



PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHANGEMAKERS

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABILITY



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FOREWORD

At Philanthropy Northwest, we believe positive change happens when we come together to learn about and invest—our expertise, time, money, and energy—in the places we call home. To realize a healthier, brighter future for all in the Pacific Northwest, we must build upon our collective strengths, connect across sectors, and engage in critical conversations to activate new ideas and practices.

This report, generously supported by the Satterberg Foundation, exemplifies these values. Each project featured illustrates the ways we can work together to develop true solutions to the challenges communities face.

In “Pacific Northwest Changemakers,” Mitchell Thomashow takes us from Central Washington to Montana, from Coastal Alaska to Portland. We learn how the Walla Walla Community Council generates community solutions to improve education and increase food security. And, we meet women promoting food sovereignty and teaching tribal youth about traditional Crow culture.

In Coastal Alaska, Sustainable Southeast Partnership successfully unites people from fishing and timber industries, Native communities, and conservation to develop regional stewardship strategies. And, as gentrification in Portland and Seattle displaces low-income communities and communities of color, Living Cully and Yesler Terrace are creating a path for affordable housing rooted in local culture.

I’m proud to be part of Philanthropy Northwest and to continue our work nurturing community-led solutions in health, equity, and the environment. We are all in pursuit of a more vibrant region, and the communities featured in this report are leading sustainable grassroots change.

I hope you will be as inspired as I have been reading this report and that you will share it broadly—encouraging national and community partners to envision place-based, community-driven philanthropy for today, and in the future. Now is a time for action, and together, our region can lead in the sustainable change our country needs.



Kiran Ahuja, *Chief Executive Officer*



A REPORT

FROM THE FIELD



In cities, towns, and rural areas throughout the Pacific Northwest, people and communities are taking the future into their own hands.

They are constructing innovative solutions to confront today's pressing issues—environmental change, economic opportunity, access to health care and education, affordable housing, transportation, and cultural vitality. They are thinking creatively, strategically, and inclusively to maximize human flourishing in ways appropriate to their places.

This report presents eight groundbreaking projects, selected from a variety of places, representing cities, watersheds, and rural communities. Each project demonstrates inventive approaches to community-based sustainability and addresses equity, diversity, and inclusion in meaningful ways. Each shows the ways in which environmental issues touch all aspects of community life. Collectively, the projects offer an impressive portfolio of policies, practices, and processes—providing the Pacific Northwest with visions for a sustainable future.

The projects are staffed by a multigenerational and multicultural group of brilliant women and men, representing a range of backgrounds and values. Each project amplifies the varied voices in communities, whose endeavors are deeply rooted in their belief in people and their connections to place. Project leaders and community members alike are generating new ways of thinking and practical action that facilitate hands-on learning and real community change.

COMMON THREADS OF **COMMUNITY-BASED SUSTAINABILITY**

Community projects throughout the Pacific Northwest are emphasizing place-based, grassroots, solutions-based approaches to local issues. Place is the common ground because it builds affiliation lodged in landscape and neighborhood, while promoting ecologically and culturally specific approaches to policy and planning. Building community encourages dialogue among stakeholders, while promoting equity, diversity, inclusion, and collaboration.

What's most stunning is how projects in geographically diverse places share a set of emerging practices. Community-based sustainability is the common thread that connects people and places, from Coastal Alaska to downtown Seattle, from the Blackfoot River Watershed to Northeast Portland, from the Puyallup Watershed to the Crow Nation, and from Missoula to Walla Walla.

The following sections describe these emergent practices in more detail. However, to fully appreciate why and how these attributes matter, it's helpful to provide a broader context—community-based sustainability is relevant in both urban and rural settings and is a response to historical cycles of natural resource extraction.

EMERGENT PRACTICES

That Form The Core of
Community-Based Sustainability



Understand place as
common ground.



Balance short-term
needs and long-term
strategies.



Invest in economic and
ecological security.



Promote creative
place-making to
unite changing
neighborhoods.



Engage in compromise,
consensus, and
collaboration.



Cultivate community
leadership and
expertise.



Emphasize
multigenerational
solutions.



Encourage innovation
and transparency.



Integrate learning
and civic engagement
opportunities.

