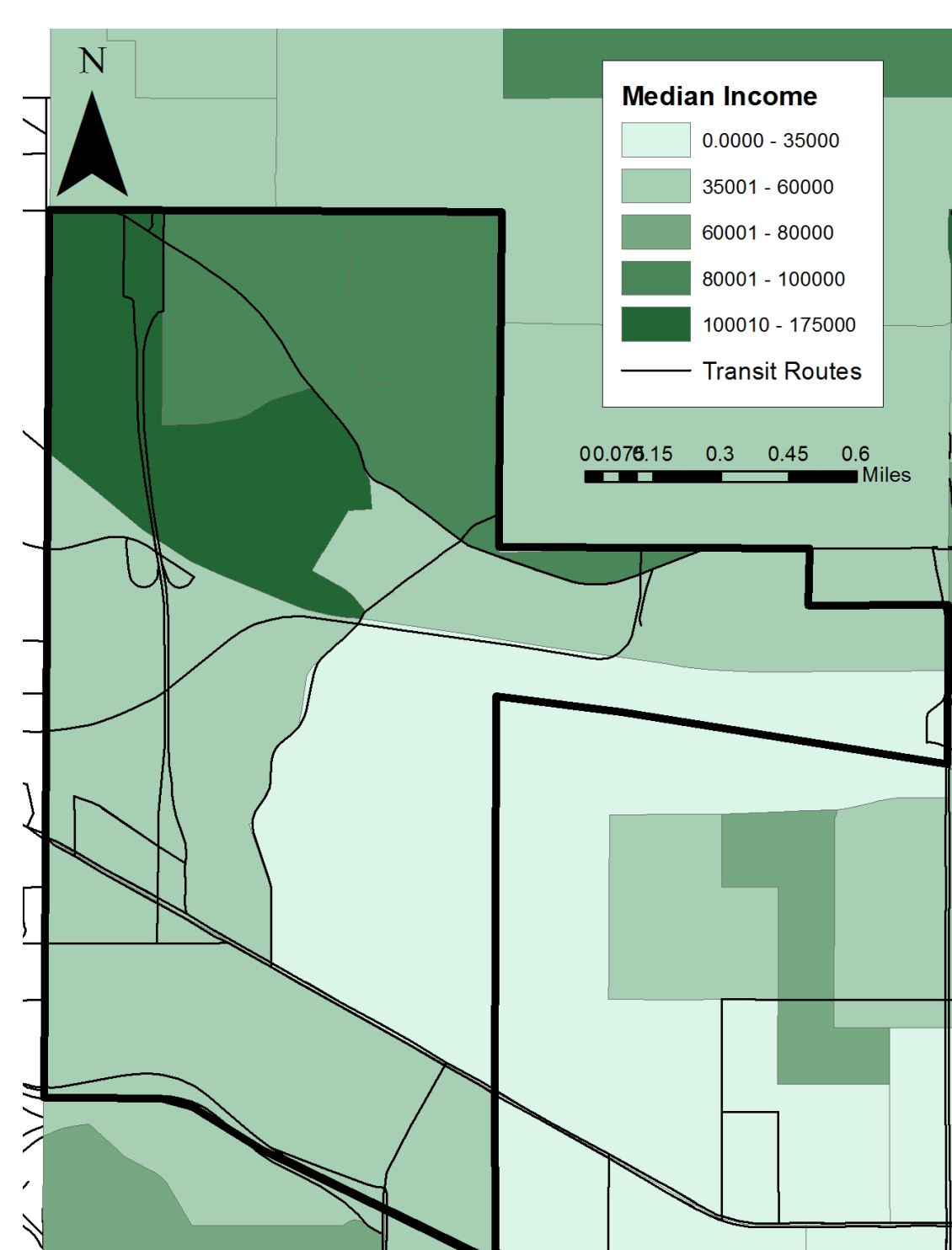
The maps below represent two important demographic categories, income and race, in relation to three relevant outcomes or associations: unemployment, and homeownership and land use. These maps show relationships between space, race and poverty, illustrating a tale of two St. Anthony Parks.

Revisiting “Food Equity”

“Food equity involves universal access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food, with no... community at a disadvantage in the...food system.”

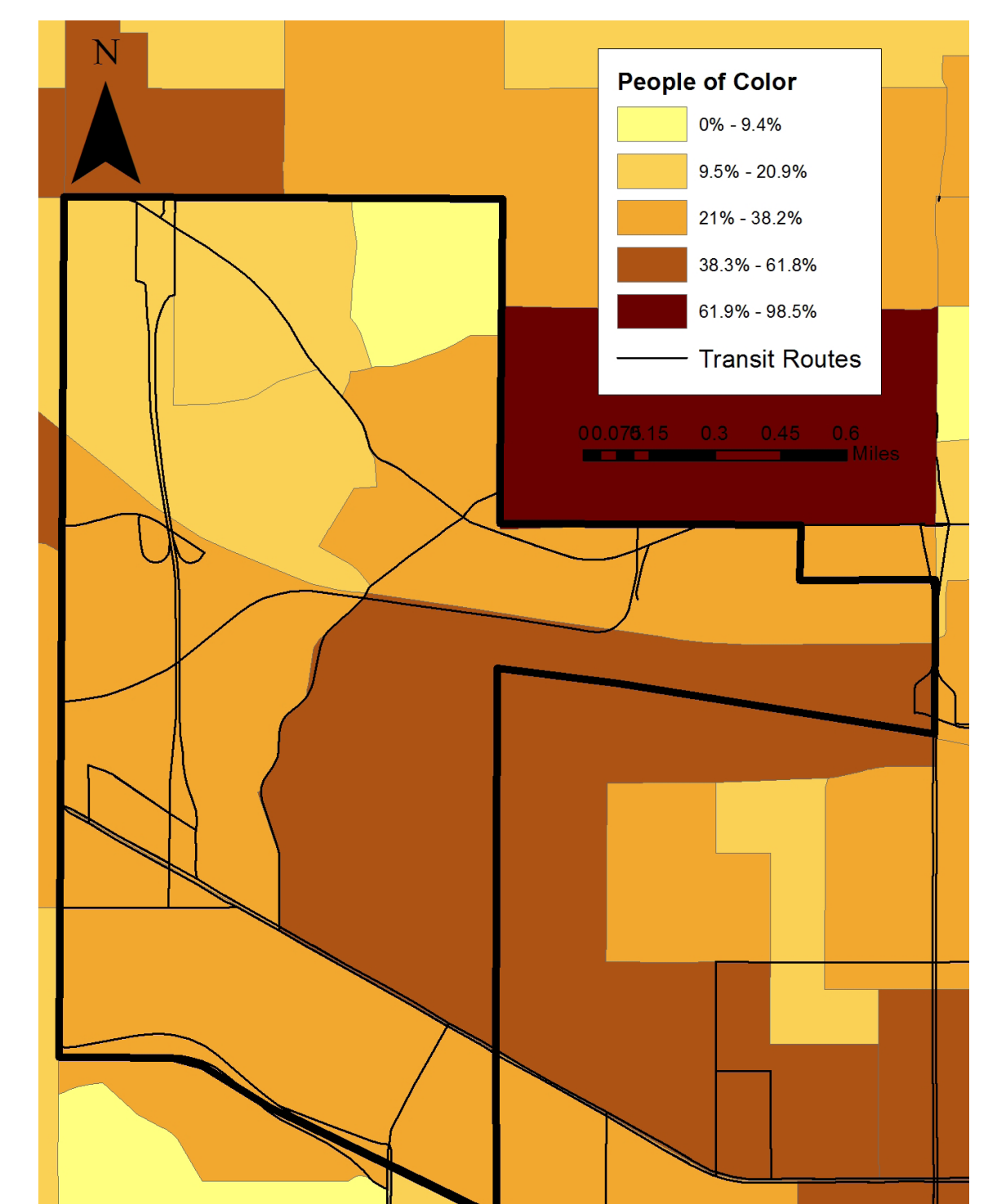
How does the spatial distribution of income, race, unemployment, homeownership and land use tell a story about whether St. Anthony Park has achieved “food equity”?

