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# Exploring Community Wealth Building in San Diego County's Food System



Compiled by the San Diego Food System Alliance for San Diego County Food Vision 2030. Learn more at [sdfoodvision2030.org](https://sdfoodvision2030.org).

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PREFACE

Community wealth building is a key strategy of [San Diego County Food Vision 2030](#). Transforming our institutions and economies to allow for greater community ownership is imperative to cultivating "a food system that belongs to all of us."

The San Diego Food System Alliance launched Food Vision 2030 with the understanding that the time to reimagine and reconfigure our food system is now. There is no question that the current path of our food system is unsustainable and transformations must take root at the community level.

Food systems can be powerful levers for change, providing significant opportunities to elevate social, environmental, and economic equity for all. As such, Food Vision 2030 is being designed around the following three goals:

Goal 1: Cultivate Justice

In the food system, healthy food access, food and farm labor, and land and business ownership are all divided along racial lines. Communities of color experience the highest rates of poverty, food insecurity, and diet-related illness; receive low wages and have few labor protections; and experience significant disparities in land and business ownership.

Through Food Vision 2030, we have an opportunity to reverse these trends. We can elevate opportunities for healthy food access, ownership, and power across Black, Indigenous, and people of color in San Diego County. We can create a more just food system—one that belongs to all of us.

Goal 2: Fight Climate Change

One of the greatest impacts of climate change is connected to how we grow, move, eat, and waste food. Our industrial food system relies heavily on energy from fossil fuels, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, and monoculture farming. It also produces a significant amount of waste. As a result of these practices, human health, soil health, and environmental health have been degraded for nearly a century. These same practices continue to accelerate climate change, causing droughts, fires, and other extreme weather patterns, and threatening farmer livelihoods and food security.

Through Food Vision 2030, we have an opportunity to slow down, adapt, and prepare for climate change. We can invest in climate-friendly agriculture, zero waste initiatives, and community-based food systems in San Diego County. We can fight climate change and create a more sustainable food system.

Goal 3: Build Resilience

In the food system, industrial agriculture, long supply chains, and consolidation of power have compromised the health and sustainability of people and the planet. Now, in the face of increasing natural disasters, public health crises, and growing inequalities, the highly concentrated industrial food system is exposing deep vulnerabilities and threatening the resiliency of people, cultures, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Through Food Vision 2030, we have an opportunity to better prepare for and adapt to shocks in our food system. We can cultivate diverse local and regional economies, build shorter, fairer, and cleaner food supply chains, and create stronger safety nets. We can heal relationships with the earth and one another. We can create a resilient food system that is capable of nourishing us today and for generations to come.

Food Vision 2030 is being developed over 18 months with extensive community and stakeholder input, and will be presented in March 2021 as a common agenda for the next decade.

Learn more at [sdfoodvision2030.org](#).





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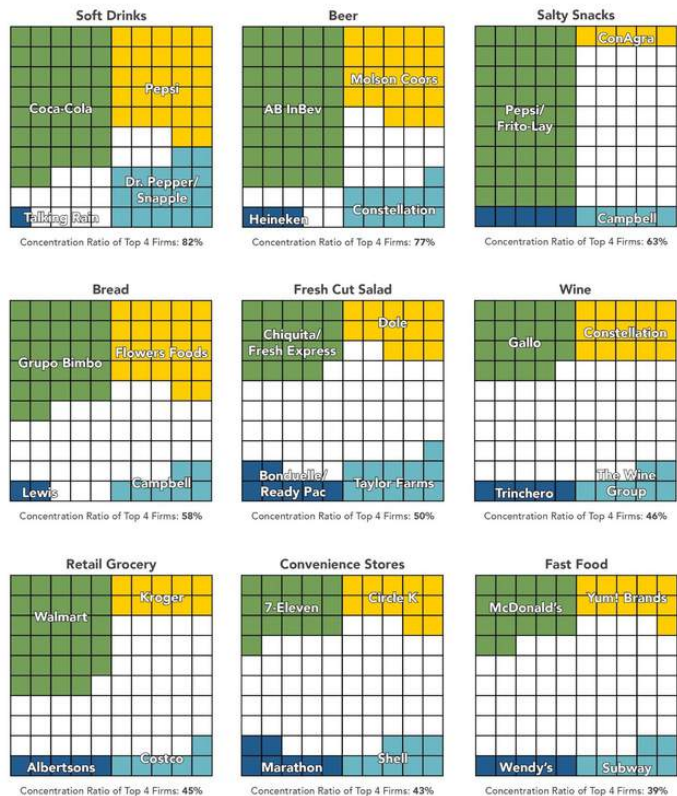
Making the Case for Community Wealth Building

Food systems can be powerful levers for change, providing significant opportunities to elevate social, environmental, and economic equity for all. On the other hand, San Diego County’s food system is—like every other food system in America—largely dependent on corporate-controlled foodways. We are culturally conditioned to favor “cheap food” while denying the significant environmental and labor costs absorbed upstream. We perpetuate underlying structural inequities that keep land and power out of the hands of marginalized communities and communities of color over generations. Deeply rooted issues in our food system have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the food system, industrial agriculture, long supply chains, and consolidation of power have been common since the 1950s. Philip H. Howard’s pioneering work on the concentration of ownership, wealth, and power among food system businesses shows that “just a few companies dominate almost all aspects of food production.” For example, four corporations control 82% of the market for soft drinks in the United States; 50% of the market for fresh cut salad; and 45% of retail grocery stores (Figure 1). Further, 20 percent of farms control nearly 70 percent of US farmland, four meatpackers slaughter 85 percent of beef, and four companies control 63 percent of the retail market. Compounded by increasing natural disasters, public health crises, and growing inequalities, the highly concentrated industrial food system perpetuates deep vulnerabilities and threatens the resiliency of people, cultures, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Community wealth building models, on the other hand, foster collaborative, inclusive, and local control over businesses, housing, and land use decisions. They have the capacity to directly address pressing social issues by building power and generating opportunities for the most vulnerable members of our society. For example, the Mondragón region of Spain has 96 cooperatives that collectively employ over 70,000 people. While the COVID-19 pandemic spiked unemployment and food insecurity around the world—and Wall Street earnings and shareholder dividends simultaneously soared—the Mondragón cooperatives were able to protect workers, precisely because they were engineered “to preserve paychecks.”<sup>1</sup> However, despite the promise of—or perhaps because of the promise of—creating more inclusive, equitable, and democratic systems, community wealth building models continue to be considered “alternative” or “non-traditional” solutions for social and economic issues.

Figure 1: U.S. Market Concentration for Selected Food Industries



Source: Mary K. Hendrickson, Philip H. Howard, Emily M. Miller, and Douglas H. Constance, 2020, The Food System: Concentration and its Impacts, Family Farm Action Alliance

<sup>1</sup> Peter S. Goodman, December 29, 2020, Co-ops in Spain’s Basque Region Soften Capitalism’s Rough Edges,” The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/business/cooperatives-basque-spain-economy.html>.

Community Wealth Building Models

Community wealth building models require changes in how we define work, ownership, and public goods, function within our communities, and measure progress. As Matthew Cropp, Co-Executive Director of the [Vermont Employee Ownership Center](#) puts it, “Food can soften radical agendas.” And so we explore opportunities to normalize community wealth building models in the context of San Diego County’s food system. Our research focuses on four models of local, broad-based ownership: cooperatives, community land trusts, equitable-food oriented development, and employee stock ownership plans (Table 1).

**Community wealth building models, including** cooperatives, land trusts, EFODs, and employee stock ownership plans, are key strategies for reimagining and reconfiguring our food system and local economy. More than 216,000 people are employed in San Diego’s food system as farmers, fishermen, grocery clerks, bakers, servers, chefs, delivery drivers, and much more. San Diego County has more than 21,000 food system businesses, including 5,000 farms, nurseries or greenhouses; over 13,000 retail food businesses; and 1,100 food processors or manufacturers (mainly bakeries and breweries). San Diego County food system businesses make up 4% of all San Diego County businesses (this percentage does not include farms).

Our interviews with food systems stakeholders and community wealth building experts, survey results, and data analysis have highlighted key barriers to community wealth building in San Diego County. They have also shown us that San Diegans are increasingly aware of the fragility of our food system and the need to not revert back to business as usual, but build a better and more resilient food system. However, despite the scale of San Diego’s food system, community-wealth building models are relatively rare within the county.

**Food cooperatives are familiar enterprises in** many parts of America, but less so in Southern California and San Diego County. Food

cooperatives can be owned by workers, consumers, or producers who share in the risks and rewards collectively. San Diego County has one existing consumer cooperative ([Ocean Beach People’s Organic Food Market](#)) that has struggled with maintaining membership as organic products have become more widespread in traditional grocery stores, and one emerging consumer cooperative ([Suncoast Market Co-op](#)) that has slowly built membership through education and outreach efforts. [FruitCraft](#), a cooperative distillery established in 2009, considers itself a social value cooperative, which is owned by its workers, consumers, and investors and whose voting influence is reflective of the social value they contribute to the company through work,



volunteering, or promotional efforts. San Diego County also has a few very small worker and producer cooperatives that emerged recently, including [Foodshed](#), a producer cooperative, and [Pixca Farms](#), a worker cooperative.

