Global Forum for Social and Solidarity Economy

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LOCAL SSE POLICIES ENABLING THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION

AN INTERNATIONAL COLLECTION OF 17 WORKING PAPERS

GSEF RESEARCH WORKING GROUP

WORKING PAPER

Community Wealth Building for Democratic Renewal and Economic System Change: Examples from the United States

Sarah McKinley, Nairuti Shastry (United States of America)

Local SSE Policies enabling Socio-Ecological Transition brings together seventeen working papers in response to a call for papers launched by the GSEF's Research Working Group.

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This multilingual collection brings together texts written in English, Spanish, and French, and highlights the processes of (co-)constructing local policies through experiences of institutionalizing the social and solidarity economy, which sometimes involve collaboration with actors in the field and sometimes political appropriation.

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Community Wealth Building for Democratic Renewal and Economic System Change: Examples from the United States

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Now more than ever, it is clear that our political economic system is in crisis and that the economy is not working for the vast majority of us. While an ever-shrinking elite amasses dazzling levels of wealth, more and more everyday people are grappling with rising costs of living, decaying infrastructure, underfunded social services, and increasingly volatile environmental conditions. Ecosystem collapse, extreme inequality, mass migration, social atomization, political polarization, rising fascism, and war are all symptoms of intertwining crises driven by an economy rooted in extraction: extraction of land, labor, and capital. Trumpism – and global reactionary populism broadly – is the most obvious manifestation of this.

This should come as no surprise. No matter who has occupied the White House or had control over Congress, vital indicators of economic, social, and democratic health have shown little improvement or, in many cases, substantial deterioration since at least the 1970s. On everything from racial wealth inequality to maternal mortality rates, labor's share of income, incarceration rates to life expectancy, the data paint a grim picture. Real wages for non-supervisory employees have remained stagnant since the 1970s, though productivity has steadily risen. Meanwhile, the cost of homeownership and higher education has skyrocketed, squeezing household budgets ever tighter and contributing to growing (and increasingly unserviceable) consumer debt.[1] Lack of confidence in our governing institutions and the politics around them is an inevitable outcome as our increasingly unequal economy undermines the legitimacy of representative democracy.

[1] The Democracy Collaborative, *Index of Systemic Trends, 2024 Second Edition* (Shaker Heights, OH, 2024), Index-of-Systemic-Trends-rd1-7.pdf

The latest iteration of Trump's presidency has torn off any remaining veil around this systemic crisis. Yet while Trumpism is a reaction to the failures of the neoliberal world order, the actions of his administration further entrench the massive wealth disparities this system has enabled while decisively eroding any protections put in place to offset its damages. From slashing the state's ability to govern,[2] targeting programs focused on equity and inclusion, creating global market chaos through tariff wars[3] to the continued undermining of the rule of law and deliberate attacks on human rights standards,[4] we are witnessing an even clearer funneling upward and an intentional bulwarking of the plutocracy.

It is a dangerous moment. Yet, as with any crisis, there is opportunity in the chaos. This moment shows us that social democratic and liberal redistributive strategies of regulation and ameliorative social spending "after the fact" are no longer fit to purpose and wholly insufficient for responding to polycrises. Leading thinkers across disciplines have long been advocating for fundamental restructuring of the institutions of our economic system to produce more equitable and sustainable outcomes by design.[5] And, more importantly, practitioners and community activists the world over have long been experimenting with more social, solidaristic, and cooperative ways of meeting local needs rooted in self-determination and collective wellbeing.

Now is the time to lift up these solutions and powerfully knit them together so that they can be greater than the sum of their parts and birth a new economic paradigm that enables true democratic flourishing where people and planet thrive. We can no longer tinker around the edges of our current system – we must completely rewire our economy. That is where Community Wealth Building comes in.

Community Wealth Building Definition and Approach[6]

Community Wealth Building (CWB) is an approach to economic development that creates a more equitable, democratic, and sustainable economy based on shared asset ownership, giving people greater control of the economic activities that affect their daily lives. It is a way to rewire and democratize the economy – starting at the local level. The goal is to reconfigure the everyday institutions of and relationships within the economy, changing how the economy operates directly rather than attempting to soften the externalities of an unequal and extractive system after they've already wreaked havoc on our communities.