Income



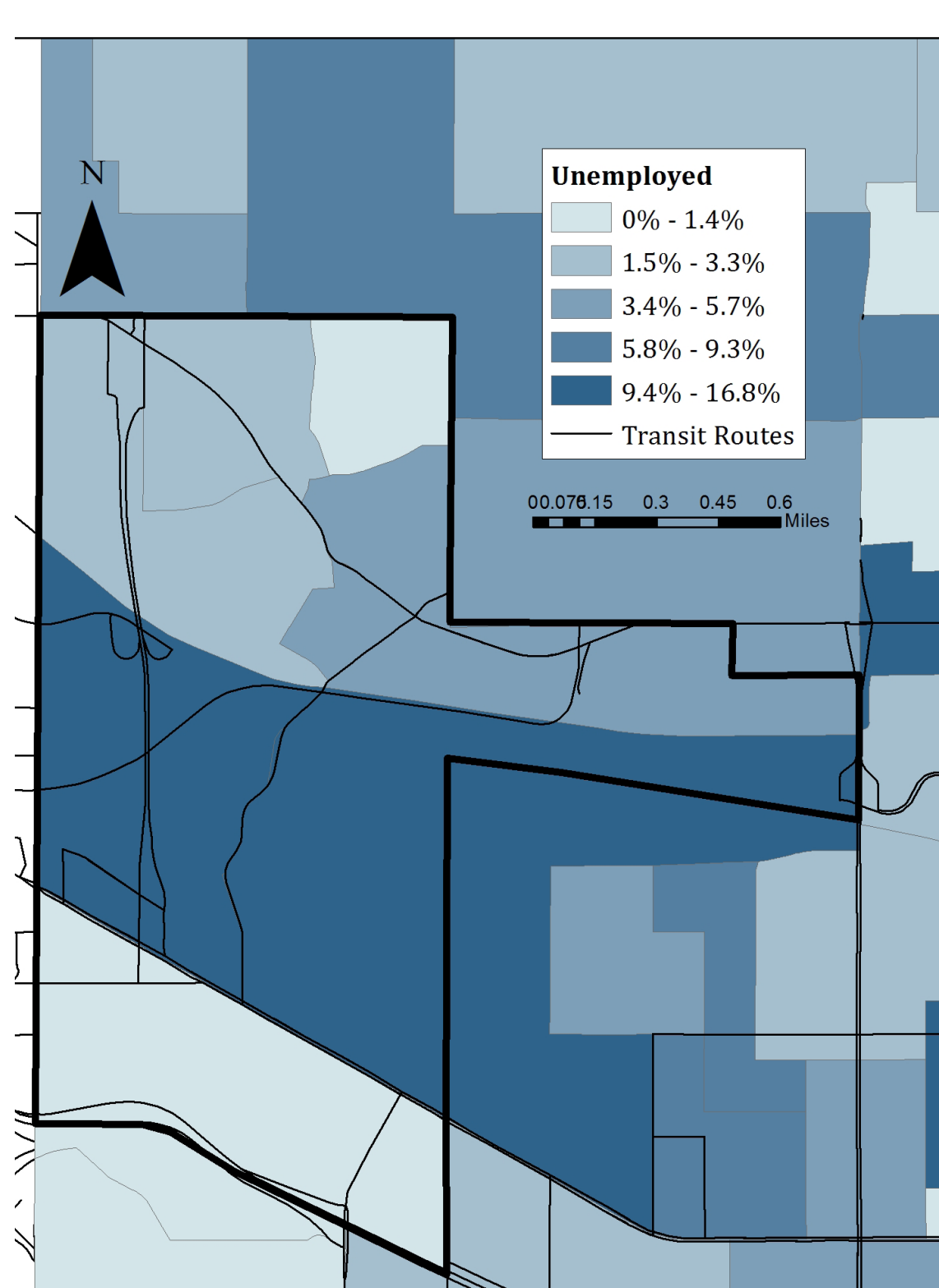
Level of income determines what foods are “affordable”. Those with limited incomes are less able to afford “nutritious and healthy foods” that often cost more.

