

## **Appetite for Change's Northside Fresh Community Food Project**

In 2010, Alison Horovitz moved back to North Minneapolis, the underserved neighborhood where she had grown up, after having trained as a chef and served as a public defender in Miami Dade County in Florida. She connected with long time North Minneapolis residents, Princess Titus and Latasha Powell, who together co-founded Appetite for Change (AFC) in 2012. AFC was created with the mission to use food as a tool to build health, wealth, and social change. In 2015, AFC was awarded the Northside Fresh Community Food Project (CFP)

The Northside Fresh CFP seeks to create a fresh food zone in a three-block stretch of North Broadway Avenue, an area rich in social capital, community assets and innovative ideas. It is also an area rich in junk food: a youth-led food assessment found 36 fast or junk options along West Broadway Ave. Despite the rich diversity of immigrants and refugees in the community, there are few places that serve culturally relevant food for these individuals. The objectives of the project are to increase access to healthy locally grown produce for North Minneapolis residents, build social capital among community residents, foster food-based resiliency through partnerships that link for-profit and non-profit entities in the community, as well as deepen the capacity to thrive for community-led agriculture and food system efforts.

The project encompasses a wide range of activities that are intricately interwoven to create a tapestry of efforts whose whole is much larger than the sum of its parts.

On one end of the zone is the West Broadway Farmers Market, an accessible and affordable market in a community where food access can be challenging. The Farmers Market hosts a SNAP incentive program, where shoppers using their SNAP card can get bonus dollars to reduce the costs of produce. And the market also hosts a Fruit and Vegetable Prescription program. In this initiative medical practitioners from a nearby University of Minnesota run clinic write prescriptions which are turned into vouchers for fresh produce at the market. As of 2016, three cohorts of patients have participated successfully in this program. The Farmers Market also hosts a community aggregation and distribution table, where a network of socially disadvantaged growers from the community, and youth producing food in AFC's gardening programs can sell their products.





AFC worked with these backyard gardeners to ensure that they are utilizing state of the art food safety protocols, facilitating the creation of a highly detailed GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) plan for these growers. One University of Minnesota food safety expert commented that he had never seen such a detailed food safety plan for small farmers.

At the other end of the zone are AFC's offices, Breaking Bread Café and kitchen incubator. As of summer 2016, 984 persons participated in free cooking classes, which give residents the opportunity to learn and engage in dialogue about nutrition, healthy eating, cooking, and growing food. These classes are rooted in popular education theory, and are used as a tool for building health, wealth and social change. Community residents are also offered the opportunity to participate in gardening workshops and to receive low cost garden supplies, such as tools, compost and seedlings, through a membership-based buying club.



Breaking Bread Café is an attractively designed and cozy space where community residents can purchase an affordable and healthy meal in a community where sit-down restaurants (outside of fast food joints) are lacking. As such, it serves as a gathering place for the community. Breaking Bread is much more than a community café though. It grows part of its food on-site in a small garden space, and has bought over 5000 lbs. of produce from community growers. It also serves as a job training site for local youth. As of August 2016, 48 youth had gone through AFC's Youth employment and training program since 2015.

Breaking Bread is not AFC's only avenue for creating new pathways for income in the community. Kindred Kitchen provides commercial kitchen space and technical support

for entrepreneurs looking to create new food-based businesses. In 2016, its first year of operation, AFC led a business development workshop for 14 business owners.

Outside of the scope of this CFP, AFC is working to help corner stores offer more healthy foods, as well as create a new co-op grocery store in the neighborhood. It is also exploring the feasibility of developing a new public market on the Northside, similar to the popular Midtown Market, focusing on the cultural assets of the diverse community.

Key to the emerging success of Appetite for Change have been three factors:

- Its deep levels of community ownership and engagement in the work. It is clear that the community feels like AFC is an integral part of the web of the neighborhood and that its programs speak to the community's desires.
- Its leaders' vision of creating a sustainable food system in North Minneapolis, with a web of connections between each program that fosters success.
- Its ability to effectively communicate its work to both community residents and the public.

Appetite for Change is part of the Northside Fresh Coalition which seeks to shape public policy decisions as they affect the food security and health of residents of North Minneapolis. AFC's leadership understands that to improve the lives of community residents it will need to transform the way the community itself is portrayed: not as a food desert, or a place with deficiencies, but as a neighborhood rich with assets and skills that need investment to flourish. The Community Food Projects grant has been instrumental in seeding that investment.