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[2] Nancy L. Rosenblum and Russell Muirhead, "Ungoverning: an unfamiliar name for an unfamiliar danger" *Princeton University Press* (September 30, 2024), https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/ungoverning-an-unfamiliar-name-for-an-unfamiliar-danger

[3] Michael Hudson, *Return of the Robber Barons* (The Democracy Collaborative, April 2025), https://www.democracycollaborative.org/whatwethink/return-of-the-robber-barons

[4] Amnesty International, *USA: Chaos & cruelty: 10 compounding assaults on human rights: A review of President Trump's first 100 days in office* (April 30, 2025), https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/9313/2025/en/

[5] The Democracy Collaborative, *The Next System Project: New Political-Economic Possibilities for the Twenty First Century* (2015), https://thenextsystem.org/download-the-first-next-system-project-report

[6] This section includes excerpts from the following report: Sarah McKinley and Neil McInroy, *Action Guide for Advancing Community Wealth Building in the United States* (The Democracy Collaborative, August 2023), Community-wealth-building-action-guide-us.pdf.

The many activities practiced within a CWB approach – from worker-owned cooperatives to credit unions – aim to locally recirculate and provide a genuine stake in wealth produced. Communities across the globe –most notably in the global South and in Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities that have been excluded from conventional economic activity and growth – have been experimenting with these practices for generations. They often fall under the umbrella of a social solidarity economy (SSE) approach and movement.[7] But integrating them into a comprehensive and strategic CWB approach to local economic development supercharges the power of these individual efforts, connecting and scaling them through policy development, institutional design, and ecosystems of support.

First articulated as an alternative approach to local economic development by the US-based think tank, The Democracy Collaborative (TDC), in the early 2000s, CWB focuses on wealth – how it is generated, how it circulates and is distributed, and who it benefits. Wealth creates stability, security, and resilience, enabling both individuals and communities to not only sustain themselves, but to thrive, with increasing time and capacity for civic participation and engagement. This focus on wealth seeks to not only extend these benefits more widely, but also to address and rebalance the undue influence of wealth in determining power – collective wealth more broadly distributes and shares power across a polity, broadening economic agency and community self-determination while countering remoteness and political alienation.

Ownership of economic assets – from land to labor – determines where wealth goes and to whom. Collectivizing the ownership of such assets fundamentally changes the nature and operations of wealth flows within the local economy. The structure and design of the organizations and institutions that manage these economic assets – from enterprises to banks – has a huge impact on wealth flows. Private, corporate ownership seeks to maximize profit, with wealth flowing to individual owners and shareholders. Conversely, CWB focuses on broad-based and democratic ownership, in a variety of forms from local and cooperative to community and public ownership – so that more people can share in wealth that is generated and have control over their economic conditions. To this end, CWB is concerned not just with *who* owns assets, but *how* those assets are owned. Therefore democratic governance is a key part of any CWB strategy, to ensure that wealth produces positive social and ecological benefits in place, but also rebuilds a culture and practice of democracy and economic agency.
Contrary to traditional economic opinion, there is no lack of wealth in most communities. Rather, it is a matter of where it is going, who it is benefiting, and how it can serve community needs. CWB focuses on reshaping the institutions, structures, and relationships that determine wealth flows across 'Five Pillars'[8] of local economies. They are:

1. **Inclusive and democratic enterprise**. Cultivating multiple forms of worker and consumer cooperatives, social enterprises, municipal ownership and more.

[7] The Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) supports the proliferation of enterprises and organizations such as cooperatives and social enterprises that produce positive social outcomes and foster community solidarity.
[8] Originally articulated by the UK-based Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) as an organizational framework for understanding CWB activity across the whole of a local economy, the five pillars are adaptable to the context of place. This document builds off The Democracy Collaborative's framing for a US audience.

2. **Locally-rooted finance**. Redirecting money in service of the real economy through public and community banks, credit unions, targeted fund and investments.
3. **Fair work**. Supporting living wages, advancing worker rights, and building real power in and control in the workplace for decent work and conditions.
4. **Just use of land and property**. Bringing local land and real estate development back under community control, and combat speculation and displacement.
5. **Progressive procurement**. Using institutional spending to re-localize economic activity, build local multipliers, and end leakage and financial extraction.