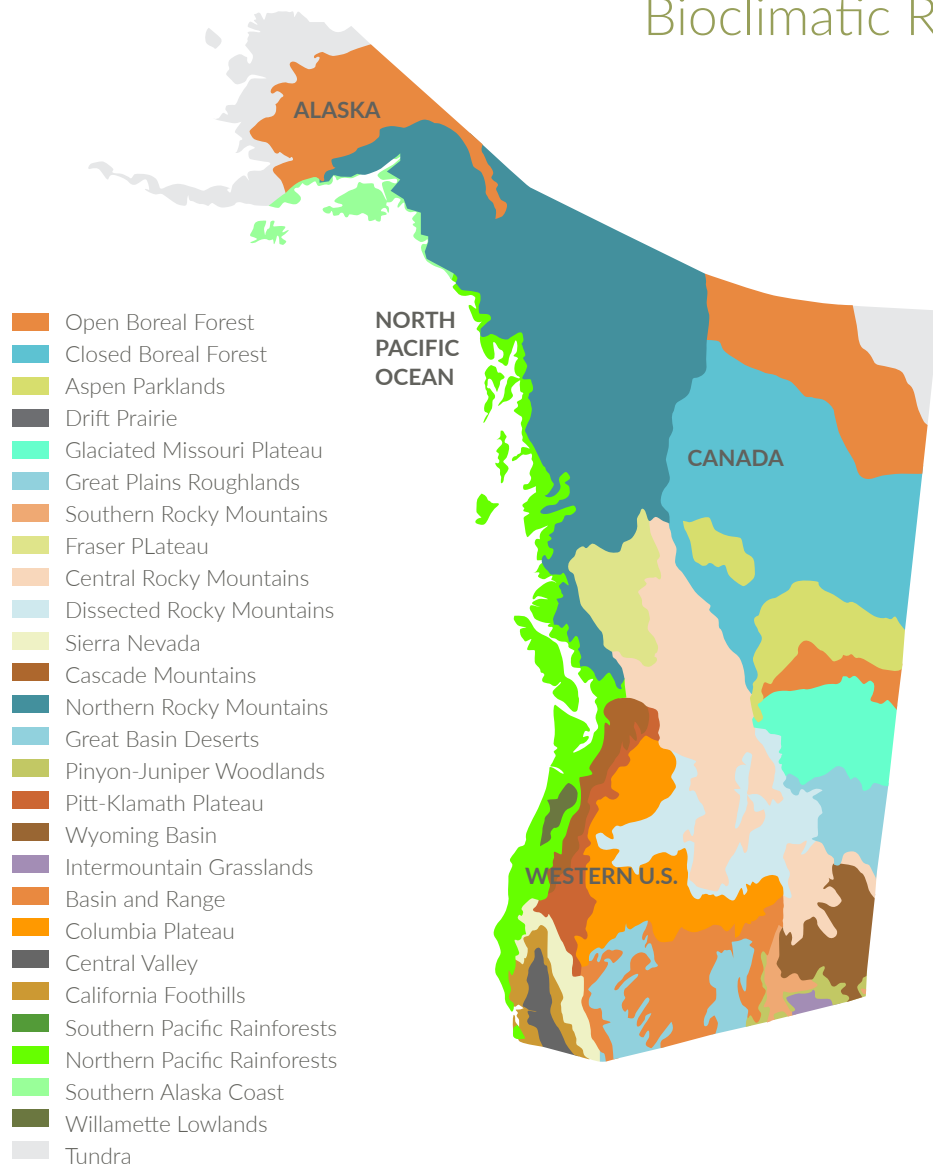
THE ROOTS OF **SUSTAINABILITY** IN THE **PACIFIC NORTHWEST**

The Pacific Northwest enjoys spectacular beauty, abundant natural resources, and rich ecological and cultural diversity. A regional map shows 27 separate bioclimates, stretching from Alaska to Southern Oregon to Wyoming, including coastal rain forests, deserts, fertile lowlands, and interior mountains, each featuring distinctive subdivisions. There are dozens of indigenous tribes with unique languages and cultures. There are immigrant groups from more than 100 countries. There is one of the fastest growing cities in the United States (Seattle), the bustling I-5 corridor, and hundreds of rural communities.

The history of Pacific Northwest settlement is a story of natural resource extraction, especially in timber, mining, agriculture, livestock and fisheries. Indigenous cultures practiced what we today call “environmental sustainability.” Their cultural traditions emphasized multigenerational resource use. In only a century, westward expansion brought a different approach to the land, resulting in dramatic increases in clear-cut logging, landscape-scale mining, industrial agriculture, and overgrazing, as well as the depletion of salmon runs. This process still has great impact on communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, prompting difficult conversations about conservation, stewardship, prosperity, and opportunity.

In many communities, the profits from natural resource extraction yield temporary prosperity. When the resource dwindles, some communities are left behind, leaving them with few economic alternatives. This results in unstable boom and bust cycles, undercutting the fabric of community life, requiring communities to reassess their local economies.

Bioclimatic Regions



The impact of boom and bust cycles takes various forms in urban and rural areas, but there are similar patterns. Seattle and Portland are examples of boom cities, spurred by the arrival of tech and biomed industries, the infusion of cultural creatives (many from the millennial generation), among other factors. Some wish to settle permanently. For others, these cities are way stations in the global economy. One result of these intentional migrations is a spectacular increase in real estate speculation; construction cranes are ubiquitous in the Seattle and Portland skylines.

As gentrification spreads, affordable housing becomes a distant memory. The displaced residents, many in lower economic brackets, can no longer afford to live in their neighborhoods. Hence, affordable housing, accessible transportation, access to health care, and many other basic aspects of community life are under threat. In these communities, environmental sustainability takes on a whole new meaning. Projects such as Seattle's **Yesler Terrace** and Portland's **Living Cully** address these challenges by demonstrating equity, diversity, and inclusion as the foundations of a sustainable community.

Medium-sized and smaller cities also experience economic and environmental transitions. Their local economies rely on a natural resource base, while also dealing with the realities of a global economy. The **Puyallup Watershed Initiative** that encompasses Tacoma and the surrounding area is a model for community-centered change, engaging residents in addressing issues of sustainable agriculture, food security, alternative transportation, and industrial stormwater. The **Walla Walla Community Council** brings multiple stakeholders together to study issues of local significance and generate community-based solutions to improve education, food security, and outdoor recreation opportunities. **Garden City Harvest** in Missoula, Montana promotes sustainable agriculture and community gardening as a means to foster food security, social well-being, and economic opportunity.

Rural regions are on the frontlines of natural resource extraction cycles. Conservation of natural resources is crucial to their future. Their challenge is to develop an ethic of stewardship so that the natural resource base regenerates, while developing alternative revenue options. The **Blackfoot Challenge** in Ovando, Montana, bordering the Bob Marshall Wilderness, works with ranchers who are striving to maintain livestock, while preserving the quality of the recreational environment. **Sustainable Southeast Partnership** in Coastal Alaska brings together people from the fishing and timber industries, native communities, and conservationists to develop regional stewardship strategies. **The Center Pole** on the Crow Reservation is revitalizing cultural traditions and building economic opportunity through programs in food sovereignty and educational attainment.

Community-based sustainability requires balancing ecological integrity and human flourishing; ecosystem health and human health; biological and cultural diversity; environmental quality and economic growth. Increasingly, communities, businesses, and principalities understand that in order to thrive and prosper they must achieve sustainability. They aspire to cultivate a spirit of creative innovation in support of civic responsibility, economic opportunity, inclusive decision-making, multiple stakeholders, and diverse representation.

EMERGENT PRACTICES: **A FOUNDATION FOR ACTION**

What follows is a set of emerging practices for community-based sustainability. These practices emanate from grassroots initiatives, inclusive processes, reflective participation, and a spirit of creative problem-solving. All of the projects and people covered in this study embody these practices.



Understand place as common ground.

Place refers to where and how people live in a community, suggesting that dwelling implies care, responsibility, and affiliation, as influenced by home, habitats, and landscapes.

A sense of place has appeal because it conveys feelings of rootedness and stability in a world of dynamic change. Place is a response to globalization and all that it entails—people on the move, economic and cultural trends that sweep through communities, and the formidable pace of environmental change. By achieving a sense of place, you learn to identify with the place where you live. You become familiar and intimate with your local surroundings. You exercise citizenship by taking responsibility for its quality of life and by taking action to care for it in a tangible and meaningful way.

Citizenship means you learn to work with your neighbors. You have a better understanding of their needs and concerns. You come to grips with the reality that you all live in your place together. You find consensus in the midst of controversy, listening to multiple voices, engaging with people who have ideas different than your own. “Common ground” links place, landscape, and decision-making. Through community conversation you deepen what you hold in common, knowing some differences may always remain.



Balance short-term needs and long-term strategies.

When you care about a place, you have to think about a generational time frame that acknowledges who preceded you and who will follow. You address what the place will be like in the future. There are many considerations—how will people earn a living, what will be the quality of life, and will young people have engaging opportunities that keep them in the community? How can we keep the best of what we have, taking advantage of current opportunities, without squandering the future?

Every community has short-term needs. People want access to the qualities of a good life—meaningful work, affordable housing, accessible transportation, nutritious food, convenient health care, and educational opportunities. What good is the future if you lack access to these basic needs in the present?

Yet it's crucial to secure a good life for future generations as well. That's not possible without strategic, long-term, community-based planning. Can we sustain the qualities of a good life without jeopardizing the future? Can our community provide equal access to these qualities both now and in the future? These questions reflect a sustainable approach to place and community. They require a long-term view of investment, an understanding that current decisions must have future returns.