**Community land trusts, whether focused on** mixed-used development or agriculture, are also owned by members who acquire and manage land or property in perpetuity. San Diego County has a Community Land Trust but not an Agricultural Land Trust. Community land trusts, especially in urban settings like San Diego, are in direct competition with speculation, development pressure, and well-financed market-rate real estate developers. The need for

community land trusts is obvious: the cost of living in San Diego County is exorbitant and land in agriculture has dramatically decreased.

**Equitable-food oriented developments (EFOD)** are a relatively new strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities and healthy neighborhoods for historically marginalized communities. The key feature of EFODs is that they are built out of resident-driven enterprises. [Project New Village](#) is the primary example of an EFOD in San Diego County.

**Employee stock ownership models are fairly** common in food businesses throughout America but less so in Southern California and San Diego

County. Employee ownership often reflects a logical extension from a company’s existing values and culture and thoughtful succession planning. [Modern Times Beer](#) is the most prominent example of employee ownership in San Diego County, and the first employee owned brewery in California.

All of these models require ongoing education, training, and capacity building.

Table I: Community Wealth Building Models

Model	Definition	Food Systems Examples	
Cooperative	Autonomous association of people united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.		
Worker Cooperative	Directly and wholly-owned by the employee owners, who share in profits and elect/serve on the Board of Directors; one of the fastest growing segments of cooperatively owned businesses.	San Diego County <a href="#">Solidarity Farm</a> <a href="#">Pixca Farm</a> <a href="#">Fruitcraft</a> (social value cooperative)	National <a href="#">Alvarado Street Bakery</a> <a href="#">Equal Exchange</a> <a href="#">Rainbow Grocery</a> <a href="#">Flying V Farm</a> <a href="#">Mandela Grocery</a>
Consumer Cooperative	Owned by customers for their mutual benefit; often oriented toward values and service rather than profit; often take the form of retail outlets owned and operated by their consumers; opportunity to supply own needs, gain bargaining power, achieve economies of scale to lower costs, and share earnings (includes service coops and housing coops).	San Diego County <a href="#">Ocean Beach People's Organic Food Market</a> <a href="#">SunCoast Market Co-op</a> <a href="#">San Diego County Credit Union</a> <a href="#">California Coast Credit Union</a>	National <a href="#">REI</a> <a href="#">Self Help Credit Union</a> <a href="#">Frontier Natural Products Co-op</a>
Producer Cooperative	Owned and operated by producers; producers work together and share pooled resources or as separate entities on marketing and production efficiency; organized to process, market, and distribute their own products.	San Diego County <a href="#">Foodshed</a>	National <a href="#">Pacific Coast Producers Farmers' Rice Cooperative</a> <a href="#">Cabot Creamery</a> <a href="#">Sunmaid</a> <a href="#">Blue Diamond Growers</a>
Community Land Trust (CLT)	Nonprofit organizations designed to ensure community stewardship of land; trust acquires land and maintains ownership of it permanently. CLTs use several tools for securing land—conservation easement, deed restriction, fee simple ownership, and ground lease.		

Model	Definition	Food Systems Examples	
Agricultural Land Trust	Nonprofit organizations that work with landowners to conserve land from development by purchasing or accepting donations of property interest, establishing conservation easements, and ensuring ongoing protections and proper land stewardship.	California <a href="#">Minnow</a> (emerging)	National <a href="#">Vermont Land Trust</a> <a href="#">Agrarian Commons</a> <a href="#">Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust</a>
Mixed Use Development Land Trust	Nonprofit organizations that acquire land held in trust for the community in perpetuity to ensure permanent community control and affordability. Uses may include: affordable housing, commercial, retail, and urban agriculture.	San Diego County <a href="#">San Diego Community Land Trust</a>	National <a href="#">Oakland Community Land Trust</a> <a href="#">Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative</a> <a href="#">Madison Area Community Land Trust</a> <a href="#">Berkshire Community Land Trust</a>
Equitable Food-Oriented Development (EFOD)	Development strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities, healthy neighborhoods, and explicitly seeks to build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically marginalized communities.	San Diego County <a href="#">Project New Village</a>	National <a href="#">Mandela Partners</a> <a href="#">Planting Justice</a> <a href="#">Community Services Unlimited</a> <a href="#">The Cooperative Community of New West Jackson</a>
Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOP)	Retirement plans that own all or part of a company on behalf of its employees; most common form of broad based employee ownership in the U.S.	San Diego County <a href="#">Modern Times Beer</a>	National <a href="#">King Arthur Baking Co.</a> <a href="#">Publix Supermarkets</a> <a href="#">Winco Supermarkets</a> <a href="#">Clif Bar</a> <a href="#">Bob's Red Mill</a>
Employee Ownership Trust	A <a href="#">perpetual trust</a> that holds the stock of a company for the benefit of employees; employees receive a profit share but do not receive an equity stake in the company.		National <a href="#">Organically Grown Company</a> (former ESOP)



# Community Wealth Building in San Diego County’s Indigenous Communities

“How does one begin to understand what economies are, who matters in them, what our own place is? These are questions of who holds power, who lacks it, who has a right to ownership, and who remains perpetually dispossessed and powerless.”

—Stephanie Gutierrez, An Indigenous Approach to Community Wealth Building: A Lakota Translation

San Diego County sits on land that was home to several distinct indigenous groups for thousands of years prior to European contact in 1542: Kumeyaay/ Diegueño, Payómkawichum/Luiseño, Cahuilla, and Kuupiaxchem/ Cupeño. The impacts of genocide from European colonization in the Americas were so severe that diseases introduced by the “Columbian Exchange” killed an estimated 90% of the indigenous population.<sup>2</sup> [Policies pursued by the U.S. government](#), including the Indian Removal Act (1830), Dawes Act (1887), Urban Relocation Program (1956) and many other instances of forced removal, violence, and broken treaties played a role in the dismantling of the unique societies—and regional food systems—that had developed over millennia on two continents.

Today, San Diego County is home to 18 tribal communities—the most of any county in America—that live on 4.3% of their ancestral homelands (125,000 acres or 195 square miles). The indigenous population now makes up 1.6% (51,904 people)<sup>3</sup> of the county and experiences a variety of challenges, including suffering the highest rates of death from heart failure and diabetes of any group. The tragedies inflicted on indigenous communities have never been rectified, nationally or here in San Diego, and the resilience of indigenous communities in the face of tremendous adversity is poorly understood in American society. For example, tribal governments do not collect taxes the way other governments can and casinos have consequently been the “most successful and reliable government revenue stream across Indian Country”<sup>4</sup> since the 1970s. San Diego’s indigenous communities are no different in this regard: Nine casinos pay for schools, hospitals, and infrastructure, and accounted for 23% of the jobs of people living on the reservations and over 20,000 jobs to San Diegans prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>5</sup> It may be that this unexpected source, gaming operations, represents the largest example of community wealth building in San Diego County.



Across the country, indigenous communities are taking a community wealth building approach to strengthening their food systems and mitigating climate change. For example, the Native American Agriculture Fund says “For too long, Native producers, communities, Tribes, and regions have not had the infrastructure necessary to create a resilient and thriving regional food system.” Their vision for the future of food and agriculture estimates a price tag of \$3.4 billion to reimagine Native food economies with a series of major infrastructural and educational investments across 10 regions.<sup>6</sup> Within San Diego County, the Pauma and Pala Tribes both operate significant land in citrus and avocados and Pala raises cattle. Pauma Tribal Farms has integrated practices such as compost application, hedgerow installation, no-till, and a transition from row crops to trees to sequester carbon. San Diego County has one emerging food producer co-op: the [Foodshed](#), made up of nine small, diversified producers that are trying to capture more “food dollars” and improve access to healthy food (several of the producers that make up the Foodshed are already worker co-ops). The Foodshed aggregate products first from BIPOC producers and then prioritizes distribution to the Pauma Band and then outward to wholesale and retail customers. They currently distribute to more than 350 families. Southern California’s first tribally-owned brewery, [Rincon Reservation Road Brewery](#), was recently opened by the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians, and the Pala Tribe has a vineyard. Our survey of tribal members during Food Vision 2030’s research phase identified a strong desire for supporting tribal farms and reclaiming cultural and spiritual identities through food sovereignty.