Within these five pillars, there are numerous strategies and tactics that can be deployed. They include institutions championed by SSE practitioners such as community land trusts (CLTs) and community development financial institutions (CDFIs), and worker-owned cooperatives, but also practices like municipal enterprises, public banking, social procurement, and more. In their own right, these activities are beneficial to communities, advancing community control and democratizing ownership. Yet, by aiming to create a dynamic relationship across and among these actions and a variety of complementary local policies, CWB works towards a tipping point to induce systemic local economic change. In this, CWB works alongside aligned movements for economic system change – lifting up and augmenting actions advanced by the SSE and new municipalist movements, while offering a delivery mechanism for aspects of a Wellbeing Economy, Doughnut Economics, or the Just Transition.[9]

The Importance of Government and Anchor Institutions

An essential lever for powering up CWB is local government which sits uniquely at the center of economic development, providing the policy, resources, and connective tissue that enable a local economy to thrive or to stagnate. The challenge, of course, at this moment, is that many communities have lost faith in government. Too many local governments are complicit in our extractive economic system, focused on developer and financial interests of the 'growth machine' whereby speculative building and uneven incentives favoring corporations are seen as the only means to guarantee jobs and increase needed capital and investment flows. As a result, communities and average residents are not only often neglected or not served effectively by local governments, but even displaced and actively marginalized by local government actions and policies, creating distrust and outward antagonism.[10]

[9] New municipalism seeks to reclaim municipal governments in service to people and community by implementing participatory, horizontal and distributed or cooperative power. Wellbeing Economy, Doughnut Economics, and the Just Transition are broad frameworks for economic system change, by, respectively, focusing on moving beyond GDP to build an economy based on shared wellbeing, promoting an economy that meets social need without exceeding planetary boundaries, and securing worker and social rights while transitioning to a green economy.

[10] Nairuti Shastry, "Addressing the Ownership Question: An Unspoken Gap in Economic Thinking," *Nonprofit Quarterly* (July 24, 2024), https://nonprofitquarterly.org/addressing-the-ownership-question-an-unspoken-gap-in-economic-thinking/

A CWB lens takes a different approach, acknowledging local government as an appropriate partner that can harness and scale up grassroots energy and solutions on the ground. Local governments can make choices to invest more of their significant purchasing power locally in underserved communities. They can serve as a convenor, bringing together different groups across the community and facilitating alignment to catalyze a movement. And, of course, they can develop policies that can ensure an enabling ecosystem for CWB activity.

As the CWB movement grows, the success of local government policies promoting CWB can also serve as a proof of concept, inspiring action in other places and at different scales. This is now more important and necessary than ever, especially in the face of national chaos and gridlock, resource stripping, and impotence at the federal level at this moment.[11] And while these realities have trickle down impacts on local government,[12] the US's federated structure empowers local government to act differently. The goal is to reclaim local government and the power it holds and reshape and redirect its institutional functions in the service of local control and democratization. When the tides turn nationally, local governments can stand as both beacons of hope and laboratories of economic democracy that deliver for their people.

Local governments are an example of 'anchor institutions', which are a key component of any CWB strategy. These are large, public, often non-profit and/or social sector organizations such as educational and school systems, hospitals and health systems, cultural institutions, and large place-based non-profit organizations. These institutions exist in almost all communities across the world and are often the largest employers and purchasers in any given place. The importance of their role is rooted in institutional economics and the notion that institutions can shape economic activity and behavior. A truly successful CWB strategy must understand the influence that anchor institutions have on people and society as a means to shape the social determinants of health and wellbeing – the conditions in which people are born, live, and work.

To that end, anchor institutions exert sizeable influence in the local economy through the purchasing of goods and services, the employment of local people, and through the deployment of their land, property, and financial assets. Most importantly, unlike private corporations, they are place-based and therefore highly unlikely to get up and leave. Many are mission-driven, focused on delivering a social good (education, health, public services, etc.) and therefore susceptible and accountable (albeit imperfectly and to varying degrees) to democratic pressure, accountability, oversight, and direction. The scale of these institutions, their fixed assets and activities, and their links to the local community mean that they demonstrate a form of 'sticky capital' (sources of capital that cannot get up and leave easily and will remain in place for a long time), that a CWB strategy can harness to improve market and social conditions.