Invest in economic and ecological security.

Communities aspire to thrive in the midst of the inevitable changes that impact their lives. That's why they engage in planning. Security implies a measure of stability, predictability, flexibility, and resilience in the face of an unknown future. For example, the concept of food security asserts all citizens have access to healthy food, even when they face hardships.

Investment is a determination regarding the allocation of present capital for future gains. Communities throughout the Pacific Northwest are broadening their understanding of capital to include more than just financial, but also social, natural, and intellectual capital. Impact investing embodies that approach as “investments made into companies, organizations, and funds with the intention to generate social and environmental impact alongside a financial return.”¹

If you include communities in the above definition, as well as the many forms of capital (financial, social, natural, and intellectual), then you get a full picture of how community sustainability seeks to balance economic and ecological security.

¹ Global Impact Investing Network, <https://thegiin.org/impact-investing/>, accessed Sept. 7, 2017.



Promote creative place-making to unite changing neighborhoods.

When people are concerned about the future well-being of their place, they are more inclined to take action and responsibility for policy. They understand place affiliation can bring a community together.

There's a term for this insight: creative place-making. Anne Gadwa Nicodemus and Anna Markusen observe that this process reflects “work that’s been organically happening in neighborhoods, towns, and cities, all across the country for decades.”

“In creative place-making, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative place-making animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability, and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”²

Creative place-making is a convergence of strategic action by cross-sector partners, a place-based orientation, and a core of arts and cultural activities.

² Nicodemus, Anna Gadwa, “Creative placemaking 101 for community developers,” LISC Institute for Comprehensive Community Development, <http://www.instituteccd.org/news/5014>, accessed Sept. 7, 2017.



Engage in compromise, consensus, and collaboration.

If you follow the national news, the prevailing narrative describes the polarization in America, how political parties can't seem to find a common ground. But when you go beyond the realm of elections and campaigns, you find communities engaged in compromise, consensus, and collaboration.

This is not an easy process. Controversies and differences abound. Progress is often painful and slow. But when people take the time to listen well, express themselves fully, and explore what they share in common, things get done.

Community-based sustainability projects inevitably involve differences of opinion, especially regarding conservation and natural resource use, equity and opportunity, or gentrification and displacement. A project becomes successful when those people and organizations with different points of view or different interests find, that despite their differences, they share enough in common to accomplish some of their aspirations.

Building partnerships requires community trust building. That takes time. You have to show up and attend meetings. And you have to understand that projects sometimes make slow, but steady progress. Participants learn how to balance urgency and patience. They learn how to speak and listen. They learn how to balance advocacy and facilitation. They learn that a strong partnership endures over time, and may take many years before it reaches full fruition.



Cultivate community leadership and expertise.

Successful projects build cohesive networks of leadership and responsibility, constructing approaches that enable multiple forms of participation, reaching out to people from different sectors and cultures, bringing them together for their opinions and ideas.

Successful projects engage inspired individuals who make major contributions. These individuals become leaders when they give credit to their partners and colleagues, delegating authority and autonomy, recruiting additional community members, especially from minority communities, and investing them with important responsibilities.

Shared leadership finds expertise within a community, knowing the information and experience necessary for any given plan or policy can typically be found locally. Good leaders elicit and support that expertise, using it to build confidence in the capacity of the community to construct creative solutions for their pressing issues. When community expertise is cultivated and shared, then the community knows when to bring in outside consultants, when to get additional perspectives, and when to learn about other communities that face similar challenges.



Emphasize multigenerational solutions.

Community leadership and expertise is a multigenerational challenge. Who will be the community leaders of the future? What role shall elders play in a community? How does a community ensure its children and young people have viable economic, social, environmental, and educational opportunities?

Successful projects empower young people, especially young women and those from communities of color, to take prominent leadership roles. This is important for several reasons: 1) In urban communities, it allows young people to stay in their home places, while providing opportunities to learn and grow, build expertise, and develop interesting professional options. And, 2) In rural communities, it allows for traditional means of working the land to remain viable. Across North America, there is a brain drain away from rural communities, as there are dwindling opportunities for talented young people. How will the family ranch survive? How will the salmon fishery remain abundant?

Projects that plan for the future include vibrant cohorts of young leaders. Through their engagement, these young leaders deepen their commitment to place, encouraging them to live where they work. The mentoring of community elders supports their work, and allows them to blend old ways and new ways as young leaders and elders learn from each other.



Encourage innovation and transparency.

Community-based sustainability is a strategic experiment. No one can predict with any certainty what path a project will take and what the future may hold. By emphasizing a solutions-based approach to community needs and challenges, these projects understand the importance of innovation, and they value creativity, improvisation, open-mindedness, and transparency.

Successful projects have active blogs and websites. This accomplishes much more than presenting news and updates. It allows participants to discuss what they are doing, why they are doing it, and to assess their successes and challenges. If you explore the websites of each of these projects, you'll find comprehensive reports and reflective editorials. In some cases, you'll find highly personal accounts of how participation encourages that reflection. Many of these accounts also describe what happens when things go wrong, how you make adjustments when things don't go as intended, and how to learn from both successes and misunderstandings.

Innovation is a trendy word and most organizations endorse it as an operating approach. The challenge is how to create a culture of innovation, a spirit that permeates all aspects of a project. It's the willingness to try new things, the openness to look at problems from multiple perspectives, the tenacity to persevere in difficult circumstances, and the commitment to reflect on your efforts. From those attributes, creative solutions emerge.



Integrate learning and civic engagement opportunities.

Community-based sustainability requires a collective educational effort. These projects maintain their vitality because they provide learning opportunities for community members, broadening residents' understanding of civic engagement, public health, local ecology, cultural diversity, and economic equity.