Race



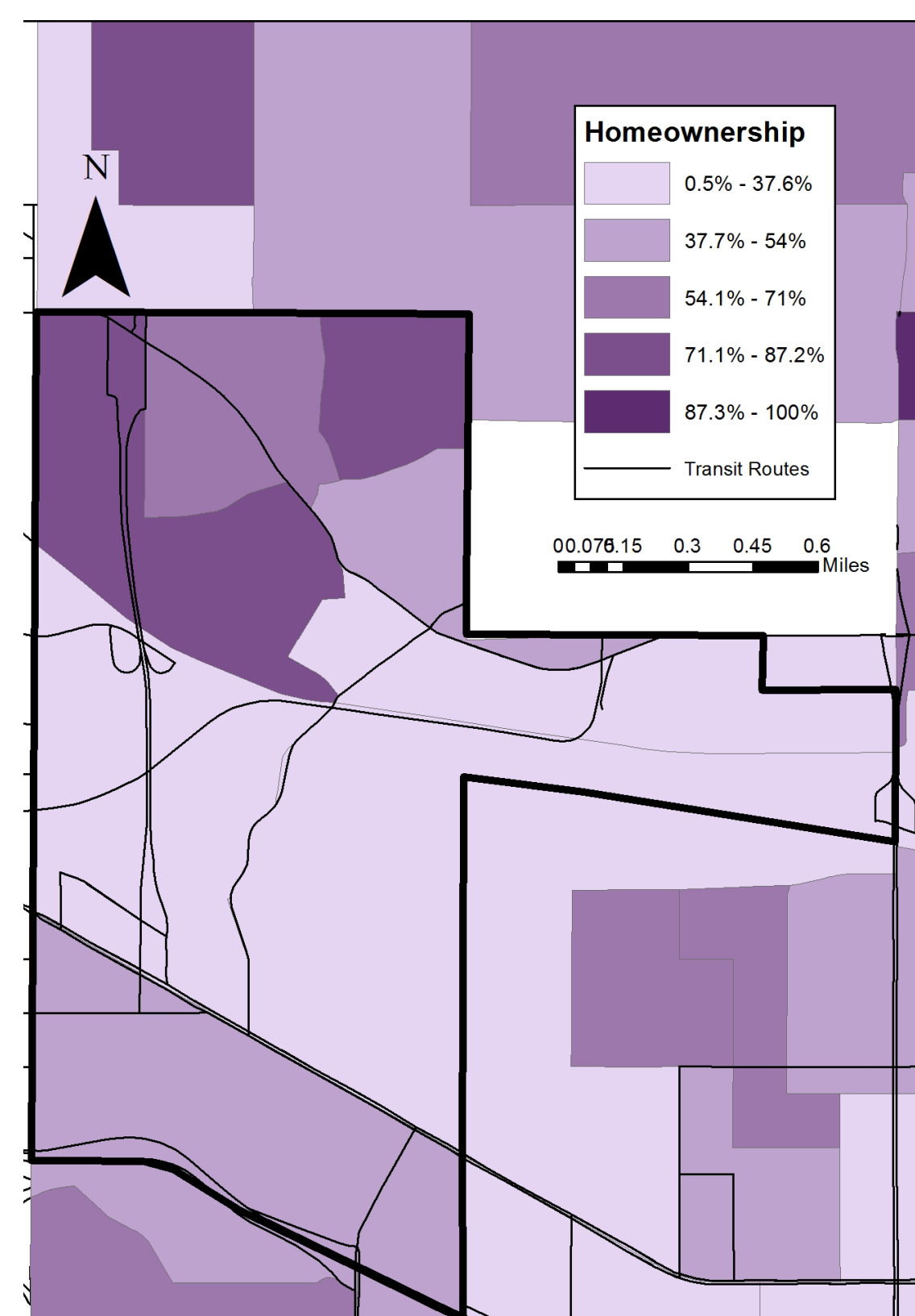
The CURA food survey revealed that many low-income residents are people of color. There is a potential association between income and race, putting communities of color at a disadvantage in the food system.

Unemployment



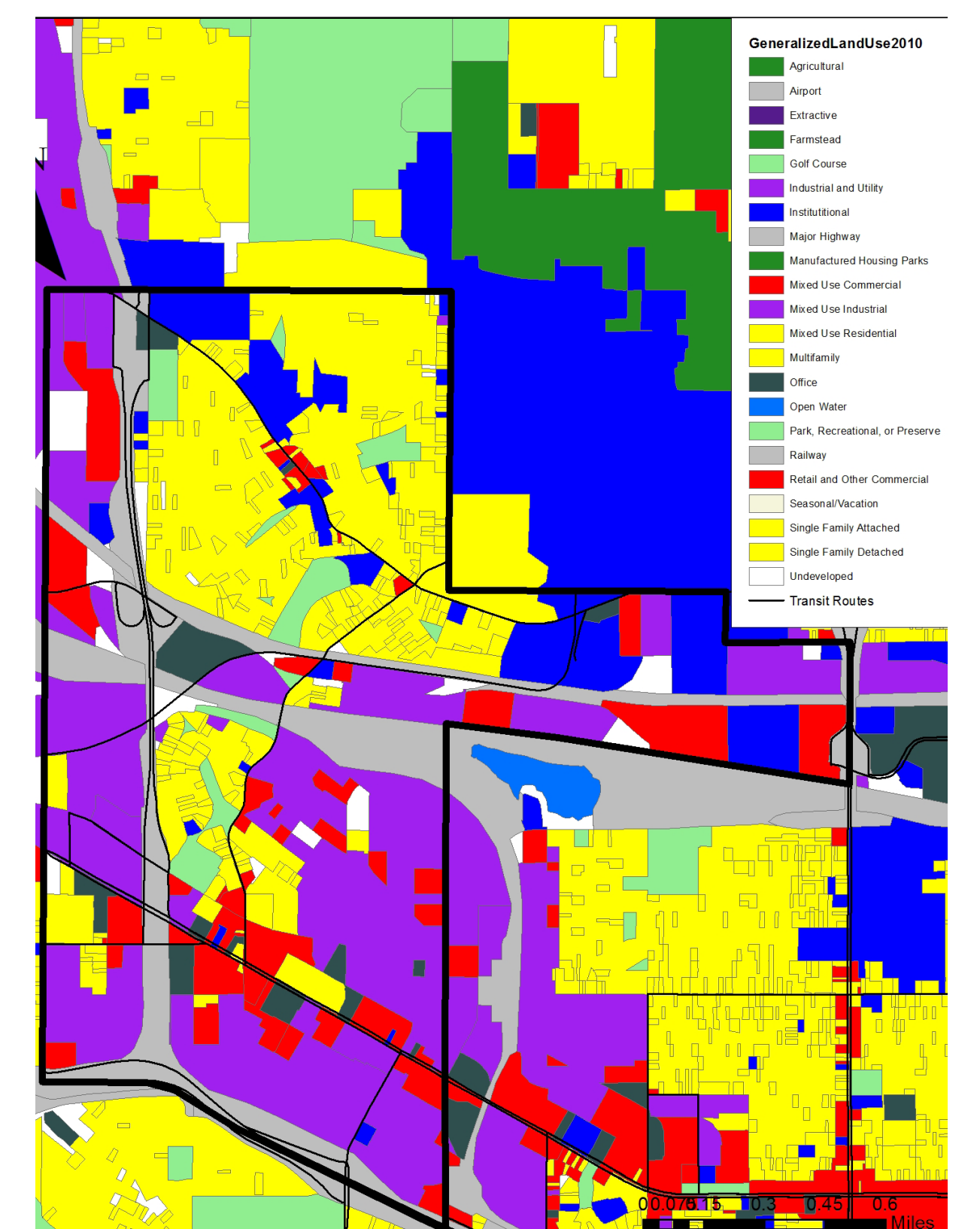
Higher than average unemployment (8.5% in the city of St. Paul) signals potential need for food access supports.

Homeownership

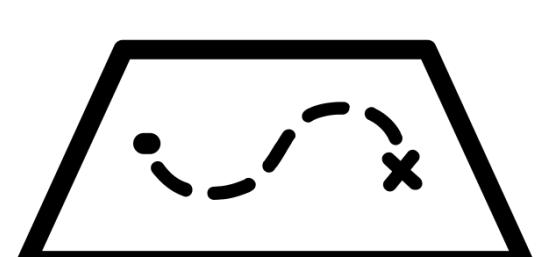


Rents are volatile in a hot market like St. Anthony Park, and may put those with already low-incomes at a disadvantage.

Land Use



The majority of industrial land uses are concentrated in South St. Anthony Park, creating harmful health effects for residents burdened by low-incomes.



The above maps provide visual evidence of social divisions in St. Anthony Park. The following poster explores demographics and social needs in St. Anthony Park to address food equity.