As we expand conversations and opportunities for community wealth building in San Diego’s food system we should keep in mind that, in several respects, community wealth building principles—like cooperation, inclusivity, community and sustainability—are [“really a return to what our ancestors always knew.”](#)<sup>7</sup> Specifically, a powerful lesson to learn is that “community wealth building is the restoration and redevelopment of our community, using a systems approach based on contemporary business models that embody our traditional ways of operating.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Koch, Alexander, Chris Brierley, Mark Maslin, and Simon Lewis, “Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas After 1492,” *Quaternary Science Reviews*, 207(1): 13-36, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.quascirev.2018.12.004>.  
<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau counts 51,904 people (1.6%) of American Indian and Alaska Native race “alone or in combination with one or more other races” and 22,524 people (0.7%) who were American Indian or Alaska Native only. Most indigenous people in San Diego County do not live on reservations.  
<sup>4</sup> Lauren J. Mapp, April 27, 2020, “Tribes Face Cultural, Economic Hardships Amid Coronavirus Stay-Home Orders,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/health/story/2020-04-27/tribes-face-cultural-economic-impacts-amid-coronavirus-stay-at-home-orders>.  
<sup>5</sup> Employment data for November 2020 indicates that San Diego’s “Amusement, Gambling & Recreation” industry is down 10,000 jobs from the previous year.  
<sup>6</sup> Native American Agriculture Fund, 2020, *Reimagining Native Food Economies: A Vision for Native Food and Agriculture Infrastructure Rebuilding and Recovery*, [https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NAAF\\_NativeFoodEcon\\_Spread.pdf](https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/NAAF_NativeFoodEcon_Spread.pdf).  
<sup>7</sup> Gutierrez, Stephanie, November 2018, *Community Wealth Building: A Lakota Translation*, <https://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/CommunityWealthBuildingALakotaTranslation-final-web.pdf>.  
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



# Research Methodology

To develop Food Vision 2030 and this report, the San Diego Food System Alliance (SDFSA) interviewed approximately 100 key stakeholders, analyzed dozens of datasets and developed more than 100 population indicators (e.g., indicators of disparities in income, wealth and assets by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and geography), engaged with our existing Working Groups, and received over 2,100 unique contributions from community surveys. Our interviews asked about strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within each category of the food system (e.g., food production; food processing and manufacturing) as well as issues specific to certain underserved communities (e.g., indigenous communities). In this general research we were not probing for detailed information about co-ops, employee ownership, EFODs, or land trusts, but these topics—and other related topics—naturally came up during interviews.

For example, during interviews with stakeholders we discussed:

- The challenges of operating the one existing consumer cooperative grocery store in San Diego County and the challenges of developing a new cooperative grocery store in Imperial Beach
- A legacy of disinvestment in southeastern San Diego and one organizations’ quest to develop an EFOD
- The [High Roads Kitchen](#) model and efforts to encourage equitable employment practices at restaurants
- The unique educational and training opportunities that place-based learning centers provide for communities (e.g., [Olivewood Gardens’ Kitchenista program](#))
- The tailored and population specific programs offered by [San Diego Workforce Partnership](#), including a new initiative that is looking into funding five transitions to employee ownership (we recommended at least one of those businesses should be a food business)
- The challenges of developing an agricultural land trust in San Diego County
- The challenges of developing a BIPOC-led land project (e.g., [Minnow](#)) focused on preserving farmland, realizing land justice, and building power for people of color in California
- The emergence of a farmer-owned aggregation and distribution hub
- The value of and desire for peer to peer learning opportunities
- The importance of understanding cultural norms when offering business services and technical assistance
- The implications of COVID-19 on San Diego County, including the unprecedented impacts of food system businesses, workers, and BIPOC communities

To flesh out our understanding of these issues and understand community-wealth building challenges, gaps, and opportunities in our regional food system, SDFSA conducted more than a dozen interviews specifically with community wealth building practitioners and service providers. Half of the interviewees were located in San Diego County, including managers of existing or emerging cooperatives, an expert from a financial institution, one ESOP expert, and one cooperative expert.

## Interviews Conducted

- Dian Moss, Project New Village (EFOD)
- Ellee Igoe, Solidarity Farm (Cooperative)
- Grant Ruroede, Escondido Planning (Cooperatives)
- Hilary Abell, Project Equity (ESOPs, EOTs, Cooperatives)
- Jennifer Briggs, Mosaic Creation, Rocky Mountain formerly New Belgium Brewing (ESOPs, Cooperatives)
- Jessie D. Palmer, Nonprofit Attorney (CLTs)
- Jim Kase, Ocean Beach People’s Organic Food Market (Cooperative)
- Kim Blaugher, Beyster Institute (ESOPs)
- Kim Frink and Shannon Ratliff, SunCoast Market Co-op (Cooperative)
- Marjorie Kelly, Democracy Collaborative (Land Banks, Cooperatives, EOTs, Continuum of ownership: Capital, Local, Broad-Based)
- Matthew Cropp and Don Jamison, Vermont Employee Ownership Center
- Neil Thapar and Ricardo Samir Nunez, Sustainable Economies Law Center (CLTs, Cooperatives)
- Rick Lewis, Bay Area CLT (CLTs, Cooperatives)
- Steve Hobbs, Conservation Fund (Financial Institution - Assisting EFOD)
- Tyler MacMillian, Formerly San Francisco Community Land Trust, client includes Northern California Land Trust (CLTs)





## Essential Elements of Ecosystems that Support Community Wealth Building

To complement the expert interviews, SDFSFA conducted research on successful support ecosystems in other regions. No single location has all programs or policies in place that embody a fully supportive environment, and the essential elements of supportive ecosystems go beyond mere business support—they create lasting change through cultivating normative shifts in how a business or community envisions and collectively works towards a more inclusive, equitable, and resilient economy for all.

Community wealth building enterprises face the same challenges as other small businesses or community ventures (e.g., access to appropriate wraparound business services and patient capital). However, because community-wealth building models are still comparatively rare, a substantial uptick in education is often required. For example, financing can be especially challenging as traditional debt underwriting and repayment practices around risk assessment, collateral, guarantees, terms, and amortization do not coincide with start up and transitioning enterprises or values-driven development (e.g., lack of personal guarantees for cooperatives, transition, and capacity building expenses). Community land trusts transfer market rate land into a public good, which requires substantial upfront capital and widespread support to combat better resourced market-based actors. To catalyze and sustain community wealth building, stakeholders (government, philanthropy, financial institutions, nonprofits, and businesses) must work in concert to directly address its unique challenges.



**Business  
Services**



**Education,  
Training, and  
Capacity Building**



**Market Development  
and Infrastructure**



**Policy**

### Essential Elements of Ecosystems that Support Community Wealth Building





Business Services

- Business service organizations (e.g., SBAs, SBDCs, CDFIs, economic and workforce development agencies, and other assistance providers) are educated and trained to offer resources and facilitate connections specific to community wealth building business models.
- Professional development and training are provided by experienced practitioners and community wealth building development and incubation organizations.
  - Mentorship and peer-to peer programs from experienced practitioners are available.
  - Practitioners with expertise (e.g., accounting, legal, human resources) in non-traditional business practices that are accessible to a diversity of entrepreneurs and business owners/workers, scales of operation, and stages of development (e.g., start-up, growth) are readily available.
- Accessible community wealth building business planning and operations education for ongoing skills development are available.
- Businesses or communities pursuing community-wealth building models have access to the entire capital continuum (e.g., debt, equity, grants) and financial institutions, investors, and philanthropic sources have interest in and experience with these non-traditional business models. Support for community capital<sup>9</sup> campaigns such as crowdfunding, peer-to-peer direct lending and mutual aid are evident.
- Organizations dedicated to the development and incubation of community wealth building models are evident (e.g., [California Center for Cooperative Development](#), [Project Equity](#), [Vermont Employee Ownership Center](#)).
- Network with staff and/or funding to serve as a backbone organization dedicated to supporting community wealth building models are available, including dedicated networks that can help mitigate financial risk by serving as loan guarantors (e.g., [Beneficial State Bank](#) accepts dedicated organization guarantors in place of personal guarantees).



Education, Training, and Capacity Building

- Community-based organizations and leaders are integral to growing knowledge, building civic engagement and power, catalyzing momentum and sustaining movement building, especially in areas that lack dedicated organizations. Early and ongoing investment is key as enterprises or development projects pivot throughout their life cycles, and is especially important for community land trust development where community organizing has been powerful in the face of market-rate development or newer models such as EFODs.
- Research, education, and community/ business-facing offerings are available from institutions of higher education and continuing education (e.g. [Beyster Institute](#), [Rutgers Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing](#), [Vermont Law School Center for Agriculture and Food Systems](#)). Higher education institutions can build credibility and serve as bridge builders between disparate stakeholders, and their alumni can shape local opportunities for community wealth building.



Market Development and Infrastructure

- Anchor institutions, government procurement, and community benefit agreements (akin to bid preferences for the [City of New York’s Office of Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises](#) program) are actively strengthening the market viability and growth potential of community wealth building models. Bid and procurement preferences are paired with technical assistance to ensure accessibility and align with existing policies.