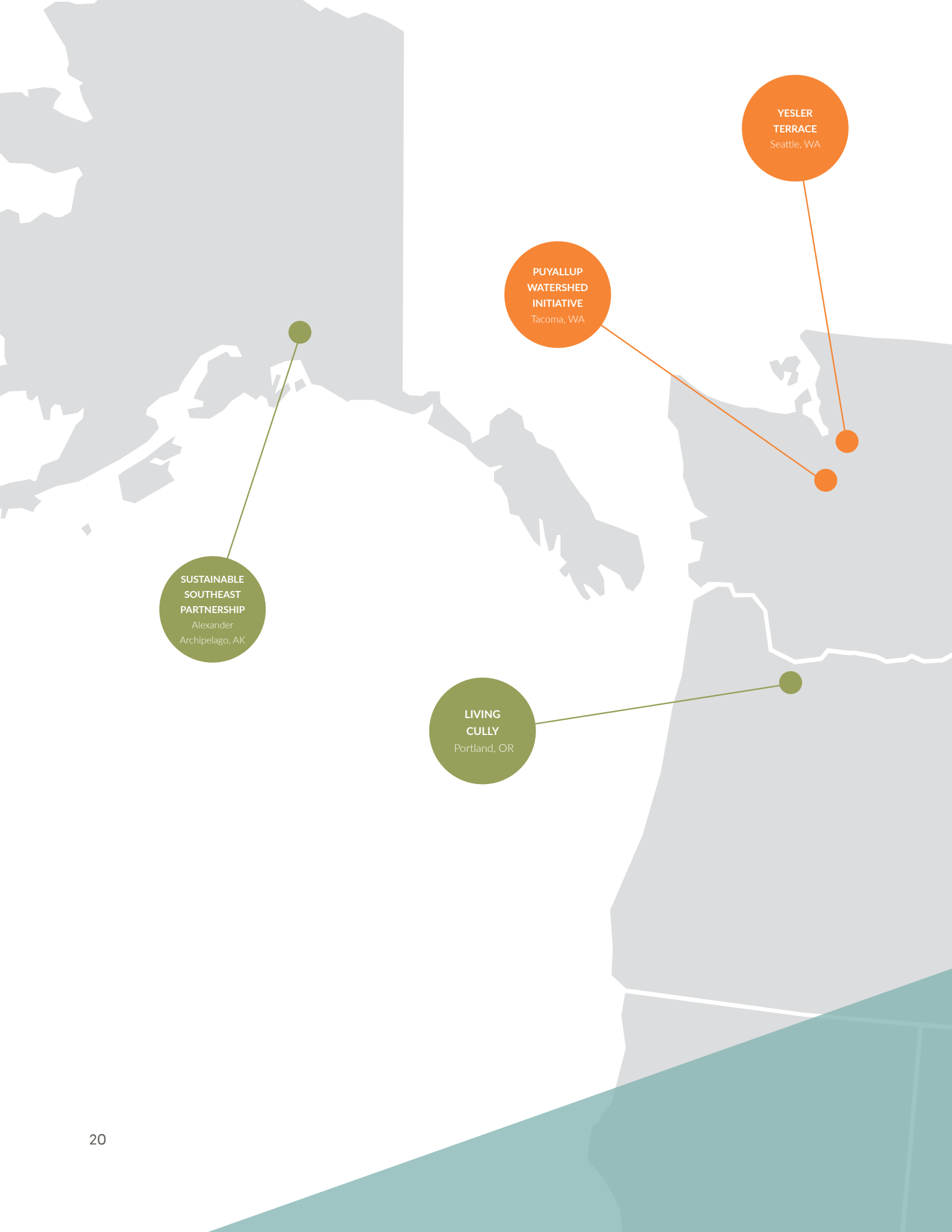
Learning pathways may include participatory surveys in which residents are asked to share their opinions or rank priorities. Community meetings, open houses, town halls, hands-on workshops, and field experiences are additional ways to engage residents. These learning opportunities not only build awareness and understanding, they also cultivate leadership and new skills among residents, and encourage community ownership of projects. Ultimately, community learning opportunities build the power and voice of community members.



**PACIFIC
NORTHWEST**

CHANGEMAKERS





**YESLER
TERRACE**
Seattle, WA

**PUYALLUP
WATERSHED
INITIATIVE**
Tacoma, WA

**SUSTAINABLE
SOUTHEAST
PARTNERSHIP**
Alexander
Archipelago, AK

**LIVING
CULLY**
Portland, OR

A stylized map of the United States is shown in light gray. Four callout circles are connected to specific geographic locations on the map by thin lines. The circles are: an orange circle on the West Coast, a teal circle in the Mountain West region, another teal circle in the Great Plains region, and a teal circle in the Southeast. The background features a teal gradient at the bottom and a white outline of the US map.

WALLA WALLA
COMMUNITY
COUNCIL
Walla Walla, WA

GARDEN CITY
HARVEST
Missoula, MT

BLACKFOOT
CHALLENGE
Ovando, MT

THE CENTER POLE
Crow Reservation, MT

CHANGEMAKER COMMUNITIES



YESLER TERRACE

Seattle, WA

Seattle is a global city with a dynamic cosmopolitan population. It consists of many communities linked by proximity, infrastructure, and networks. What happens when some communities are left behind? What happens when their neighborhoods are rapidly gentrifying, or otherwise going through changes that may not necessarily be in their interests? To properly address such questions, it's essential to understand how issues of inclusion, equity, and diversity inform community-based sustainability. The redevelopment of Yesler Terrace is a multi-sector partnership proactively dealing with these challenges.

The Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) developed Yesler Terrace in the 1940's. It was the region's first affordable housing construction and one of the first racially integrated public housing communities in the United States. Seventy years later, most of the older units needed extensive repairs. After comprehensive consultation with residents, neighbors, city officials, philanthropic organizations, and local businesses, a vision for a model community emerged. The City of Seattle, JPMorgan Chase, Seattle Foundation, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development made major investments to help turn the vision into reality.

SHA and its partners believe that a sustainable community creates opportunities for its residents. With Yesler Terrace this is evident in four approaches—education, jobs, health, and social networks—including “cradle to college” educational support, participation in a Workforce Opportunity System, an emphasis on community health education, and a full-time community builder who helps the residents develop affinity groups and social networks.



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“We help residents navigate the health care system. Because we belong to the same culture, speak the same language, and have similar life experiences as the people we work with, we are more readily able to understand their needs and connect them to the right resources and services. We are all learning from each other.”

– Nimo Farah, Kim Do, Alisa Farah, and Winta Yohannes,
community health workers at Yesler Terrace

The redevelopment of Yesler Terrace relies on effective community partnerships. For example, nearby Seattle University Colleges of Nursing, Education, and Social Work partners with SHA to have community health workers in neighborhood schools. This contributes to students' health and well-being and encourages family engagement. Partnerships with the Seattle University Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center and JPMorgan Chase support entrepreneurial education, skills training, and culturally-appropriate job placement services.

The Yesler Community Collaborative (YCC) is a networking organization that fosters cooperation with surrounding communities, such as the International District, Chinatown, and Capitol Hill. YCC facilitates meetings among community leaders to share pertinent information, invite their participation and input in community planning, and encourage civic engagement in public policy.

The Yesler community is a place and a concept at a crossroads. It's a transition zone, located between the booming downtown area to the north and west, sports stadiums and warehouses to the south, and the changing international district to the east. It could easily become yet another constellation of expensive high-rise apartments. The Yesler project sends a compelling alternative message. This is the heart of Seattle. People of mixed incomes live together. Residents think about all aspects of community well-being—health, environment, education, and opportunity. A growing community thrives and works together. People from multiple generations and cultures find stability, fidelity to place, and neighbors who care about each other.

www.seattlehousing.org/about-us/redevelopment/redevelopment-of-yesler-terrace



LIVING CULLY

Portland, OR

Throughout the Pacific Northwest, dozens of grassroots, environmentally-concerned organizations are changing how we think about sustainability. Although conservation, climate, and biodiversity are important to their efforts, they are emphasizing environmental health and ecological restoration, as connected to social enterprise, job training, job opportunities, and multicultural approaches. In essence, equity is the new focus around which all of these other issues revolve.