From Maps to People

This poster provides a broad demographic and economic profile of low-income residents in St. Anthony Park using St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) data and results from a CURA food security survey. This data gives the St. Anthony Park Community Council a more detailed look into the needs of people potentially facing food insecurity.

Existing Research

St. Paul Public Housing Agency Overall Resident Data

Very limited economic and demographic data on St. Anthony Park residents living in PHA and Section 8 eligible housing is publicly available. The following statistics provide projections of who lives in Seal Hi-Rise and Hampden Park Apartments, two affordable properties in St. Anthony Park, based on 2015 overall PHA resident and Section 8 recipient data. **While this data provides a general understanding of demographics in St. Anthony Park, finer grained administrative data should be available to District Councils and other nonprofits that serve public housing residents and Section 8 voucher recipients.**

36%

of PHA
residents are dis-
abled

33%

of PHA
residents are
elderly

\$14,500

Average
annual income

\$350

Average
monthly rent

CURA Food Security Survey

In summer 2016, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) conducted a survey on food security in St. Anthony Park. Over the course of several weeks, two separate surveys were distributed to all St. Paul District Councils and residents of two Public Housing Authority (PHA) buildings in St. Anthony Park, Seal Hi-Rise Apartments and Hampden Park Apartments. **The resident survey results present food security challenges the SAPCC and their partners must combat to ensure universal access to affordable, nutritious and healthy food, with no community at a disadvantage, and achieve food equity.**

Demographics of Survey Respondents

54 respondents to long form survey

58%

respondents are
over 55

51%

respondents are
people of color

85%

respondents live
alone

60%

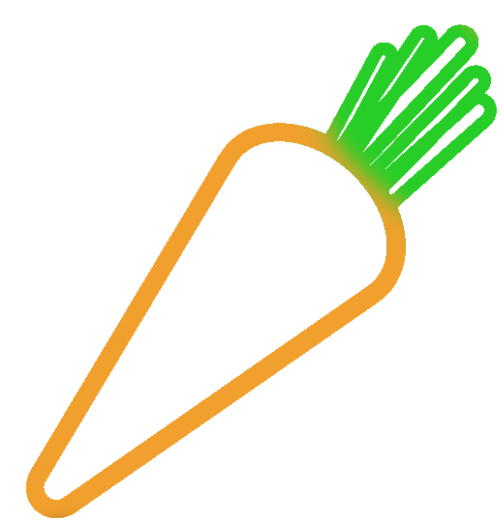
respondents
have a HS
diploma or less

Food Security Findings

The following statistics come from the long form survey:



Residents spend **\$134**
on groceries a month,
less than 1/2 the
average American



Residents across the board
want greater access to
fresh vegetables



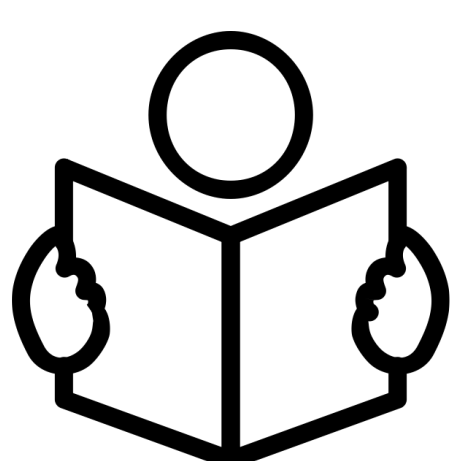
62.3% of residents visited
a **food shelf** in the past
month



63% of people **cannot**
afford the foods they
want

Major takeaways

- Disabled and elderly residents have unique food access needs. Proximity to the home and ease of food preparation must be considered in policy or programming.
- Low-income residents balance limited incomes to pay rent in addition to buying food. Affordability is central to increasing access to healthy food.



Demographic and economic data on public housing residents is limited. The following poster analyzes the SAPCC food survey and makes suggestions for future survey design.

Future Survey Design Recommendations

The following recommendations for a future survey design are based on a review of a 2016 CURA food security survey. It also identified gaps in knowledge about the needs of low-income neighbors. While the survey was an important initial data collection effort, more outreach and needs assessment should be conducted, with a focus on discerning the range of nationalities of all neighbors and a strategic effort toward surveying a racially representative sample.

Demographic Information

Please select your gender

☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ Other _____

Please select your age range

☐ Under 18
☐ 18-24
☐ 25-34
☐ 35-44
☐ 45-54
☐ 55-64
☐ 65-74
☐ 75 or older

Please select your ethnicity

☐ White
☐ Hispanic or Latino
☐ Black or African American
☐ Native American or American Indian
☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
☐ Other _____

Please select how many people are living in your household

☐ One
☐ Two
☐ Three
☐ Four or more

Page 1 of 4 of the CURA food security survey

1 Insert here

2 Insert here

Please select the number of years you have been living in the neighborhood

☐ less than 1 year
☐ 1-3 years
☐ 4-7 years
☐ 8-11 years
☐ 12 or more years

Please select the highest level of education that you completed

☐ K - 8th
☐ Some high school, no diploma
☐ High school diploma
☐ Some college, no degree
☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
☐ Associate degree
☐ Bachelor's degree
☐ Master's degree
☐ Professional degree
☐ Doctorate degree

I am currently

☐ Employed
☐ Self-employed
☐ Looking for work
☐ Volunteer
☐ Student
☐ Military
☐ Retired
☐ Disabled
☐ Other _____

Page 2 of 4 of the CURA food security survey

5 Insert here

- 1 Data on nationality or 'years in US' could serve as a starting point for understanding different food preferences
- 2 Language proficiency category would capture if future events, outreach materials and/or surveys are helpful in English only
- 3 Make sure each question can be answered using categories, leaving narrative style responses as optional--increases ease of completion for different literacy levels

- 4 Use translation services to print survey in different languages and hire translators for survey administration
- 5 Disability status should be its own demographic category; work status is a category for which disabled and employed are two separate categories, but residents can be employed *and* disabled

Appendix A

1. How often do you buy food?

2. Where do you buy food?

3. How do you get there?

☐ Walking
☐ Biking
☐ Driving Vehicle
☐ Family/Friend Driving Vehicle
☐ Public Transit
☐ Metro Mobility
☐ Other _____

4. How much, on average, do you spend on groceries each month for your household?

5. If there was a new grocery store or food shelf opened up locally, what foods would you like to see provided?

6. Do you feel that you are able to afford the foods that you want to eat?

7. Have you used a local food shelf? Why or why not?

Page 3 of 4 of the CURA food security survey

8. If yes, what type of transportation did you use to get there?

☐ Walking
☐ Biking
☐ Driving Vehicle
☐ Family/Friend Driving Vehicle
☐ Public Transit
☐ Metro Mobility
☐ Other _____

9. If yes, what was your experience like?

10. Have you encountered any barriers to buying groceries?

☐ Weather
☐ Health
☐ Not able to get a ride
☐ Affordability of groceries
☐ Transportation difficulty or cost
☐ Other _____