It must be emphasized, however, that despite the importance of government and other anchor institutions in a CWB strategy, at its core, CWB is a bottom-up approach that centers democratic

[11] Nairuti Shastry and Megan Alter, "It's Still Possible to Build Community Wealth in an Era of Executive (Dis)Order," *Next City* (May 29, 2025), https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/community-wealth-building-possible-federal-cuts

[12] Nairuti Shastry and Sarah McKinley, "Not all Localism is Created Equal," *Next City* (September 13, 2024), https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/not-all-localism-is-created-equal

ownership of the economy and community self-determination. The role of the institutional partners is to be in service of their broader local community. A successful CWB strategy must build on grassroots community-based activities, and, together, working in coalition, mobilize the power of local government, the public sector and other anchor institutions to shape more equitable economic conditions. Through greater collaboration and collective action, CWB connects grassroots activities to policy action and institutional change and transformation. CWB is inclusive by design, delivering for those who have historically been the most excluded, marginalized, and exploited, with ultimate goal of rebalancing power.

Community Wealth Building Background and Theory[13]

Though the term 'Community Wealth Building' has only been used for around 20 years, its political and historical antecedents date much further back, as noted above. From the cooperative movements in Europe to the solidarity movements in Latin America to the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the elements found in a CWB strategy have their roots in experiments in self-determination and liberation aimed at pushing back on exploitation and extraction.[14] Indeed, in 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. stated, "When … profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are incapable of being conquered."[15] As he launched the 'Poor People's Campaign' nearly 60 years ago, King was linking racial equality to the need for economic system change, calling for every person, especially people of color, to have control of their economic future – to have a meaningful stake in the wealth they collectively create.

In the 1960s, movements for collective ownership and a more democratic economy grew at local and national levels. In the United States, activists including Gar Alperovitz, the future co-founder of TDC, pushed for federal legislation through the Community Self-Determination Act (CSDA) – urging the US Congress to authorize community-controlled organizations that would supplement social services. Game-changing ideas advancing community control of capital and assets like community land trusts (CLTs), community development corporations (CDCs), community development banks, and worker-owned businesses organically sprung to life in communities ranging from Georgia and Ohio to the Pacific Northwest.[16]

[13] This section includes excerpts from the following chapter: Sarah McKinley, "Community wealth building as a counter to right-wing reactionary politics: place-based democratisation of the economy to tackle rising inequality," in *Commons, Citizenship and Power: Reclaiming the Margins* (Bristol University Press, January 10, 2025) pp. 165-181.

[14] Jessica Gordon Nembhard, *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice* (Penn State University Press, 2014).

[15] Martin Luther King, *SPEECH: The Three Evils of Society* (National Conference on New Politics, 1967), SPEECH: The Three Evils of Society, Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967 | Black Agenda Report.

[16] Thomas Hanna and Marjorie Kelly, 'Community Wealth Building: The path towards a democratic and reparative political economic system' (The Democracy Collaborative, 2021), https://democracycollaborative.org/publications/community-wealth-building-the-path-towards-a-democratic-and-reparative-political-economic-system.

These individual, one-off successes were never amplified and replicated at scale. Despite the abiding need, through the 1970s to the 1990s, the American political establishment lacked the will and desire to deliver the radical jolt to the system. Liberal politicians and organizations largely remained committed to orthodox economic thinking, and the conventional social democratic framework ultimately gave way to neoliberalism. This ushered in the decoupling of wages from productivity or growth, and furthered the decline of labor unions and the countervailing check they provided on corporate power. The resultant erosion of the relative equality of the post war years and increase in corporate influence has undermined the social contract as well as efforts to democratize the economy ever since.

While alternative collective ownership and solidarity economy models have continued to develop and mature, they do so despite the system, unable to connect and sustain themselves at the scale commensurate to the need for change. The articulation of the ‘Community Wealth Building’ frame grew out of the need to give strategic direction to the process of connecting and scaling these alternative models, institutions, and approaches. CWB takes an interlinked systemic approach to community-rooted economic development and control, demonstrating what’s possible locally while laying the groundwork for political-economic system change more widely. Rather than reform or revolution, CWB develops, scales, and networks together a variety of actions, institutions, and approaches that change and democratize patterns of ownership and control in the economy and society over time.