Living Cully launched in 2010 as a collaboration among four anti-poverty organizations: Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East, Hacienda Community Development Corporation, Native American Youth and Family Center, and Verde. The project aspires to promote sustainable economic development in Cully, a highly diverse, low-income neighborhood in northeast Portland with sparse commercial development and low household incomes. All four Living Cully partners serve communities facing equity-related challenges, from families at risk of homelessness to low-income workers living in places without economic opportunity and in poor environmental conditions.

By applying environmental sustainability as an anti-poverty strategy, while braiding neighborhood-scale environmental investments with traditional community development resources, Living Cully has inspired support from a range of local and national foundations, including grants from Meyer Memorial Trust, The Kresge Foundation, and Surdna Foundation.

The Living Cully staff emphasize the importance of community-based participation in crafting affordable housing policy. They strive to better understand the needs of residents by engaging them in public meetings to discuss their concerns and aspirations. Their goals are to assist families in ways that are immediately responsive—increase family income, improve job stability, and keep jobs and people in the neighborhood. These are the prerequisites of an environmental participation strategy, providing opportunities that support economic needs and a sustainable community.

For example, Cully Park, formerly a land fill, is undergoing a thorough restoration process. Park construction is underway. At the entrance, there's a large sign that offers thanks to the partners, funders, and supporters of the forthcoming Cully Park. There are 55 logos representing a variety of organizations, including Hacienda, Meyer Memorial Trust, National Association of Minority Contractors, National Park Service, Native American Youth and Family Center, Oregon Health Authority, United Way, and Verde, among many others.

Within the park, there's a community garden, a habitat restoration area, a nursery, and an inter-tribal gathering garden. Verde worked with neighborhood schools and students to design an extensive play area that meets the needs of young people and disabled youth.

Verde's mission is to serve communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach, and advocacy. It includes a landscape contracting business and a general contracting business, both of which provide opportunities for minority-owned contractors, staffed by Cully community members. The Verde landscaping business works with multiple partners, including affordable housing providers, and native plant and native seed groups. They also offer training for skills, such as pesticide licensing, landscape contractor licensing, and computer literacy.

Living Cully embodies the new face of environmental sustainability, demonstrating ways to effectively combine environmental quality, economic opportunity, and social justice.

www.livingcully.org



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“I’ve lived in the Cully neighborhood for nine years with my husband Freddie and our four children. I am proud to live here, because of the people and the diversity of cultures, and because this neighborhood is healthy for my family. I have learned a lot and I have grown a lot. I have learned that community is not made up of one person, but is created by the whole community, working together alongside our children. Together, we have power to make change!”

– Manuela Interian, resident and
volunteer of Living Cully



PUYALLUP WATERSHED INITIATIVE

Tacoma, WA

According to the United States Geological Service, a watershed is “an area of land that drains all the streams and rainfall to a common outlet, such as the outflow of a reservoir, mouth of a bay, or any point along a stream channel.” The term is also used to indicate a significant conceptual change. The Puyallup Watershed Initiative (PWI) embodies both definitions. It aspires to implement community-based sustainability on a region-wide, watershed level. It also represents a new way of thinking about community organizing and the role of foundations in catalyzing that process.

The Puyallup watershed begins at the Puyallup glacier on Mount Rainier, ranges through the mountain’s foothills, flowing to Tacoma on the shores of Puget Sound. It includes over 1,000 square miles, more than 300,000 people, two tribal nations, 17 cities and towns, rich agricultural lands, pristine forests, splendid recreational opportunities, and a bustling port city. PWI is a new model of community-centered change to improve social and environmental conditions throughout the region.

Funded by a 10-year, multi-million-dollar grant from The Russell Family Foundation, PWI organized six Communities of Interest—Active Transportation, Agriculture, Environmental Education, Forests, Industrial Stormwater, and Just and Healthy Food Systems—to bring together people and groups not typically at the table. PWI believes community stewardship with an emphasis on equity and inclusion is key to addressing the region’s development challenges, while preserving its natural and cultural resources.



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“At the heart of the PWI’s work are people and place. The people inspire and fill me with confidence that together we can tackle future challenges, regardless of the complexity. The place—with its beauty, wonder, and resources—inspires us all to contribute to our quality of life in the present and for future generations.”

– Jennifer Chang, community relations manager of
Puyallup Watershed Initiative

“The Communities of Interest are the engines of change,” says Jennifer Chang, community relations manager. Through the Communities of Interest, PWI invites diverse viewpoints to develop solutions from the bottom up.

- **Active Transportation** works with multiple stakeholders to develop a system of trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, and more that connects the Puyallup watershed’s public spaces from Mount Rainier to Tacoma, using recently-approved park impact fees that are expected to generate \$19 million for trails over the next 15 years.
- **Agriculture** coordinates farmers, developers, nonprofits, and municipalities to support farmland conservation strategies. They received an \$8 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conserve 1,000 acres of farmland.
- **Environmental Education** seeks to broaden the community’s understanding of our natural environment by encouraging hands-on learning in K-12 schools and college programs, and offering stewardship and advocacy opportunities for residents.
- **Forests** coordinates projects that engage small forest landowners in increasing the urban tree canopy, while preserving remaining tracts of old-growth forests.
- **Industrial Stormwater** works with small businesses and diverse economic sectors to demystify the permitting process and promote comprehensive water quality in the region.
- **Just and Healthy Food Systems** uses an equity lens to assess all food security programs, while launching a community council to solicit input from underrepresented stakeholders.

All six Communities of Interest emphasize diversity, inclusion, and participation. Anyone can join. Members include local businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and individuals. Collectively, the Communities of Interest are engaging the whole community in taking care of their place—and balancing the social, environmental, and economic interests of the watershed.

www.pwi.org



WALLA WALLA COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Walla Walla, WA

The Walla Walla Valley is a geographical crossroads, a central place bounded by mountain ranges and forests to the east and south and the Columbia Basin to the north and west. It's embedded within over 700,000 acres of farmland—lush green rolling hills covered with wheat (the primary agricultural crop), asparagus, sweet onions, and alfalfa. Wineries dot the landscape, offering recreational opportunities for culinary enthusiasts. The region (with a population of 78,000 people) spans Columbia and Walla Walla counties, as well as northeastern Umatilla County, intersecting with the Touchet Valley in Oregon.

Walla Walla, a modest-sized city of 32,000 people, serves as a cultural, commercial, and educational hub. Its diverse population includes a large Latino community. It has ecological, economic, and cultural diversity; educational capacity; and a population big enough to add complexity, but small enough to be intimate and manageable.