Policy

- Accessible business development, operations, and growth tax/fee incentives or exemptions for small, local, BIPOC, women-owned, veteran-owned, and community wealth building enterprises and supporting organizations are available.
- Dedicated funding to support research, conversions, education, technical assistance, and other professional services is available.

Although no single location has all programs or policies in place that embody a fully supportive environment for community-wealth building, many cities and states exemplify several best practices. (Table 2).

- Value chain facilitation and infrastructure development initiatives are linked to connect local community wealth building enterprises with markets (i.e., to strengthen local supply chains).

“Organize a cross sector anchor initiative. Relocalizing purchasing of food is much harder than we think. There are questions around volume to meet demands—you need to build out supply.”

—Marjorie Kelly, Executive Vice President, Democracy Collaborative

- Pro-community wealth building policies such as streamlined, accelerated regulatory and permitting processes, technical assistance to address the complexity and inaccessibility of small business and development services, and living wage and local hiring/contracting requirements are available.
- Policymaker and allied organization partnerships catalyze and sustain policy and systems change with support from community leaders and residents. Community organizing and planning is paired with leadership development to build power, active and informed networks, and broad-based support.

<sup>9</sup> Community capital is investment sourced from a broad spectrum of a community, including both wealthy and non-wealthy investors. While typically defined by geography (like a city or county), it can also be based on a common interest (like education or biodynamics).



Table 2: Community Wealth Building in Practice Across the United States

Cooperatives

Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative

New York, NY

Other emerging ecosystem examples: [Madison, WI](#), [Minneapolis, MN](#)

**Public Seed Funding**

In 2015, the City Council allocated \$1.2 million in discretionary funding for nonprofit and professional service partners to provide cooperative development technical assistance, professional services and financial assistance (\$3.6 million in 2019).

**City-Supported Business Services and Financing ([Working World](#), CDFI)**

The Department of Small Business Services manages the nonprofit and professional service partnerships and aggregates [resources on its website](#).

**Administrative Policy - Local Law 22 (2015)**

Requires the City to monitor the participation of worker cooperatives in businesses that receive city contracts, with an eye for expanding the number of worker cooperatives that do business with the city.

**Growth-Oriented Network**

[NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives](#) is a trade organization increasing public awareness and supporting the development of cooperatives with education and financial and technical assistance.

**Leadership Development and Capacity Building**

[Cooperative Economics Alliance of New York City](#) provides peer-led training, education, and technical assistance as well as policy advocacy.

Evergreen Cooperatives

Cleveland, OH

Other emerging anchor-led examples: [Rochester, NY](#), [Richmond, VA](#)

**Network Development**

The Cleveland Foundation coordinated the Greater University Circle Initiative to bring together city decision-makers, neighborhood and workforce development entities, business accelerator organization and an evaluation partner to address community development issues (2005). To seed interest in community wealth building strategies, the Cleveland Foundation and the Democracy Collaborative led a roundtable for community and economic development stakeholders (2006).

**Philanthropic and Public Seed Funding**

The Cleveland Foundation funded the Democracy Collaborative-led feasibility study and strategy development, which laid the groundwork for broad support (2007). The City of Cleveland catalyzed the first Evergreen Cooperative business with a long-term, low interest loan and facilitation of a New Markets Tax Credit transaction (2009).

Evergreen Cooperatives (continued)

**Anchor Procurement**

Evergreen Cooperative Corporation develops cooperatives to redirect the purchasing power of large institutions for local economic development and community wealth building for low-income communities. Evergreen currently has four cooperatives working with anchors in the Cleveland Greater University Circle (laundry, solar energy, food production, business services). The cooperatives leverage anchor procurement needs and sustainability commitments to ensure market stability.

**Dedicated Organization and Fund**

Evergreen Cooperative Corporation is the nonprofit umbrella company that coordinates the growth of the cooperative network and emerging supportive entities, such as [The Fund for Employee Ownership](#) (ownership conversions with financing and technical assistance) and Evergreen Land Trust. A portion of member cooperative profits is used to support the development of additional supportive entities or other cooperatives.

Equitable Food-Oriented Development

Mandela Partners

Oakland, CA

Other examples: [Food Innovation Network](#), [Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#)

**Diversified Early Stage Funding**

Philanthropic and public funding for start up and leadership development investments

**Community Engagement**

Authentic, well-resourced community engagement as pre-development to ensure strategies are equitable and responsive to existing strengths and assets

**Early and Intentional Capacity Building and Leadership Development**

Training and educational opportunities to prepare stakeholder for transitioning from organizing and planning to implementation and sustainable operation/growth

**Network and Partnership Development**

A diverse, locally rooted set of mission-aligned partners with complementary skills and expertise, with Mandela as the backbone organization

**Financing and Technical Assistance**

Low-to-no cost, flexible and patient public-private financing throughout business development stages and across the value-chain ([Ladder-Up Fund](#), [Harvest to Market](#), [Kiva Microloans](#)), paired with [entrepreneurship training](#)

**Business Incubation**

[Mandela Grocery Cooperative](#) (now independent), Mandela Produce Distribution, Ashland Market and Cafe, Zella’s Soulfood, Oak Harvest Kitchen

**Dedicated Backbone Organization**

Since 2004 Mandela Partners has served as the central nonprofit organization for West Oakland’s food-centric community development initiatives (providing community engagement, fundraising, strategic planning, capacity building)



Employee Stock Ownership Plans, Employee Ownership Trusts, Cooperatives

The State of Vermont

Culture Supports Community-Wealth Building

Food and farm business employee ownership has been successful in Vermont because residents, business owners, and decision-makers value food as community, environmental and economic development. Vermont continues to experience an overall positive trend in worker cooperative implementation because of this cultural value.

Network Development

[Vermont Employee Ownership Center](#) (VEOC) leads direct marketing efforts, leveraging peer examples and strong narrative case studies; Working partnerships and referral systems with financial institutions, peer companies, small business service providers and public leadership and agencies.

Early Adopters and Champions

Vermont’s culture has long supported community-wealth building models; Vermont had high profile values-driven companies, including King Arthur Baking Co. and Gardener’s Supply even before an employee ownership support organization formed; these early adopters are stewards that have inspired other businesses to implement employee ownership models.

Community of Practice

VEOC has received state funding since inception and it has coordinated a COP to build the necessary level of trust for building the case for employee ownership and cooperatives.

Wraparound Services

Outreach and education; Access to capital including VEOC revolving loan fund and referrals to experienced financial institutions; Technical assistance and training for conversions and ongoing education; Facilitation of peer to peer learning

Community Land Trusts

[Madison Area Community Land Trust: Troy Gardens](#)

Madison, WI

Other examples: [Vermont Community Land Trust](#), [Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative](#), [Cooperative Community of New West Jackson](#)

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Troy Gardens Coalition, a diverse group of local nonprofits (anti-poverty, land conservation, affordable housing, planning groups), University of WI, and community members, banded together after the state placed the site on the surplus land list for private development. Community members had been gardening large portions of the undeveloped site for years. Community organizing efforts facilitated development of the final mixed use development and natural areas conservation plan.

City Support

With financial (Community Development Block Grant funds for land acquisition and planning), zoning, and political support of the City of Madison, the state granted MACLT an initial 16 year lease and subsequent 50 year lease with a purchase provision. The City helped MACLT purchase the land only 4 years into its lease. Troy Gardens is now leased and managed by [Rooted!](#) (a merger of 2 original coalition nonprofits).

Madison Area Community Land Trust: Troy Gardens (continued)

Dedicated Partner Organizations

MACLT and Rooted! have served as development and operating backbones throughout the evolution of Troy Gardens. MACLT has in-depth experience as an affordable housing CLT—they were crucial to building acquisition support and financing. Rooted! is a strategically networked education and community development nonprofit with strong university, philanthropic, and community relationships.

Education and Training Programs

Rooted! partners with local nonprofits, schools, government agencies, and University of WI to offer urban farming entrepreneurship training and on-site educational programs for community members.





Understanding the San Diego County Context

More than 216,000 people are employed in San Diego’s food system as farmers, fishermen, grocery clerks, bakers, servers, chefs, delivery drivers, and much more. San Diego County has more than 21,000 food system businesses, including 5,000 farms, nurseries, or greenhouses; over 13,000 retail food businesses; and 1,100 food processors or manufacturers (mainly bakeries and breweries). San Diego County food system businesses make up 4% of all San Diego County businesses (this percentage does not include farms).

Despite the scale of San Diego’s food system, community wealth building models are relatively rare within the county. Our interviews with food systems stakeholders and community wealth building experts, survey results, and data analysis have highlighted key barriers to community wealth building in San Diego County. They have also shown us that San Diegans are increasingly aware of the fragility of our food system and the need to not revert back to business as usual, but to build a better and more resilient food system. Emerging food systems opportunities that elevate historically underserved communities are uniquely positioned drivers for this social and economic transformation. Community wealth building efforts in our food system are the seeds of a movement to redefine the structures and institutions limiting access to opportunities and shared prosperity.