11. What other needs or concerns do you see that affect you or other people living here?

Page 4 of 4 of the CURA food security survey

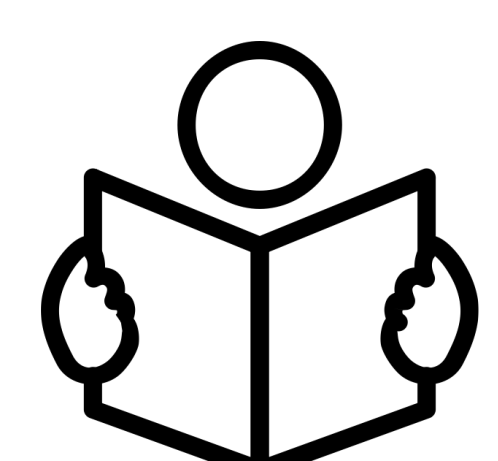
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- 6 Cut down on free form questions; use categories, including an other option with space for explanation
- 7 The term "food shelf" needs simpler explanation like "have you accessed free food before?"
- 8 Overall use direct lines of questioning, avoid "do you feel" and open ended "why or why not". Will allow greater standardization of data across the sample.

- 9 Ask about distance traveled to access food
- 10 Be intentional about what other needs and concerns are solicited; consider what resources and activities SAPCC has access to, either through partners, or as a direct responsibility of the council (example: gauging interest in community gardening to further expand reach of SAPCC owned community garden)

To be applied throughout survey process

- 3 4 6 7 8 10



Qualitative data analysis laid a foundation for building a robust food equity agenda. Surveys should continue to explore needs. The following poster highlights food equity work currently being conducted in St. Anthony Park.

Food Equity Partners

This poster highlights organizations currently engaged in food equity work in St. Anthony Park. After conducting nine stakeholder interviews, it is clear there are passionate people and organizations taking action to improve food access for all. This poster documents their collective achievements, provides recommendations and illuminates opportunities for collaboration.

Hampden Park Co-op

The Food Equity vision: In 2015, the Hampden Park Co-op board went through a visioning process where they asked: **who is our community?** Recognizing the need to make their environment more amenable to low-income and disabled residents, the Co-op has made thoughtful physical, social and pricing improvements over the past few years.



Aisle widening, seating area adjustments and wider checkout lanes to accomodate wheelchairs represent some of the changes that result from food equity visioning.

Recent victories: In addition to making physical improvements to accomodate disabled neighbors, Co-op Deals and Basics are two new options that guarantee a constant stock of affordable goods

Recommendation: The co-op is conveniently located by Seal and Hampden Park Apartments, and in outreach partnership with Twin Cities Mobile Market, could boost EBT sales

Twin Cities Mobile Market

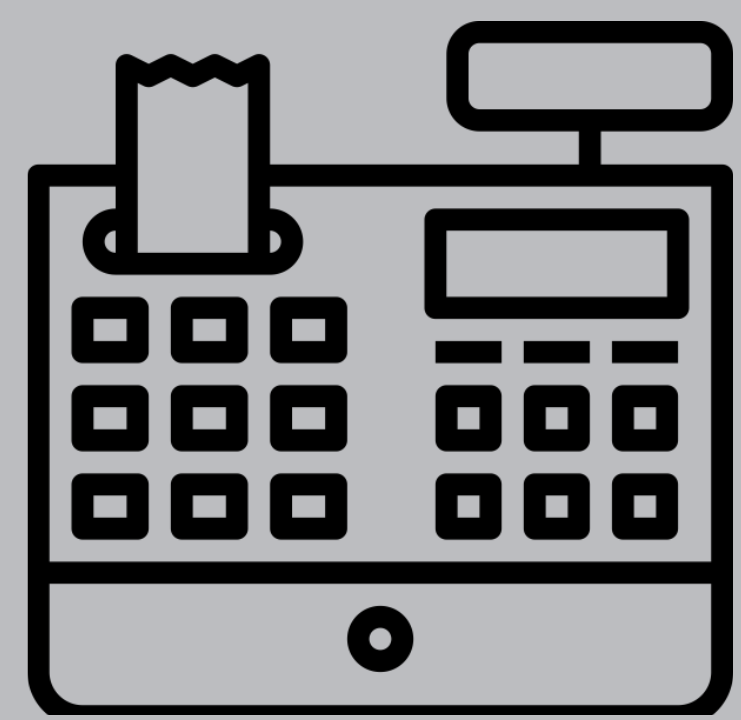
The Food Equity Vision: Twin Cities Mobile Market is a grocery store on wheels that brings affordable, healthy food directly to under-resourced neighborhoods. Many neighborhoods do not have grocery stores, and residents struggle to afford fresh food prices. The market offers a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products and staples like rice and dried beans. The bus operates on a routine schedule year round and offers as much local, in-season produce as possible.



Recent victories: In April 2017, the Twin Cities Mobile Market added Seal Hi-Rise to their list of regular stops.

Recommendation: Both Hampden Park Co-op and the TC Mobile Market are well located food sources. TC Mobile Market also has a mission to be affordable. Since Hampden and the mobile market accept EBT, they could partner to conduct food stamp eligibility screenings, potentially increasing EBT sales at Hampden and overall sales at the mobile market.

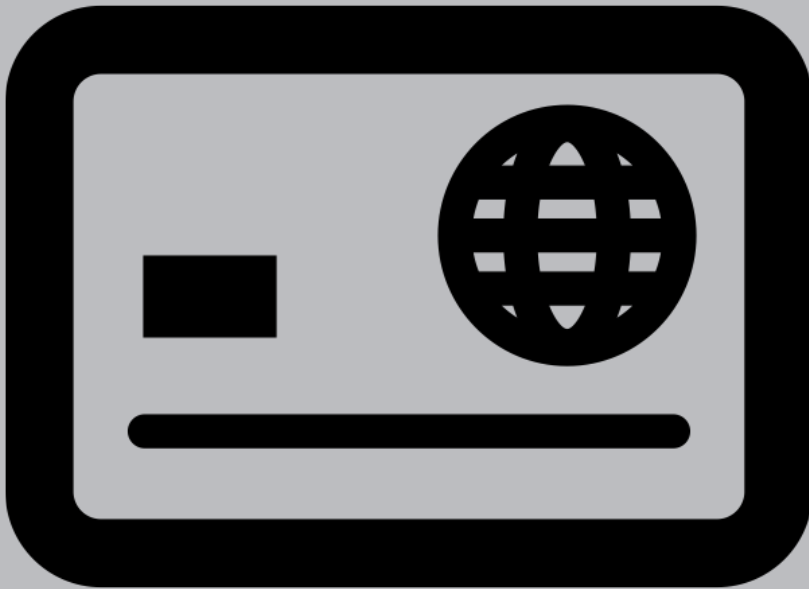
Recommendation: Conduct Food Stamp Outreach



In 2016, the co-op took in \$18,600 in EBT sales vs. \$2,224,390 overall



Can use EBT on Mobile Market



7% of households in St. Anthony Park receive food stamps



21% of people in St. Anthony Park live below poverty line

Both the co-op and mobile market offer affordable, healthy food options AND accept food stamps. However, food stamps are clearly underutilized in St. Anthony Park given the difference between usage and poverty rates, 7% vs. 21%. In order to increase food stamp usage, eligibility screening and application assistance should be available in both Seal Hi-Rise and on Twin Cities Mobile Market.