Ten years ago, a group of community leaders understood that Walla Walla and the surrounding region had the potential to be a model for community development. They were interested in crafting a process to help residents plan a sustainable future and do so in a participatory and equitable way. They aspired to build community capacity for organizational change and leadership development. Through a series of public forums, they brought this idea to the community, including government leaders and underrepresented groups. Support for the process came from the Northwest Area Foundation, Tourism Walla Walla, the Walla Walla Chamber of Commerce, and the Blue Mountain Community Foundation.

The Walla Walla Community Council was formed in 2008, as a 26-member board with the aim to organize community conversations about the most pertinent issues for the region's future. Each year the council's program committee identifies a priority issue and recommends it to the board. A study group then gathers data on the subject and develops policy recommendations. An implementation task force assesses and takes steps to carry out the recommendations. Community members are actively involved with the implementation process.

Thus far, the Community Council has produced seven reports, covering topics from education to gang prevention, agriculture to food security, outdoor recreation to economic growth. These reports provide the residents of Greater Walla Walla with well-considered action steps and a portfolio of policy opportunities.

In 2016 and 2017, the Community Council coordinated a "Community Conversations" project as a way to invite public input about the future of Greater Walla Walla. The coordinating team included the Community Council, Blue Mountain Community Foundation, Pomegranate Center, Sherwood Trust, and United Way of Walla Walla County. Five evening workshops were held and more than 450 community members attended. Each workshop offered Spanish translation and childcare services, as well as food and refreshments. At each workshop, the conversation was framed around one foundational question: What ideas do you have for this region's future? Thirteen themes emerged: Access to Education, Strong and Diverse Economy, Health and Well-Being, Care for Nature, Safety, Arts and Culture, Local Agriculture, Recreation, Regional Collaboration, Vibrant Centers, Well-Being for All, Civic Engagement, and Commitment to Diversity. The first five are now regional emphases, but all of these priorities are considered together.

Any city interested in community-based sustainability would be well-served by studying the Community Council process, which is demonstrating what it means to be a learning community, how to empower diverse groups to think carefully about what matters to them, and ways to cultivate meaningful place-based community development.

www.wwcommunitycouncil.org



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“As president of Community Council’s board of directors, I seek to expand community outreach and make the organization’s work more inclusive. I have strong ties to a variety of communities—including business leaders, government officials, and Latino residents. I’ve learned that the best way to facilitate diverse participation is to make meetings welcoming and relevant. One way to do this is to provide essential services that make it easier for people to attend the meetings—translation services, childcare, and food.”

– Roger Esparza, president of
Walla Walla Community Council Board



GARDEN CITY HARVEST

Missoula, MT

Over 20 years ago, there was a lot of talk in Washington, D.C. about welfare reform. The proposed 1995 Farm Bill included deep and dramatic cuts to the food stamp program. In Missoula, Montana, some community members were concerned—how would this impact the community? How would low-income families get access to food? Would the food bank have sufficient capacity?

In response, Josh Slotnick, a local vegetable gardener, organized a team of local Missoula activists. He started the two-acre, student-based PEAS (Program in Ecological Agriculture and Society) farm on the south end of town. This led to a partnership between the University of Montana's environmental studies program and Garden City Harvest, a fledgling local organization. The student farm could produce fresh and nutritious produce for the food bank, working in tandem with a community garden to increase food security.

Twenty years later, Garden City Harvest has 10 community garden sites and four neighborhood farms located throughout Missoula. They produce thousands of pounds of food, much of which is distributed to low-income families. They employ several dozen people and offer a suite of programs that combine food security with social justice, community service, and health awareness. Their portfolio includes farm to school, markets for seniors, nutritional awareness, and youth development programs.

Their Youth Farm program is an effective partnership of Willard Alternative High School and social service agencies, including Youth Homes, the Human Resource Council, Missoula Aging Services, and others. It operates three mobile market sites, a



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“When my husband, Bob, and I first started walking our dog past the Northside Community Garden, we’d just sold our dining room table to buy that week’s groceries. We were shattered after the loss of so many things, and that simple practice of going and gardening and weeding and watching that garden come to fruition, and then getting to know people in the neighborhood really did a lot for us. It was really helpful for me in recovering my health. The act of growing our own food gave us back our confidence.”

- Naomi Kimbell, community gardener at
Garden City Harvest

community supported agriculture program (CSA), and donates thousands of pounds of food to family service agencies each year. The Youth Farm also provides job training to older adolescents aging out of foster care. The employment program, a partnership with Youth Homes, is an opportunity for young people to learn critical social and employment skills. Over the course of the season, teens are given tasks of increasing importance, from managing irrigation, to interacting with customers, to leading Youth Homes volunteers.

Garden City Harvest believes a resilient community starts with growing food together, and they see the linkage between agriculture and addressing critical social issues. The organization partners with the food bank, homeless shelters, and group homes to provide food-growing opportunities for people facing economic hardship. Through these opportunities, Garden City Harvest is teaching self-sufficiency and promoting positive change in individuals' lives.

Garden City Harvest demonstrates how increasing food security can create community sustainability by connecting a diversity of people, working toward a shared goal, and putting food on the tables of those who most need it.

www.gardencityharvest.org



BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE

Ovando, MT

The Blackfoot Watershed contains 1.5 million acres of forested mountain ranges, wildlife habitat, and productive working lands in Western Montana. It's the home of Blackfoot Challenge, an organization whose mission is to coordinate efforts that conserve and enhance the watershed's natural resources, while sustaining a rural way of life.

As early as the 1970's some of the community's ranchers perceived threats to their livelihood, from the ecological impacts of drought and invasive weeds, to soil depletion and climate change. Concerned about the future of ranching, Blackfoot Challenge grew out of conversations among local landowners, as a way to collectively steward the land and address these threats.

Over four decades, Blackfoot Challenge has successfully initiated community conversations based on collaborative planning, active listening, and local expertise. Relationship building is fundamental to the program's success. Staff and board members, participating ranchers, and community members emphasize the necessity of consensus-building. They appreciate that conversations may be controversial and there are a variety of perspectives on how to manage land.

Blackfoot Challenge encourages a consensus-based strategy, helping people understand what they share in common. They build on pride of place and appreciation of the landscape. They prioritize the necessity of civic participation. Private landowners and public managers communicate together on a regular basis. The result is a comprehensive management plan for the region, including a ranch

resiliency program that integrates water conservation, a drought response program, and sustainable livestock practice.

Over several decades, Blackfoot Challenge has used these three C's—community, consensus, and conservation—with enduring success. Their programs emphasize four pillars: protection, restoration, stewardship, and place-based education.