The following section features takeaways from challenges of local community wealth building practitioners and synthesizes opportunities for catalyzing community wealth building in our food system.

Key Barriers to Community Wealth Building in San Diego County

- Community-specific conditions (e.g., cultural and community capital, access to resources and opportunities) enable or constrain success
- Lack of education and awareness of what these models can offer among businesses, producers, or consumers
- Limited local wrap-around business planning, technical assistance, infrastructure development, financing capacity, and education focused on community wealth building and its specific needs/challenges, especially for start up and pre-development stages
- The absence of a dedicated local/regional organization that coordinates and supports development of models (e.g., California has some statewide organizations but given the size of the state they have had limited reach in San Diego County)
- Limited San Diego County proof of concept; limited San Diego County case studies

“The big thing is to get people to picture not only a different future, but themselves in a different future. How are they going to operate? People aren’t used to going into their jobs and having a say, in government, in society at large. Getting people to see themselves in a different way is key.”

–Grant Ruroede, San Diego County-based cooperative expert

Local Examples of Community Wealth Building | Cooperatives



OCEAN BEACH PEOPLE’S ORGANIC MARKET (OCEAN BEACH)  
CONSUMER CO-OP

There is one existing consumer grocery co-op in San Diego County, the [Ocean Beach People’s Organic Market](#). O.B. People’s started in the 1970s as an outgrowth of the hippie movement in a non-conformist community and in stark contrast to San Diego’s reputation for being a military town. In the words of O.B. People’s general manager, Jim Kase, “Co-ops are snowflakes, by and for their communities.” O.B. People’s point of difference is that it only sells certified organic produce and that makes their prices a little higher.

O.B. People’s has lost members since 2014 (generally oscillating between 9,000 to 12,000 active members), but have recently seen an uptick as they have begun modernizing the store. They are experiencing the same tension as other co-ops across the country as organic and healthy food options become more available at mainstream grocery stores: How do they maintain their identity as a co-op but still be relevant, modern, and accessible to people who want their food? The next generation of customers are young people who are familiar with and reliant on technology, but are also very cause-driven. Jim’s observation is that “people want things faster,” so O.B. People’s is starting to think about food delivery and curbside service.



Could there be more consumer grocery co-ops in San Diego County? If so, where? “That’s the question,” Jim ponders. From his point of view, the characteristics that are needed include the unique culture of the community (e.g., Ocean Beach is a walkable, family-oriented community that has somewhat resisted gentrification and corporatization), and there has to be a defined need (e.g., O.B. People’s started as a vegetarian co-op). O.B People’s has considered other locations (and has been approached by other communities), but the challenge of values alignment (e.g., they are dedicated to organic and vegetarian products and other communities want to sell meat products) has prevented that from moving forward to date.

O.B People’s recognizes the power of what National Co-op Grocers can do in terms of lobbying for changes in the food system (e.g., for organics), but feels that cooperatives—since they are rooted in community—need customized business services to really succeed.

**SUNCOAST MARKET CO-OP (IMPERIAL BEACH)  
CONSUMER CO-OP**

Imperial Beach is a community of 27,000 people (mostly BIPOC, lower-income neighborhoods) in southwestern San Diego with limited grocery shopping options. Five years ago, a new grocery store development seemed promising—many Imperial Beach residents petitioned for Trader Joe’s or Sprouts, but instead got a food outlet store and a dollar store. Ultimately, the recognition that getting a full range of healthy groceries in town would be unlikely was what inspired a resident to start a discussion in a Facebook group: “Why don’t we start a co-op?”

Opening a food co-op takes significant fundraising and community support (i.e., businesses and households invest in the co-op by becoming owners). SunCoast will need 1,200+ owners in order to open and was more than halfway there as of December 2020. However, SunCoast organizers have discovered that co-ops are not a familiar, intuitive concept in Southern California. Shannon Ratliff, outreach manager, shared that “We’ve found that it takes a lot of outreach, education and trust-building when opening a co-op, especially in disenfranchised communities. We’d like to see more support for creating co-ops in diverse communities.”

According to Shannon, community members are responding to the idea of keeping local money in the community, supporting good local jobs, and improving access to sustainable food, but the culture is different in Imperial Beach compared to Ocean Beach. And they have seen an ownership growth stall due to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., outreach is difficult because they do most of it in person). However, a side effect of the co-op development process is that SunCoast has built a strong, committed group of community advocates and was able to step up to support small businesses, local farms and high-risk populations with a produce pickup and delivery program in the early months of the pandemic.



**JIMBO'S NATURALLY (4S RANCH, CARLSBAD, CARMEL VALLEY, ESCONDIDO, HORTON PLAZA)  
VALUES-BASED GROCERY STORE**

[Jimbo's](#) is neither a co-op nor employee owned, but it does exemplify the type of store that many people would wish to see in their community. Jimbo’s is very transparent about its commitment to organic food, product labeling, and healthy eating. But even a values-based grocery store like Jimbo’s struggles with the possibility of opening stores in historically disadvantaged communities. “It’s a fine line between us being profitable and providing to the widest audience we can,” according to Dinah Siscon, Director of Administration at Jimbo’s. “The cost of a higher quality of food, for us to be successful, requires us to be affordable for the demographic. How can we support places where we aren’t?”

Jimbo’s has visited options across the county and does have a location downtown (Horton Plaza) because there were no organic grocery shopping options at the time, but this issue represents the fundamental challenge of healthy food access in historically disadvantaged communities.<sup>10</sup>

**FOODSHED (SAN DIEGO COUNTY)  
PRODUCER CO-OP**

San Diego County has one emerging food producer co-op: [Foodshed](#). FoodShed is made up of nine small, diversified producers who are trying to capture more “food dollars” and improve access to healthy food (several of the producers that make up Foodshed are already worker co-ops). Today, less than 15 cents per every food dollar actually makes its way back to producers (the rest goes to packaging, marketing, transportation, and retail). The idea for Foodshed is that 80% of each food dollar goes to the farmer (\$.80/dollar), 5% goes toward regenerative agriculture research and project implementation (\$.05/dollar), and if any profit is earned on the remaining 15% that stays within Foodshed, it is paid back to farmers through profit sharing at the end of each year (\$.15/dollar). The vision of Foodshed is to aggregate products first from BIPOC producers and then prioritize distribution to the Pauma Band and then outward to wholesale and retail customers. They currently distribute to more than 350 families.

Foodshed has received support from a variety of consultants, grassroots donations, and grants from private foundations and local/state/tribal/federal governments that help to offset costs like planning, infrastructure, and farmer-to-farmer mentorship. The key challenges for Foodshed revolve around scaling up the local food supply and acquiring additional philanthropic dollars to support growing staffing and infrastructure needs. As a social impact business, Foodshed will also experience challenges with generating a profit as they seek to balance fair treatment and compensation for farmers with affordable access to healthy food for families in need.



<sup>10</sup> A recent [study](#) from the City of Baltimore’s food retail environment found that grocery stores provide the largest amount of “healthy food availability” compared to small grocery stores, corners stores, and convenience stores, but that these smaller markets were the most common types of markets in lower income and BIPOC communities. Hence, BIPOC and lower income communities need special prioritization to overcome challenges that are historic in nature.



Agricultural Land Trusts

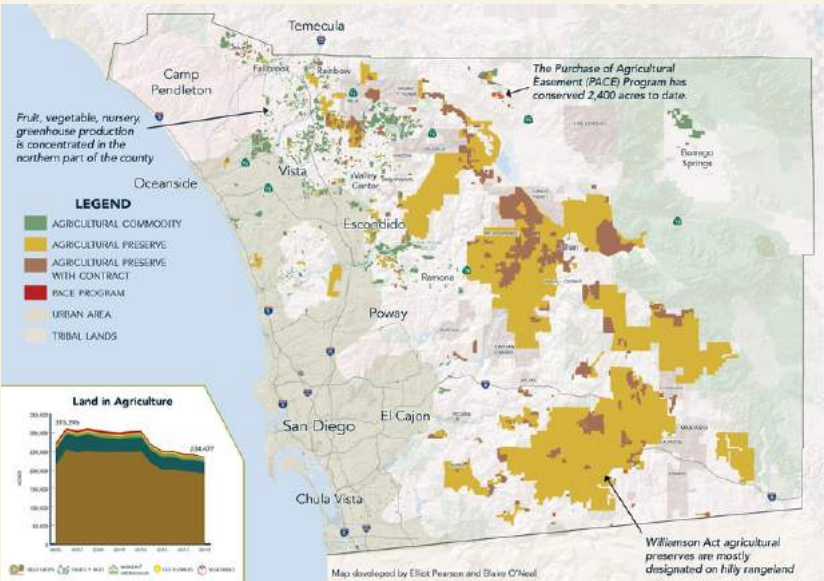
“If we don’t start preserving ag land, there is no future to food production in the region.”