Data sources, left to right: Hampden Park Co-op, 2015 American Community Survey, MN Compass

St. Anthony Park Community Garden & LydiaPlace Collaborative Communities

The Food Equity Vision: The St. Anthony Park Community garden began in 1981 and has operated continuously since then. It was started by volunteers as a project of the Community Council and is owned by them today. Plots are rented on an annual basis to people throughout the metro area. Several years ago, gardeners connected with Keystone Community Services to provide free produce. In May of 2014, Pastor Scott Simmons began holding a service at Seal Hi-Rise in St. Anthony Park, following an invitation from residents. Since then, he has learned much about the needs and conditions of residents in the building, particularly around issues of food access.



Recent victories: Through building relationships, LydiaPlace and SAP Community Garden were able to begin “Sunday Table”, a partnership to get free and fresh food to the residents of Seal High Rise. In addition to a handful of dedicated plots, an increasing number of gardeners are donating their excess produce to the program.



In 2016, the garden donated over 1200 pounds of fresh produce to Seal High Rise--twice as much as in 2015

Recommendation: Currently, there is no prioritization for St. Anthony Park residents for applications for plots. As a program of the council, the community garden should focus its efforts on serving St. Anthony Park residents. This may also help with recruitment and retainment of more racially, ethnically and socioeconomically diverse residents. Public signage and outreach could also be helpful in recruiting new members.



There is a solid foundation of organizations invested in food equity work. The next step in advancing the work is creating a collective vision that incorporates residents currently involved while making space for those who are not yet active. The following poster identifies themes that are driving existing efforts.

Spatial and demographic data reveal strong evidence for food inequity in St. Anthony Park. For this project, I interviewed nine key actors in the neighborhood who are aware of these inequities, and are working to figure out how to proceed. This poster identifies themes that are driving existing efforts and could support next steps and in shaping future initiatives.



Filsan Ibrahim,
Twin Cities Mobile Market

“We have a notebook [in each bus] where people can write down items they’d like to buy.”

“We spent months on community engagement before starting our second route.”



Melissa Williams,
SAPCC Equity Committee

“We need a relationship [with low-income neighbors], and it can’t be one-directional”

“We recognize that there are people who can’t do this by themselves”

“A community engaged food resource center is different than a food shelf. Charity is different than engagement.”



Sherman Eagles,
SAPCC & Community Garden

“We’ve had some people [with plots at the community garden] from South St. Anthony Park over the years... but not many.”



Suyapa Miranda,
Executive Director, SAPCC

“We talk about ‘a seat at the table’ [on the council] for low-income residents and residents of color, but we need to take away the table and meet the people where they are.”

“Let’s redefine ‘participation’.”



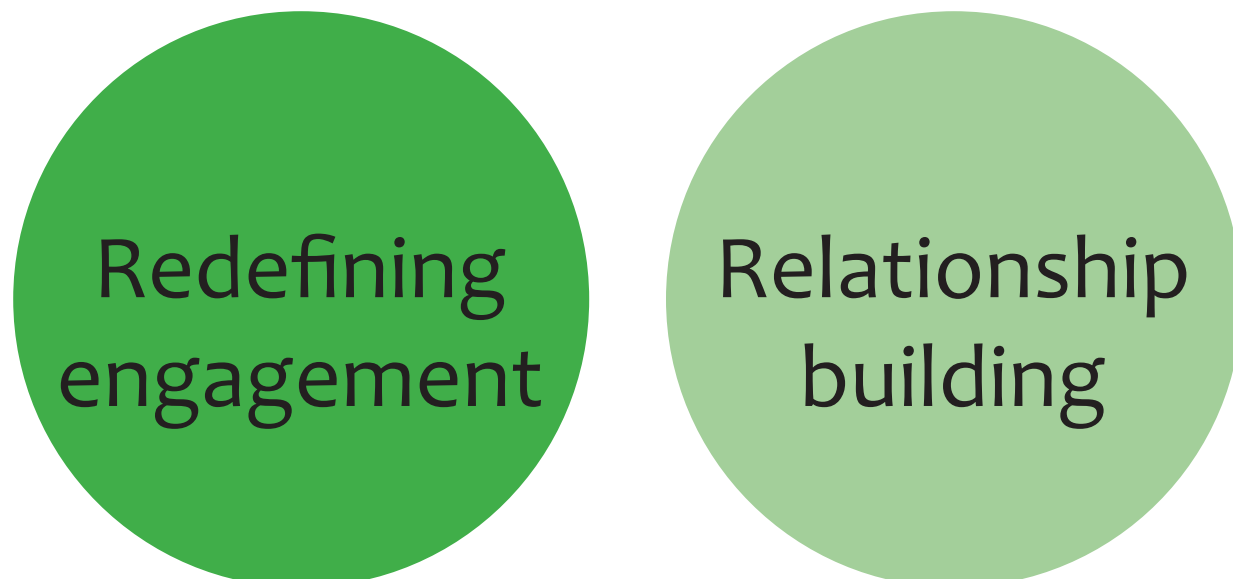
Scott Simmons, SAPCC Equity Committee & LydiaPlace

“We don’t have a brick and mortar church. LydiaPlace is a church that radically welcomes the invitation of the other...the resident council at Seal invited LydiaPlace to lead worship.”



Kit Canright, Transition Town

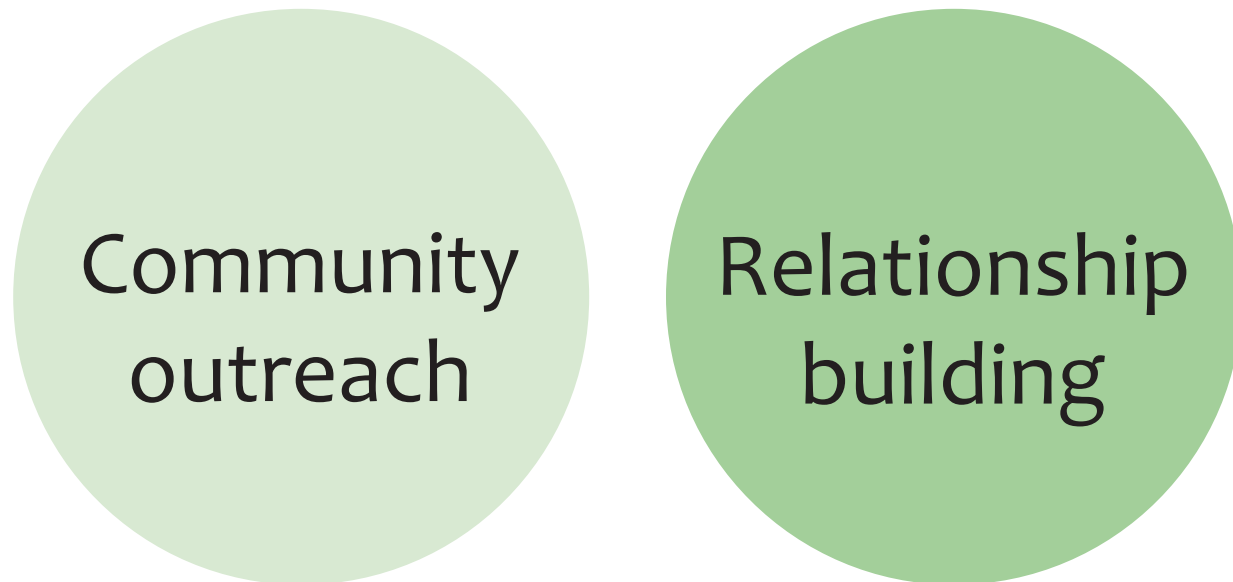
“How can we help you achieve the things you want to achieve in your neighborhood? [We aren’t] interested in telling people what to do.”