The approach to change that CWB follows is grounded in Gar Alperovitz’s theory of ‘evolutionary reconstruction’ which seeks to displace, not just remediate, corporate power (and its excesses) as the structure currently governing our economic system. At the same time, evolutionary reconstruction seeks to build a new economic power base through the creation and augmentation of community-rooted institutions which directly advance more equitable sustainable outcomes in place. ‘Pre-distribution’, not just redistribution. Depending on the local context and the existing assets and activism in a place, evolutionary reconstruction leads to long term institutional displacement through a mosaic of various CWB activities and institutions slowly shifting both conditions on the ground and the balance of power they entail. This in turn allows for new policy opportunities that support a more robust ecosystem for these community-sustaining institutions.[17]

Though starting at the local level, evolutionary reconstruction is an approach and a first step within a longer-term theory of political-economic transformation. By decreasing the market share of corporations, their political influence will also likely decrease. Meanwhile, the creation or boosting of CWB institutions locally helps build up a new countervailing power base that lays the political groundwork for future efforts, leading ultimately to much broader political-economic reconstruction. The goal is to anchor change, however unpredictable it may be in this time of crisis, in practical experience and community-rooted institutional forms with a clear sense of systemic direction that meet local need while nurturing democracy, equality, community, liberty, and ecological sustainability as a matter of course.

[17] Gar Alperovitz, *Principles of a Pluralist Commonwealth* (The Democracy Collaborative, 2017).

So while there is a 'pick and mix' modularity across the five pillars of CWB and any singular action or group of actions can be practiced and applied, its power lies in demonstrating that a path to economic transformation has begun. Creating a comprehensive suite of actions across all five pillars integrated into an economic strategy is where evolutionary reconstruction can take place and the path to true systemic change lies. Combining the actions within the five pillars of CWB with the policy and enabling infrastructure to support them can result in the disruption and ultimate displacement of extractive economic activity and create a new model that drives a more democratic economy from the local to the global.

To this end, CWB should be seen as a policy framework, supporting a plurality of new local democratic institutional forms while requiring robust and inclusive engagement, reinvigorating democratic participation. By its nature, a CWB approach is rooted in the resources and assets of place and therefore must be adapted to and fit within local circumstances, conditions, and culture. To harness the full wealth of these resources and assets and establish shared goals to sustain change in a community, CWB requires the co-construction of place. In this, individuals from diverse backgrounds as well as institutions (including government) must engage with one another, debate, disagree, resolve conflict, find common ground, and, ultimately, build trust and community cohesion.

Ultimately, CWB is grounded in the belief that healthy democracy requires that people have control of their economic conditions, that economic inclusion and participation is necessary in order to advance political inclusion and participation. By taking a systemic and collaborative approach to fostering recirculatory, locally-rooted economic activities, CWB requires not just the creation of new economic institutions but also the reclamation and democratization of existing institutions of our economy, and especially government, so that they are not only more responsive to but fully reflective of the people and communities they serve. This framework therefore offers both active strategies to re-root community wealth for local benefit as well as a process to grow a new local political arrangement rooted in democracy and economic agency.[18] The result should be for communities to reclaim both place and power, countering trends towards isolation, disengagement, and despair.

Early Experiments in Community Wealth Building in the United States and the United Kingdom

These theories were put to the test with the first intentionally self-identified CWB experiment in Cleveland, Ohio, in the late 2000s. Here, the Cleveland Foundation – in collaboration with local institutions, community groups, and TDC – developed a strategy that would connect progressive procurement to the development of a community-controlled worker cooperative network, loosely based on and inspired by the Mondragón cooperatives in Spain. The resultant green industrial

[18] M.C Barnes and T.M. Williamson, "Becoming the American community we should be – but have never been", in *Community Wealth Building and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020), pp 11-37.

enterprises – the Evergreen Cooperatives[19] – now employ over 400 people and supply goods and services to large local place-based institutions like the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western University. Evergreen is owned by its employees, the vast majority of whom are Black, many returning citizens from the criminal justice system, and live in nearby historically under-served and under-resourced neighborhoods. These employee owners receive shares in the profits of the enterprises, are engaged at various levels in democratic governance of the cooperatives, and can access numerous support services such as housing and transportation programs that enable professional advancement and community stability. The cooperative enterprises are linked together by a community-controlled holding company that has a 'golden share' in the network giving them veto power in the event of a sale option.