–Steve Hobbs, California State Director, Conservation Fund

There are many potential pathways to preserving land in agriculture, including acquisition of fee title or conservation easement, term protection via deed restrictions, and in lieu fees for acquisition.<sup>11</sup> For example, [California’s Williamson Act Program](#) empowers municipalities to designate agricultural preserves (of at least 100 acres) and enter into 10-year contracts with landowners. The benefit is that land stays in agriculture and landowners receive substantially reduced property tax assessments. Over 406,000 acres, including over 80,000 acres with contracts, are in Williamson Act preserves. As seen on Figure 2, these preserves have been designated mostly on rangeland—and rangeland that may not be in active production—which contributes less than 1% of the value of agricultural sales in San Diego County. The [Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program](#) and a couple of other statewide programs funded by cap-and-trade proceeds are also available to preserve land, but San Diego County has historically received the smallest amount of cap-and-trade funding of any region in California.<sup>12</sup>

The [County of San Diego’s Purchase of Conservation Easement \(PACE\) program](#) has also conserved 2,400 acres of land in agriculture (33 mostly citrus and avocado farms) via perpetual easements since 2013. As with employee ownership, easements tend to come up during succession conversations and the PACE program proactively looks for potential properties. In alignment, with the County of San Diego’s Climate Action Plan, the PACE program has a goal of preserving at least 443 acres per year through 2030 (for a total of 4,370 acres). But with only 1% of land in agriculture currently conserved in PACE it is clear that stronger efforts are required.

Figure 2: U.S. Market Concentration for Selected Food Industries



Sources: County of San Diego Department of Agriculture, Weights, and Measures, Crop Statistics & Annual Report, multiple years. SANDAG, Regional GIS Data Warehouse, AG\_COMMODITY\_2020.zip, Agriculture\_Preserve.zip, Agriculture\_Preserve.zip.

A missing piece of the puzzle in San Diego County is an agricultural land trust. Touring around California, Steve observes that “It’s really behind here. One gets the impression that other places, particularly northern California, have a stronger cultural foundation that values agricultural activity.” Another difference, in Steve’s experience, is that in other parts of California agriculture is more integrated into the larger landscape. Here in San Diego County, agricultural preservation is competitive with land preservation. “That’s unique,” from Steve’s perspective. Practically speaking, then, boosting the importance of agriculture to the future of San Diego—folding the value of growing food back into narratives about the future of San Diego—must work in tandem with the creation of an agricultural land trust. The [Vermont Land Trust](#) (VLT), which has conserved about 11% of the state’s land area, provides one instructive example: in 2019-2020, VLT’s budget of \$16,087,596 was generated from government support (49%, from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, a statewide agency, with matching funds from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service), individuals and businesses (32%, including over 3,500 members), foundations (13%), and investment returns (6%).

FROM DISPARITY TO PARITY

Farmers experience any number of daily economic, ecological, and regulatory challenges, but we know that BIPOC, socially disadvantaged, young, and beginning farmers experience significant disparities finding and affording quality farmland, and securing land tenure<sup>13</sup>, dramatically limiting opportunities for community wealth building, power, and leadership. After all, American society, our economy, and our food system were built from the enslavement of 12.5 million African people during the Transatlantic slave trade and the conquest of the continent. For example, the introduction of sugar slavery—“white gold”—drove trade in goods and people, fueled the wealth of European nations and, for the British in particular, shored up the financing of their North American colonies.<sup>14</sup> After the Civil War, the number of Black farmers is estimated to have peaked in the 1910s, with 200,000 farmers operating an estimated 20 million acres, mostly in the South.<sup>15</sup> Reporting by The Atlantic revealed that losses of land operated by Black producers—dubbed the “Great Land Robbery”—occurred through legal mechanisms (e.g., tax sales) that stemmed from illegal pressures (e.g., discrimination from funders): “Major audits and investigations of the USDA have found that illegal pressures levied through its loan programs created massive transfers of wealth from black to white farmers, especially in the period just after the 1950s. In 1965, the United States Commission on Civil Rights uncovered blatant and dramatic racial differences in the level of federal investment in farmers.”<sup>16</sup> Today, Black Americans make up 12.3% of the U.S. population but only 1.3% of producers and operate only 1.7% of U.S. farms and 0.5% of land in agriculture. It is no coincidence that the [USDA’s own maps](#) show that areas of the country where farmers make comparatively little money—the South, Navajo Nation, Cherokee Nation, along the Mexican border—are areas with concentrations of Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic farmers.

Hispanic people, California’s largest ethnic population, make up about 39% of the state’s population but only 12% of producers and operate only 16% of farms and 12% of land in agriculture. In recognition of the fact that “California’s farmers and ranchers are made up of a diverse group of people, and not all have historically had access to resources and information in order to successfully run their businesses,” the state of California passed the Farmer Equity Act in 2017, which requires the California Department of Food and Agriculture to improve programs, policies, and communication for BIPOC and socially disadvantaged producers. A legislative report on the Farmer Equity Act identified four major challenges—land tenure, language barriers, BIPOC representation on agricultural industry boards and commissions, and access to available resources and programs—and provided recommendations for overcoming these challenges.

That is why there is growing awareness and energy behind the movement from [disparity to parity](#) for BIPOC and socially disadvantaged producers. State and federal policy, like California’s Farmer Equity Act or U.S. Senator Cory Booker’s proposed [Justice for Black Farmers Act](#), attempt to mitigate historic grievances. The Justice for Black Farmers Act would allocate \$8 billion to buy agricultural land and grant it to Black producers. The [Native American Agriculture Fund](#), a philanthropy dedicated to funding Indigenous producers, says “For too long, Native producers, communities, Tribes, and regions have not had the infrastructure necessary to create a resilient and thriving regional food system.” Their vision for the future of food and agriculture estimates a price tag of \$3.4 billion to reimagine Native food economies with a series of major infrastructural and educational investments across 10 regions. Several land trusts have emerged to specifically serve BIPOC producers. The [Black](#)

<sup>10</sup> A recent [study](#) from the City of Baltimore’s food retail environment found that grocery stores provide the largest amount of “healthy food availability” compared to small grocery stores, corners stores, and convenience stores, but that these smaller markets were the most common types of markets in lower income and BIPOC communities. Hence, BIPOC and lower income communities need special prioritization to overcome challenges that are historic in nature.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammed, Khalil Gibran, August 14, 2019, “The Sugar That Saturates the American Diet Has a Barbaric History as the ‘White Gold’ That Fueled Slavery,” The New York Times Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/sugar-slave-trade-slavery.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Philpott, Tom, November 19, 2020, “Black Farmers Have Been Robbed of Land. A New Bill Would Give Them a “Quantum Leap” Toward Justice,” Mother Jones, <https://www.motherjones.com/food/2020/11/black-farmers-have-been-robbed-of-land-a-new-bill-would-give-them-a-quantum-leap-toward-justice/>.

<sup>16</sup> Newkirk II, Vann R., September 29, 2019, “The Great Land Robbery,” The Atlantic, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/09/this-land-was-our-land/594742/>.



[Family Land Trust](#) is a North Carolina-based land trust dedicated to preservation of Black landowner assets, including farms and forests. [Minnow](#) is a nascent effort in California to develop a BIPOC-led agricultural trust.

Interestingly, while San Diego County has the largest number of White farmers of any county in California (7,835), it also has the most relatively diverse producers in the state: San Diego County ranks 3rd for the number of Hispanic producers (1,121); 4th highest for the number of Asian American producers (384); and it has the highest number of producers from more than one race (173), Indigenous producers (106), Native Hawaiian or Polynesian producers (55), Black producers (44), and female producers (3,501). Hispanic people make up 33.5% of San Diego County’s population and operate 26.7% of land in agriculture, the *second* highest percentage of any county in California. Building from these unique characteristics of agriculture in San Diego County is one of the opportunities for cultivating justice and building resilience for the next generation of farmers.