Bettsy Hjelseth,
Humphrey/CURA researcher

“The [hard parts] of getting responses were a lot of people weren’t home when I was door knocking and...many people don’t speak English in Seal. Sometimes they might have a friend translate for them but at times they weren’t comfortable talking with an outsider [like me].”

“People were excited that the council initiated a project on food access, everyone knows its a big issue.”



Christina Nicholson, Hampden Park Co-op

“We asked ourselves, ‘what do we mean when we say community?’”

“[Our board] would be interested in cooking and sharing a meal with Seal residents...people are looking for authentic connection”

“Our recent move to paid cashiers helps EBT users feel more comfortable. They are trained to use the machines.”





Currently engaged residents in St. Anthony Park would like to change the “participation paradigm” and get to know their neighbors in organic ways. Initiating new relationships will take a variety of community engagement strategies. The next posters present material and social strategies for increasing food equity and fostering relationships.

Toward a Food Equity Vision & Action Plan

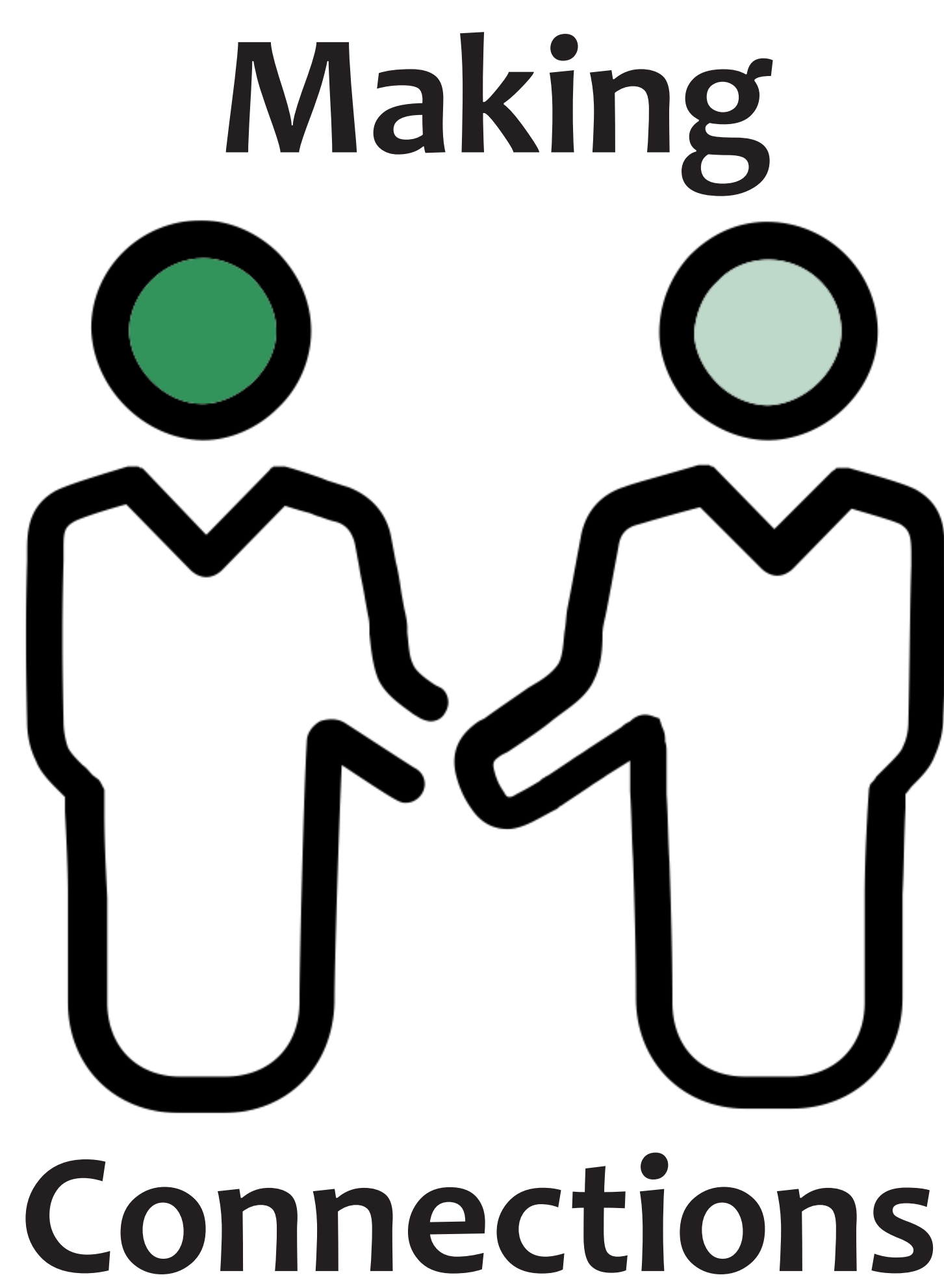


Many residents in St. Anthony Park face food access challenges due to limited income and mobility. At the same time, a variety of actors and organizations are taking initiative to rise to these challenges. Building a food resource center in the neighborhood and a year round greenhouse would further this work, increasing social connection and centralizing healthy and affordable food.

The Lead Partner: St. Anthony Park Equity Committee

In 2015, SAPCC engaged in a strategic planning process. “Equity in all we do” emerged as a central goal of the council moving forward. SAPCC currently has standing land use, transportation and environment committees, and decided to convene an equity committee in 2016. Members of the SAPCC board and community members at large are able to sit on the committee. The committee is leading food equity efforts and serves as a central body for planning all equity related initiatives. The Equity Committee will hold the work of building the food resource center and year round greenhouse.

St. Anthony Park is poised to address food inequities through a strong network that grows, sells and advocates:



Hampden Park Co-op: At present, the co-op donates their imperfect and expired produce to Twin Cities Food Justice, a local food rescue organization. SAPCC could partner directly with Hampden or TC Food Justice to divert food directly to a food resource center.