Since 2010, the Evergreen Cooperative's successes and challenges have generated considerable national and international interest in CWB. Dozens of communities in the United States and around the world have embraced the CWB concept and framework and many have experimented with locally led and designed CWB activities. One of the most comprehensive has been developed in Preston,[20] a deindustrialized city in the north of England. After the collapse of a traditional economic revitalization strategy in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, leaders on the Preston City Council launched an ambitious CWB initiative partly inspired by the Evergreen Cooperatives.

Working closely with the UK-based Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), Preston has been able to redirect over £70 million of local institutional spending to the local economy and create over 4,500 jobs. The city set a living wage standard for local government as well as local institutions, launched a cooperative network, and reinvested local pension funds directly into community-based projects such as affordable local student housing. Once listed as one of the most deprived urban areas in England, Preston rated by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) as the most improved city in 2018 and 2019 and the 'Best Place To Live' in the north of England, and early stage research shows notable improvement in both physical and mental health outcomes correlating to CWB efforts.[21] Furthermore, some recent election results seem to show that the

[19] Evergreen began with an industrial laundry service which has performed so well that it ultimately won the Cleveland Clinic's full laundry contract and doubled in size, creating more secure high-paying jobs in the community. Evergreen now has five cooperative businesses and houses the Fund for Employee Ownership, which supports the conversion of existing businesses to employee ownership. Much has been written on the Evergreen Cooperatives, including: Duong, B. (2021) 'Despite a rocky start, Cleveland Model for worker co-ops stands test of time', *Shelterforce* [online], 9 March, Available from: https://shelterforce.org/2021/03/09/despite-a-rocky-start-cleveland-model-for-worker-co-ops-stands-test-of-time/; and: Scharf, A. (2022) *Case Studies of Worker Cooperatives in Health: Evergreen Cooperative Laundry and Cleveland Clinic.* Rutgers University Institute for the Study of Employee Ownership and Profit Sharing.

[20] Even more has been written about the "Preston Model" than on the Evergreen Cooperatives, most notably the Centre for Local Economic Strategy's work on Preston and a book co-authored by Preston City Council Leader Matthew Brown. Those references are: Centre for Local Economic Strategies (2019) *How we built community wealth in Preston: Achievements and lessons* [online], Available at: https://cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CLES_Preston-Document_WEB-AW.pdf [Accessed October 2023]; and Brown, M., Jones, R. (2021) *Paint your town red: how Preston took back control and your town can too,* London: Repeater Books.

[21] Rose, T.C., Daras, K., Manley, J., McKeown, M., Halliday, E., Goodwin, T.L., Hollingsworth, B. and Barr, B. (2023) 'The mental health and wellbeing impact of a Community Wealth Building programme in England: A

positive local impacts associated with Preston's CWB approach have delivered favorable returns at the ballot box for the Councilors championing this work, demonstrating political viability of this approach.[22]

While the work of Evergreen in Cleveland continues to be a powerful demonstration project showcasing the possibilities of tying local spending flows to the development of democratically owned enterprises to provide positive impact in people's daily lives, it has remained a neighborhood-level effort and has yet to influence the economic development approaches of the City of Cleveland. The work in Preston went further, integrating CWB directly into the economic strategy of the city to begin to demonstrate how local government can be a powerful partner in advancing and scaling this approach in a way that begins to shift power. This, in turn, has inspired more places, and, in particular, local governments across the UK – and most notably the whole of Scotland[23] – to take up a CWB approach to economic development.

Though its application will look different in every place, as more places experiment with CWB, a more structured and mature approach to practice and implementation has emerged, with some universal components, methodologies, and learnings. We are beginning to see the emergence of a self-conscious movement, with ongoing iteration refining CWB practice, to intentionally shift institutional behavior and begin to rewire the working of local economies towards more equitable outcomes. Yet while the chaos and austerity wielded by the Trump administration makes business as usual increasingly more difficult, it is not only clear that business as usual isn't really working and change is desperately needed, but more and more local leaders are emboldened to advance it.