Equitable Food-Oriented Development

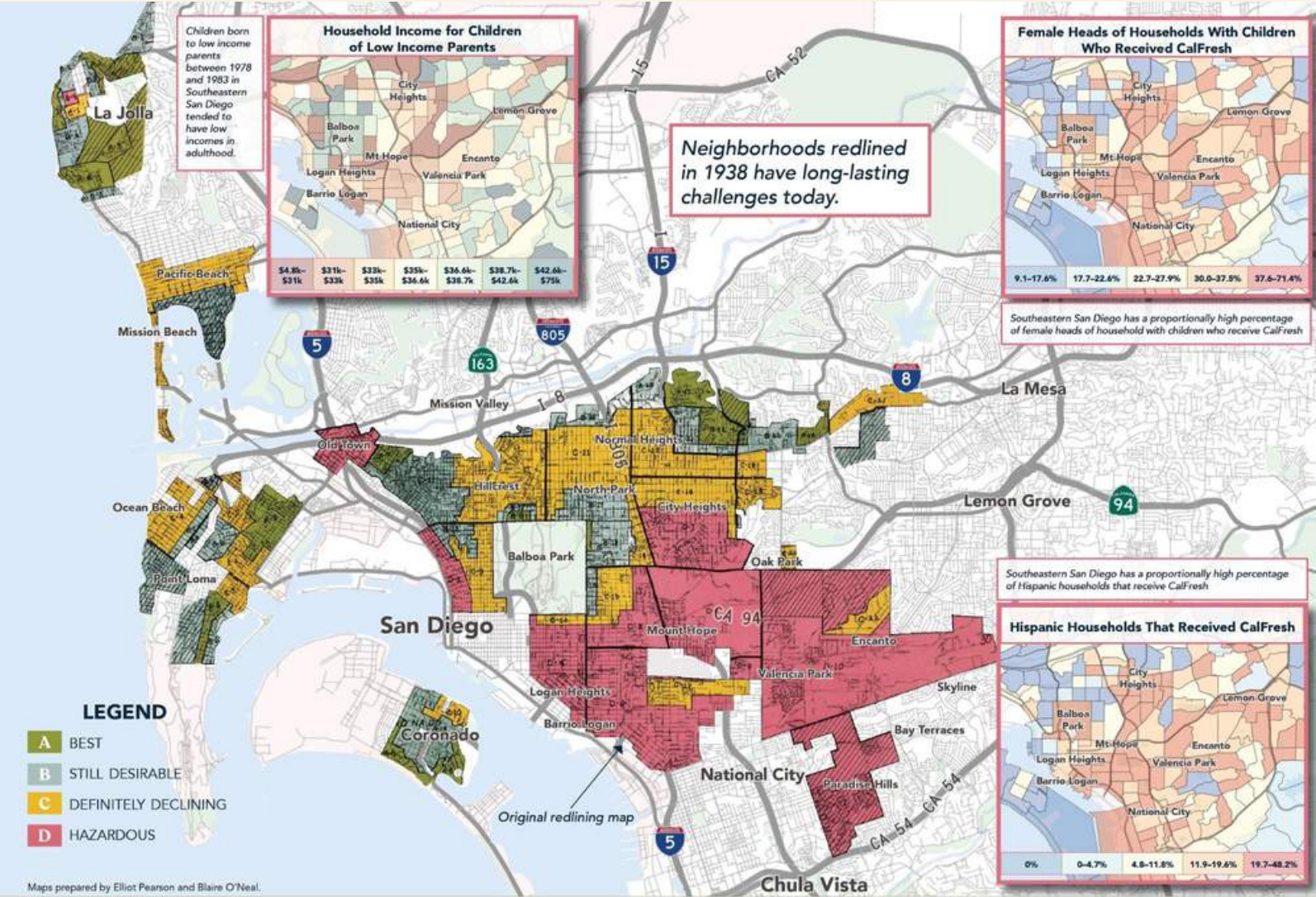
Between 1935 and 1940, the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation assigned grades to neighborhoods in cities across America. Areas that received the lowest grade, “D,” were colored red and deemed “hazardous.” For example, notes for East San Diego included “There is no concentration of any foreign element. However, many Mexicans scattered throughout the area.” “Redlining,” then, was a mechanism for making it difficult or impossible for BIPOC families in certain areas to access mortgage financing to become homeowners. The consequences of redlining have echoed through the past 80 years and are visible in wealth inequalities we see today, particularly in southeastern San Diego.

Historic, durable inequality is found in virtually every dataset that measures demographics. For example, the Opportunity Atlas measures the average



outcomes of children born between 1978 and 1983 who grew up in each neighborhood in America. The results show dramatic results based on where people were raised. For example, children—especially Hispanic and Black children—raised in southeastern San Diego by low income parents were likely to have low income as adults (Figure 3). Within San Diego County, Asian Americans and White Americans have higher median incomes than other racial or ethnic categories. In fact, the median income for the most recent 5-year period (2013-2018) for Asian and White San Diegans was about \$30,000 larger than for Hispanic or Black Americans. BIPOC San Diegans receive CalFresh benefits disproportionately to their size of the county's population. For example, Hispanic San Diegans make up 26% of the county's population but 49% of CalFresh recipients. Black San Diegans make up 5% of the County's population but 11% of CalFresh recipients. The list goes on.

Figure 3: The Legacy of Redlining Limits Opportunities to San Diegans







“I want the convenience of getting my food just like everybody else.”

—Dian Moss, Managing Director, Project New Village

**PROJECT NEW VILLAGE  
EQUITABLE FOOD-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (EFOD)**

In one historically Black neighborhood, the [Mt. Hope Community Garden](#) is one of the few Black community growing spaces. In the words of Dian Moss, “It’s a spiritual thing. And it’s a resilience effort—create your own system. It’s nice to be outside when you don’t have that much connection to nature.” Dian is the Managing Director of [Project New Village](#), an effort to take urban agriculture to the next level—a holistic place-making effort to fight gentrification and improve healthy food access.

Project New Village is essentially an investment in infrastructure—a “Good Food District,” as they call it—which will consist of a building with a public market, community spaces, a shared kitchen, health clinic, senior apartments, and a garden space. Project New Village had no experience fundraising at the level that they need to and consequently has received extensive business support. To date, they have purchased the land where the Good Food District will be built, invested in cold storage infrastructure, and are pursuing a mobile market.

The key challenges for Project New Village as they develop the Good Food District will be financing, business planning, and operationalizing the multi-million-dollar project. Building equitable food-oriented development projects does not have the same return on investment as conventional development projects, so it will be a challenge to find mission-aligned funders and investors who understand the return on social capital and wealth building for BIPOC communities in southeastern San Diego.

**Employee Stock Ownership Plan**



**MODERN TIMES (SAN DIEGO COUNTY)  
EMPLOYEE-OWNED BREWERY**

In 2017, [Modern Times](#) became the first brewery in California to become employee owned (i.e., 30% of Modern Times is held in an employee stock ownership plan). “This is my single proudest achievement as Founder & CEO of Modern Times,” wrote majority owner Jacob McKean. McKean said that the transition to employee ownership ticked all of the boxes for him: values alignment, employee retention, setting an example for others, excellent return on investment, tax benefits, and building an ownership culture that will succeed him when he’s ready to move on.

And Modern Times made the transition in a way that ticked all of the boxes for service providers like the Vermont Employee Ownership Center (VEOC). VEOC played no role in Modern Times transition, of course, but the organization has substantial experience building a supportive ecosystem for employee ownership. From VEOC’s perspective, getting the ear of business advisors is key to employee ownership to be picked up as a succession tool (Modern Times worked with several advisors, including one based in Southern California, that made the ESOP transaction possible). Additionally, peer examples—including becoming a peer example within the craft beer industry—and access to patient capital are vital. Going forward, it’s clear that Modern Times can serve as a foundational example for transitioning more food system businesses to employee ownership.





### Recommendations for Expanding Community Wealth Building in San Diego County’s Food System

Community wealth building models, including cooperatives, land trusts, EFODs, and employee stock ownership plans, are key strategies for reimagining and reconfiguring our food system and local economy. Our Food Vision 2030 goals to **Cultivate Justice**, **Fight Climate Change**, and **Build Resilience** aim to increase health and wealth for BIPOC communities, build leadership and power to nurture community-led change, proactively address climate change, and create an adaptive local economy. The pathway to creating a more just, healthy, and sustainable food system requires a holistic approach with targeted strategies to democratically build individual and community wealth and assets, ensuring that all people have the opportunity to thrive.