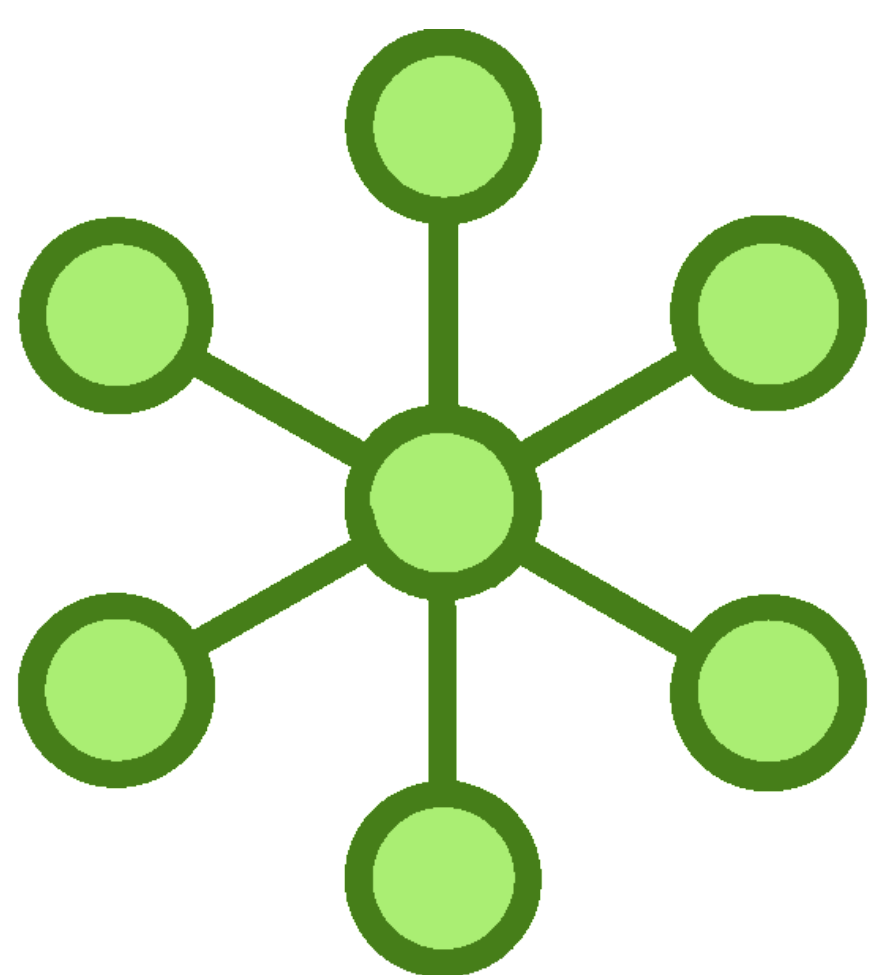
Brightside Produce: SAPCC is exploring a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model with Brightside that would deliver boxes of fresh produce at a reduced rate, offset by the purchase of full price boxes.

St. Anthony Park Community Garden: Building off of the current Sunday Table initiative, the garden could provide free produce during the growing season. The addition of a year-round greenhouse would increase volume and capacity.

Fresh Thyme Grocery Store: Opening in Spring of 2018, Fresh Thyme is a mainstream grocery store that advertises fresh produce at affordable prices. Many large grocery stores dispose of produce that is imperfect in appearance, and this could be redirected to a food resource center. Furthermore, Fresh Thyme may have a greater variety of affordable fresh options for EBT usage.

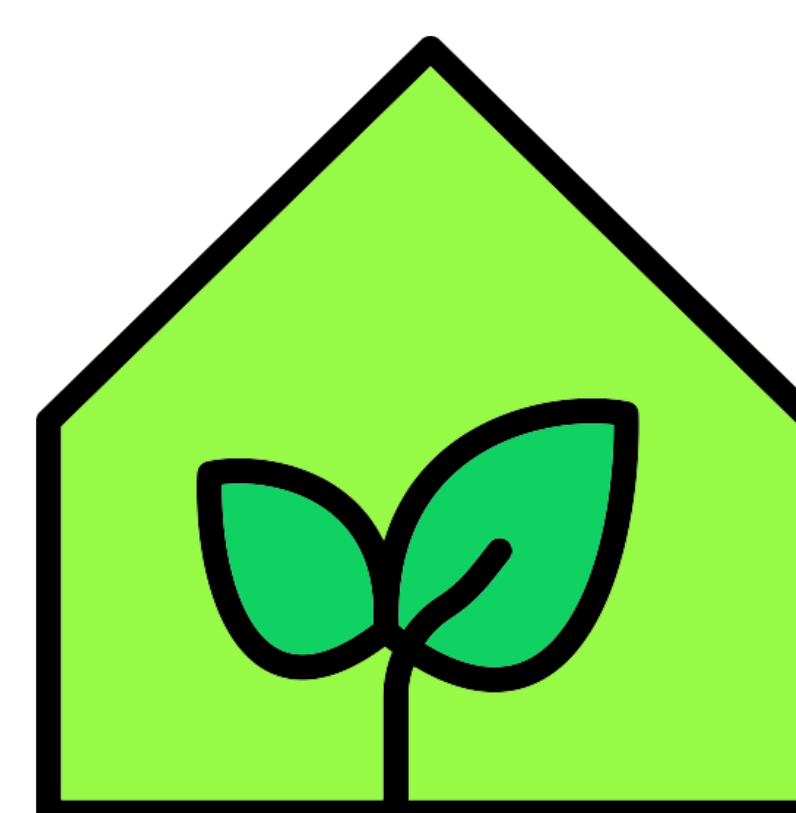
Restaurant food waste: According to the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996, companies and organizations can donate food that would otherwise go to waste in good faith, and be protected from civil and criminal liability. Restaurants in St. Anthony Park, like Finnish Bistro, as well as those in closeby Summit-University and Macalester Groveland, could donate leftover food to a resource center.

Why a Food Resource Center?



- 1) Due to limited incomes and mobility challenges, low-income St. Anthony Park residents would benefit from a centrally located source of affordable, healthy food.
- 2) A food resource center could be a site for community engaged activities and sharing, providing space for relationship building.

Why a Year-Round Greenhouse?



- 1) SAPCC owns the plot of land where the community garden is located. There is some vacant space that could be utilized to build a year-round greenhouse.
- 2) In the food security surveys, the majority of residents desired more fresh and free foods. A year-round greenhouse would allow the garden to expand their free food initiative.

Community Engagement Strategies

Currently engaged residents in St. Anthony Park would like to change the “participation paradigm” and get to know their neighbors in organic ways. Initiating new relationships will take a variety of community engagement strategies. Community meals, storytelling circles and a resource share are potential strategies that emphasize two directionality and mutual learning, two themes identified across stakeholder interviews.



Community Meals



Storytelling Circles



Skill & Resource Share

Let's redefine participation

Photo credits, from left to right: Urban Farm and Garden Alliance, University of San Diego and Mercury News