David Mannix, a board member and rancher, explains how the work of Blackfoot Challenge entails a delicate balance. “It’s taken us awhile to get people to broaden their perspectives. At first, many of my fellow ranchers thought that I sold out to the environmentalists, but now they see the practical results of the Blackfoot Challenge program have made a difference.”

The Blackfoot River Watershed, like so many places in the rural Rocky Mountain West, has to navigate the challenging dynamics of the global economy—the temptation to use natural resources in the here and now, versus a strategic management plan for many generations down the line, or what Blackfoot Challenge describes as stewardship. Family ranches have to figure out how their legacy will continue. Which members of the next generation will manage the ranch? Will the younger generation, many of whom are college educated, choose to return to Montana, and if so, will they choose ranching?

Blackfoot Challenge respects the importance of extended family relationships in the ranching community, and the challenges of generational transfer. Much of the organization’s leadership comes from ranchers who are board members—people who care deeply about their community and wholeheartedly engage in ranching as a way of life. They promote a viable rural way of life through civic engagement and by deepening awareness of conservation and stewardship. These are the best approaches to ensure the next generation will follow their lead and add to their wisdom.

www.blackfootchallenge.org



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“Blackfoot Challenge is a national model for cooperative conservation on a local level. As such, it attracts attention from interested individuals, landowner groups, conservation organizations, educational institutions, and governmental agencies from all over the country. The [Blackfoot] Challenge has conducted hundreds of tours and ‘show me trips’ for countless groups, including grade school kids, governors, U.S. senators, two Secretaries of the Interior, and one from the Department of Agriculture. It has given me the opportunity to interact with decision-makers who can make a difference.”

– Jim Stone, board chair of Blackfoot Challenge



THE CENTER POLE

Crow Reservation, MT

The Center Pole is located in the heart of Crow County. It's at a crossroads between the Rocky Mountains and the flatlands of Eastern Montana. From the highway, you notice a spectacular mural painted on the side of a barn-like building, bounded by the smooth grassy hills of the Little Big Horn National Monument, tucked between small ranches and trailers. The barn houses a community food bank, the Wellknown Buffalo Thrift Store, and a radio station. Across the way sits the Wellknown Buffalo Coffee House, a gift shop, and radio station. At first glance, the facility seems patched together, yet firmly rooted in its place. That rootedness is a testimony to the past, a haven of stability for the present, and a vision for the future. Hence, the name The Center Pole, a place at the heart of a community spreading in many directions.

Peggy Wellknown Buffalo and Susan Kelly, the project co-directors, share a common passion for food sovereignty, traditional approaches to land use, educational opportunity, and Crow culture. The circumstances of their vision and leadership are exceptional, and the best way to introduce The Center Pole is to share a brief history of their work together.

In 1991, Susan Kelly was working with Time-Life books in Washington, D.C., but wanted to make a change to more meaningful work. So, she started the Kelly Foundation to help prepare Native American young people from reservations for success at competitive institutions of higher learning and then return to their communities as agents of change. Through this program, Susan met Peggy Wellknown Buffalo from the Crow Reservation. In her youth, Peggy was shipped to an Indian boarding school where she was encouraged to forget the ways of her culture. That



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“When I was very young I was taken off the reservation and sent to a bible boarding school. There was a lot of mistreatment and abuse. I couldn’t speak Crow. I couldn’t learn about my own culture. When I went to sleep, I would sing Crow lullabies. I remembered my mother singing them to me when I was very little. I survived by keeping my language in my head. When I returned to the reservation I participated in sun dances. An elder told me that I had to heal myself. I had a vision while doing a sun dance. I didn’t understand it at first. Then I had it again. I saw myself working in a place where children and elders could come and learn about their culture and traditions, about growing food, about the Crow language. I decided to name it after the place where I got my prayers and healing: The Center Pole.”

– Peggy Wellknown Buffalo, founder and executive director of The Center Pole

experience strengthened her resolve. She devoted her life to revitalize the very culture she was instructed to forget.

When Peggy Wellknown Buffalo and Susan Kelly came together, they were inspired to create The Center Pole to promote knowledge, justice, and sovereignty in native communities. They had limited financial resources. Peggy used her own house and land as the foundation for the program. With the aid of several small gifts, she started a food bank, knowing that would meet a huge local need and would bring people to a central place. The food bank would be the first step in a series of activities designed to support food sovereignty, cultural awareness, and educational opportunity. Ultimately, Peggy and Susan envisioned The Center Pole as the heart of a living classroom, the center of a wheel with projects stretching in many directions, including traditional ways of learning, visits to sacred places, the revitalization of the Crow language, and the gathering of herbs—all supported by teaching young people about the land, respect, and cultural awareness.

Fifteen years later, many of the projects Peggy and Susan aimed to bring their community are underway. On Friday afternoons, the community food bank, staffed by young people, hosts a steady parade of visitors. The food bank offers classes on topics ranging from traditional foods to sustainable housing, and provides financial and academic support to young people entering college.

The Crow Reservation is dealing with a multitude of economic, health, and environmental concerns. Peggy Wellknown Buffalo's biggest fear is the onset of hopelessness when people can't envision the possibility of opportunity. What's unique about The Center Pole is their hands-on approach to community sustainability, blending work opportunities with traditional knowledge and cultural vitality. It's a gathering place for new ideas, a demonstration in how to live on the land, a testimony in respect for the land, and a place for community members to call home.

www.thecenterpole.org



SUSTAINABLE SOUTHEAST PARTNERSHIP

Alexander Archipelago, AK

In the Alexander Archipelago of Southeast Coastal Alaska, small communities punctuate thousands of islands huddled against a fractal coastline, with splendid mountains, forests, and inlets, unfolding in seeming isolation against a backdrop of clouds and mist. The wilderness is always present. Despite the convenient connections of planes, ferries, the Internet, and satellite television, it feels like you are on the edge of one of the last wild places on the planet.

The economy of coastal Alaska is based on forests and fisheries. Every community has a different perspective on how to best use those resources. The native tribal cultures have long histories of mainly sustainable resource use. Layered on this original substrate is a more recent history of logging and fishing, with the typical challenges that accompany natural resource extraction. Andrew Thoms, the director of the Sitka Conservation Society, believes the region is at a turning point. It's figuring out how to move away from a boom-bust mentality into an economy that creates sustainable returns.

An important agent of this change is the Sustainable Southeast Partnership (SSP), a network of regional organizations, including tribal governments, conservation nonprofits, native corporations, economic development groups, and representatives from the villages of Kake, Klawock, Sitka, Kasaan, Hydaburg, Hoonah, and Yakutat. SSP's emphasis is to ensure a prosperous future for their families and region by promoting self-reliant communities, a vibrant place-based culture, healthy functioning ecosystems, and a robust local economy.