#### Build the case for community wealth building

##### Mobilize network and coordinate actions (e.g., policies and programs) to build the case for community wealth building

- Identify partners whose work is aligned with community wealth building strategies and assess prospective roles, including community organizing, leadership development, and capacity building groups
- Build partnerships with values-driven business networks (e.g., social enterprise and corporate social responsibility organizations such as [B Corps](#), [Business for Good San Diego](#), [1% for the Planet](#), and [Mission Edge Social Accelerator and Impact Lab](#))

##### Build a movement that uplifts a local, sustainable, and equitable food system

- Mobilize network and coordinate actions (e.g., content development and programs) to create educational campaigns for food system businesses that elevate community-wealth building models (e.g., through webinars, resource lists, presentations, events), with special attention paid to developing resources for socially disadvantaged and BIPOC communities, and veterans.
- Seed a new generation of community wealth building practitioners and advocates by integrating community wealth building education and training opportunities into educational program offerings, curricula, internships and workforce development initiatives

##### Generate supporting research

- Work with city and county decisionmakers, researchers and organizations (e.g., Project Equity) to assess succession opportunities and measure capital leakage of food system businesses
- Measure the potential of our shared assets by analyzing underutilized and vacant land within San Diego County, including public and private ownership, to encourage equitable food oriented development, urban agriculture or other community-driven development (e.g. faith-based organizations are exploring supportive and affordable housing on dormant properties)

#### Infuse community wealth building into business support services

##### Expand food system business support services

- Incorporate community-wealth building models in wrap-around business planning, technical assistance, infrastructure development, financing capacity, education, and research services to meet the needs of food entrepreneurs and businesses, especially those owned by and/or serving socially disadvantaged, BIPOC individuals, and veterans
- Create opportunities for peer to peer example sharing across San Diego County’s food system network to build awareness of community-wealth building options and establish a mentorship program matching emerging community wealth enterprises with experienced practitioners such as Mandela Grocery Cooperative or Ocean Beach People’s Organic Food Market
- Explore creative public-private investments to mitigate perceived risk of alternative business and ownership models, leveraging existing funder networks (e.g. CDFIs, [San Diego Grantmakers’ San Diego Impact Investors Network](#)) and case studies (e.g. [Mandela Partners’ Ladder-Up Fund](#) with [California FreshWorks](#))
- Coordinate value chain facilitation services to connect local producers with local markets and strengthen local food supply chains (e.g. food manufacturers to anchors, farms to restaurants and schools), prioritizing cooperatives, EFODs, and employee owned companies
- Partner with San Diego Workforce Partnership, Project Equity, Beyster Institute, and SDFSA network members to successfully complete a cooperative, ESOP, or EOT conversion of an existing food business



Improve community food environments

Mobilize network and coordinate actions (e.g., policies and programs) to improve community food environments

- Increase financial incentives (e.g., Good Food zones) to support business development--with a particular focus on community wealth building models--for BIPOC, socially disadvantaged, and veteran communities
- Through policy, encourage the retention, establishment, and growth of healthy food options; discourage the over concentration of fast food, liquor, and convenience stores in food deserts
- Increase municipal and public housing agency support for agriculture and food access infrastructure (urban, rural, suburban) including retail and processing through streamlining policies, providing incentives, and technical assistance

Preserve agricultural land and soils

Develop an agricultural land trust in San Diego County

Scale up land conservation through existing programs (e.g., through PACE, SALC, the Conservation Fund)

- Expand easements, agricultural land use planning, and acquire agricultural land through conservation financing

Transform community wealth building strategies into pillars of resilient local economies

Generate county and municipal support for community wealth building Leverage the SDFSA network, workforce and economic development leadership, and other organizations (e.g., Beyster Institute/UCSD)

Conduct a community-wealth building policy and political landscape assessment

- Conduct a community wealth building policy and political landscape assessment (e.g. local implementation of AB 857 public banks and SB 196 community land trust property taxes, Community Development Block Grants to support enterprise creation or transitions, or mirroring of the ESOP capital gains tax exemptions for worker ownership transitions) and examine statewide policy partnership opportunities for greater reach and collective impact



Reports and Resources Reviewed

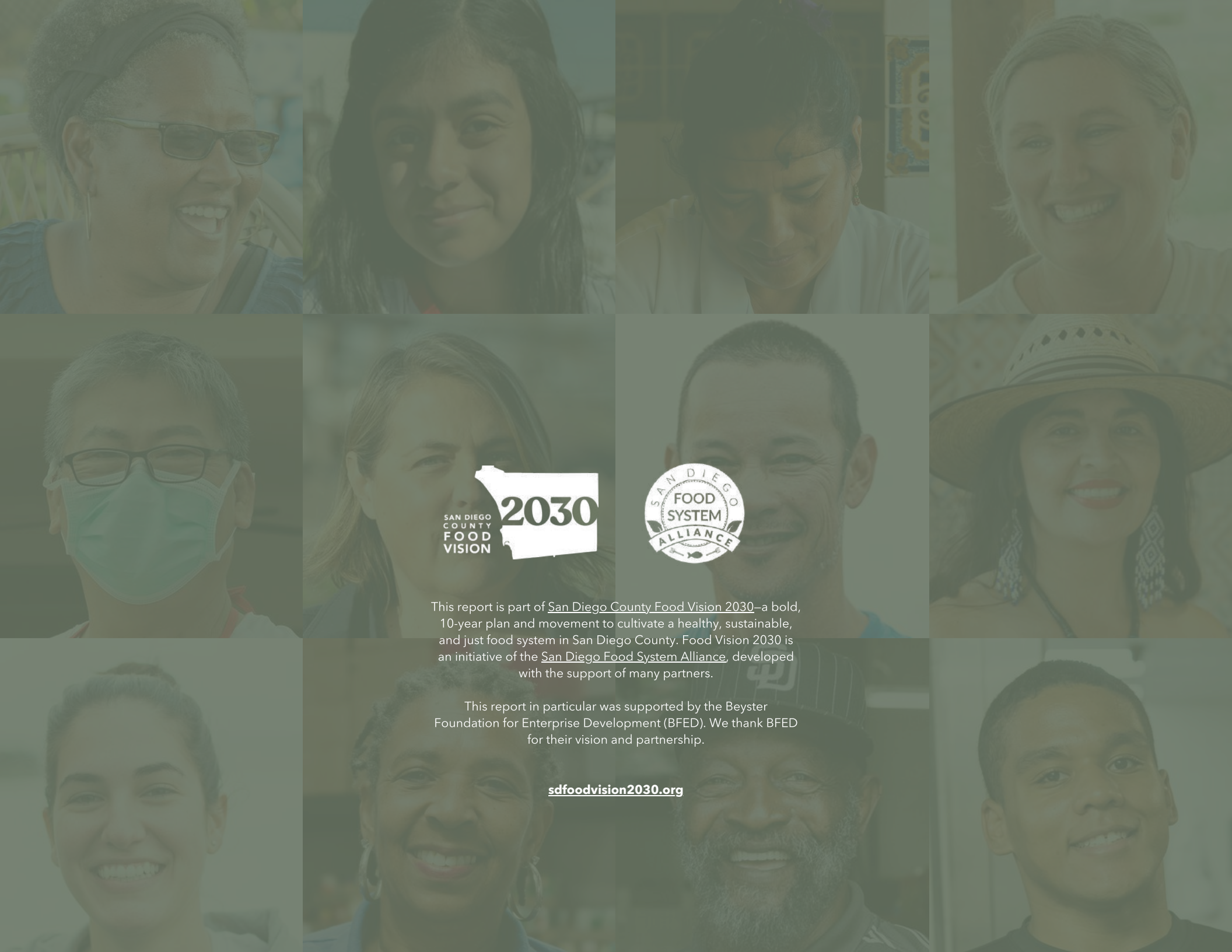
REPORTS

- [“Beyond Housing: Urban Agriculture and Commercial Development by Community Land Trusts,”](#) Lincoln Land Institute
- [“Cities Developing Worker Co-op: Efforts in 10 Cities,”](#) Imagined Economies Project
- [“City-CLT Partnerships - In Search of Best Practices,”](#) Burlington Associates in Community Development
- [“City Farms on CLTs: How Community Land Trusts Are Supporting Urban Agriculture,”](#) Lincoln Institute of Land Policy
- [“Conserving California’s Harvest,”](#) California Council of Land Trusts
- [“Cooperative Cities: Municipal Support for Worker Cooperatives in the United States,”](#) University of Illinois Chicago
- [“Employee Ownership: Building a Better American Economy,”](#) National Center for Employee Ownership
- [“Equitable Food Oriented Development Brown Paper,”](#) The EFOD Collaborative
- [“How Cooperatives Scale: Another World is Possible,”](#) California Cooperative Development Center Webinar by Grant Ruroede and Kirk Vartan
- [“Keeping Wealth Local: Shared Ownership and Wealth Control for Rural Communities,”](#) Marjorie Kelly
- [“Municipal Policies for Community Wealth Building,”](#) NYC Department of Consumer Affairs
- [“Organizing and the Community Land Trust Model,”](#) Shelterforce
- [“The Cleveland Evergreen Cooperatives Building Community Wealth through Worker-Owned Businesses,”](#) Institute for Sustainable Communities
- [“Transforming West Oakland: A Case Study Series on Mandela MarketPlace,”](#) PolicyLink

RESOURCES

- [California Center for Cooperative Development](#)
- [Community-Wealth.org](#) (Democracy Collaborative)
- [Community Groundworks](#)
- Democracy at Work Institute ([multiple publications](#) and [resource pages](#))
- [Equity Trust](#)
- [Farmland Access Legal Toolkit](#), VT Law School Center for Agriculture and Food Systems
- [Grounded Solutions Network](#)
- [Land Trust Alliance](#)
- [National Coalition for Community Capital](#)
- Project Equity ([multiple publications](#) and [resource pages](#))
- [Schumacher Center for New Economics](#)
- [Sustainable Economies Law Center](#)





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