The core of SSP is their Catalyst Program. The partnership involves an affiliation of host organizations, supported by the Alaska Conservation Foundation. Each host employs a “Community Catalyst” who assesses local priorities, builds solutions-oriented capacity, and develops sustainability initiatives congruent with the community, the village, the organization, and the ecosystem. Hosts also may seek the input of “Regional Catalysts” who bring subject matter expertise in food security, energy security, local business, community forestry and fisheries, communications, and workforce development to support and inform local projects. The Community and Regional Catalysts work as a cohesive team, meeting regularly to discuss their priorities.

Quinn Mas-Aboudara, a Community Catalyst, serves as a member of the Prince of Wales Landscape Assessment Team (POWLAT), a working group of 25 representatives from tribal associations, villages, and industry groups. POWLAT recently completed a year-long planning process, conducting meetings to address timber industry viability, healthy watersheds, tourism, recreation, and economic stability. The purpose was to provide the U.S. Forest Service with community-wide input for a 10- to 15-year plan for a suite of projects that the Tongass National Forest will implement on Prince of Wales Island. This plan must balance business needs and environmental sustainability, allowing enough timber sales to maintain the industry, while avoiding an adverse impact on salmon runs, tourism, or contemporary subsistence resources. Despite many tensions and values conflicts, the process yielded a high degree of consensus and a plan for moving forward.

Throughout Southeast Coastal Alaska, the SSP Regional and Community Catalysts serve as agents of change, educators, and community facilitators. Most of the catalysts are under 40. Many are from Alaska, although some left for brief periods to get an education, serve in the military and/or Peace Corps, or to participate in various community projects. The catalysts form a superb cohort of skillful, experienced, solution-oriented practitioners, who are also willing listeners and engaged learners. With their leadership, community-based sustainability has a vibrant future in Southeast Coastal Alaska.



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“I grew up on Prince of Wales Island in Southeast Alaska. My life was focused around a unique lifestyle, a traditional sustainable approach specific to a region with thousands of islands. Life centered on subsistence hunting and fishing. To this day, a subsistence lifestyle binds me to the land. Whether I’m in a boat pulling crab pots, or tromping through waist deep snow to check a trap line, I feel my connectedness. I have gratitude and respect for how much these lands provide for my family and me. Now I have an opportunity to address many of the challenges of a small community in Southeast Alaska—the high cost of food, the lack of employment opportunities and stable jobs, and how they are connected to economic development options.”

– Quinn Mas-Aboudara, Klawock Community Catalyst for Sustainable Southeast Partnership



THE ROLE OF

PHILANTHROPY



Philanthropy plays a significant role in community-based sustainability, providing financial support, organizational guidance, and partnership networks. Without substantial funding and support from foundations, individual donors, and the extraordinary volunteer efforts of countless community members, none of the projects in this study would flourish. The projects are enhanced, too, by government grants, grassroots fundraising campaigns, and the donation of in-kind services.

Building on the emergent ideas and lessons learned from these community projects, in what ways can philanthropic support be most innovative? Are there common themes that help broaden the possibilities for philanthropic best practices? Do community-based sustainability projects have specific characteristics that can inform wise investment?

The following suggestions were articulated by almost all of the funders of these projects. They are offered as a place to start conversations and a springboard for sharing and learning from each other.

**Many
Philanthropy
Northwest
member
foundations
contributed to
the projects in
this report.**

**Alaska Conservation Foundation • Bill
& Melinda Gates Foundation • Blue
Mountain Community Foundation •
Boeing • Brainerd Foundation • Bullitt
Foundation • Dennis and Phyllis
Washington Foundation • JPMorgan
Chase & Co. • M.J. Murdock Charitable
Trust • Meyer Memorial Trust •
Northwest Area Foundation • Seattle
Foundation • Sherwood Trust • The
Russell Family Foundation**



Use the emergent practices as criteria to guide organizational support and funding decisions.

How does a foundation understand a community? The emergent practices in this report can help uncover the various histories, cultures, and geographies of any project. They also can provide a checklist for philanthropic organizations to assess the potential of community-based projects—identifying areas where organizations might need support and helping them integrate these emergent practices.

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Consider unrestricted grants and longer funding cycles to support community-based projects that require flexible resources.

Community-based sustainability takes time. For example, the seeds for Yesler Terrace Redevelopment were sown in the 1940's. The first Blackfoot Challenge discussions were in the 1970's. And, The Russell Family Foundation's Puyallup Watershed Initiative is a 10-year grant.

Unrestricted grants show trust and share power with grantees. They allow flexibility for communities to determine their own priorities and direct their budgets as appropriate. Both longer-time frames and unrestricted funds enable grantees to take risks, learn as they go, and make adjustments as needed.



Emphasize multicultural and multigenerational leadership opportunities to ensure knowledge transfer and community continuity.

An essential element of sustainability is building in plans and practices to ensure knowledge is transferred between generations. Philanthropy can play a role by investing in projects that encourage multigenerational sharing, such as school-community programs involving students and parents or caretakers, youth and elder collaborations, and community celebrations. It's also important to fund logistical considerations that enable multigenerational participation, such as child care, transportation, meals, and translation services.



Incorporate professional development and networking opportunities to support a cohort of creative changemakers.

These projects are organized, administered, and facilitated by people with deep commitments to place and community. Their involvement is values-based. They are dedicated to grassroots decision-making, inclusive processes, diversity, and equitable outcomes. They are innovators and collaborators.

Philanthropy can support changemakers in sustaining their drive by investing in their professional development and supporting their self-care, so they can stay with a project over time. Knowledge-sharing and network building are also important investments for nurturing leaders. Fellowships, exchanges, seminars, and conferences foster synergistic learning and keep changemakers invigorated.



INVESTING IN A

HOPEFUL FUTURE



The etymology of philanthropy is originally from the 17th century Greek “philanthropia,” meaning kindness, benevolence, and love of mankind. Four centuries later, we can expand its meaning to suggest generosity and love for both humankind and for the earth.

The philanthropic ethos is nothing less than a transformational process, providing the nourishment and resources to support human and planetary flourishing. Thanks to the foundations who contributed their leadership, creativity, and funding to the flourishing of the eight communities featured in this report.

These eight community-based sustainability projects are leading the way to a hopeful future—empowering communities to realize their vision, rooted in place and landscape, celebrating biological and cultural diversity, and redefining prosperity. Most importantly, they are stories of personal and community transformations. Now, more than ever, the world must hear these hopeful stories. They demonstrate the power of generosity and the possibilities of collaboration.

Philanthropy has the resources, the intelligence, and the ethos to catalyze these stories in ways that will change lives for the better. These projects are only a sampling of the thousands of similar efforts around the region, North America, and the world. Each requires ongoing support. If philanthropy is generosity and love for humankind and the earth, then its investment and encouragement will be beautifully reflected in this vision.

The author would like to thank the staff of the Pacific Changemaker projects for their extraordinary generosity of time and spirit. It was a great honor to visit these projects. Enormous gratitude also goes to Philanthropy Northwest and the Satterberg Foundation for the opportunity to work on this report.

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