Community Wealth Building Today: Examples from Los Angeles, CA, Richmond, VA, and St. Paul, MN

Many places around the world – from Atlanta to Chicago,[24] Amsterdam[25] to Northern Ireland[26] – have already been laying the groundwork for change. Communities and local governments have taken up CWB as a means of shaping their economies to deliver greater resiliency and more equitable outcomes. Most efforts are still in their early stages, making direct outcomes and causal links to social and economic changes difficult to determine. Furthermore, all have different approaches at different scales, with various drivers, starting points, focus areas, and local

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difference-in-difference study', *The Lancet*, Volume 8, Issue 6: Pages e403-e410.

[22] Pidd, H. (2021) 'Labour's victories show importance of localism and positive vision', *The Guardian* [online], 8 May, Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/may/08/labours-victories-show-importance-of-localism-and-positive-vision.

[23] The Scottish Government is advancing an integrated CWB strategy across the whole devolved nation, which includes a soon to be passed Community Wealth Building legislation which will require all local authorities to integrate CWB into their local plans. See more here: Community wealth building - Cities and regions - gov.scot

[24] See more case studies on CWB in the US on The Democracy Collaborative's website here: Case Studies — The Democracy Collaborative

[25] More on the work in Amsterdam can be found here: Community Wealth Building | GroenLinks Amsterdam

[26] More on the work in Northern Ireland can be found here: Community Wealth Building in Northern Ireland | Department for Communities

champions. Yet, all are applying various elements of a CWB approach to rewire their local economies to produce better results for people, place, and planet and, ultimately, long-lasting structural change. In this section, we present some of the ongoing work in Los Angeles, California, in Richmond, Virginia, and in St. Paul, Minnesota – very different cities with different political contexts, one led by community groups, the other by government, and the last taking a partnership approach. All are struggling with economic inequalities and are seeking to redress them using CWB in spite of, and in many ways because of, the national political environment.

Los Angeles, CA

Let's start with Los Angeles (LA): the City of Angels, Tinseltown, the entertainment capital of the world. From the outside looking in, Los Angeles is a lot of things: the second largest city in the country – boasting a population of nearly four million sprawling across an approximately 500-square mile metropolis[27] – the home of Hollywood, and, more recently, the site of devastating fires which killed 29 and displaced thousands more,[28] and now an ongoing stand-off with Trump over his military-backed deportations.[29] Even amid these stark contrasts, a sense of LA pride is palpable in this community of communities.

Despite the topographic and racial diversity, the City of Los Angeles is quite segregated. In fact, in 2021, LA was reported to be the sixth most segregated metropolitan area in the United States where 68 % of white households owned their homes, while only 44 % or less of Black, Korean, and Asian Indian residents owned theirs.[30] Beyond spatial segregation, Los Angeles is also a posterchild for wealth inequality in the States, with white households' median wealth being over ten times greater than their Mexican and Black neighbors.[31] The jurisdictional distinctions between Los Angeles County and City add to this complexity. While arguably the most visible, the City of Los Angeles is just one of 88 municipalities in the County and power is concentrated in the five-person County Board of Supervisors.[32]

Against this complex background, a local champion was needed to cohere and advance nascent CWB work in the region. Enter the United Way of Greater Los Angeles who, in 2007, made a

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[27] US Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Los Angeles city, California" (2024), https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia/LND110220#LND110220
[28] Robin Dillon-Merrill, "LA Residents, Businesses Face a Decision after Wildfires: To Rebuild or Relocate" (Georgetown University, 2025), https://www.georgetown.edu/news/la-wildfires-climate-migration/
[29] Joe Miller and Christopher Grimes, "Donald Trump tests the limits of presidential authority by sending troops into Los Angeles," *Financial Review* (June 9, 2025), https://www.afr.com/world/north-america/trump-tests-limits-of-presidential-authority-by-sending-troops-into-la-20250609-p5m606
[30] Stephen Menendian, Samir Gambhir and Arthur Gailes, *The Roots of Structural Racism Project: Twenty-First Century Racial Residential Segregation in the United States* (Othering & Belonging Institute, 2021), https://belonging.berkeley.edu/roots-structural-racism
[31] Malany De La Cruz-Viesca et al, *The Color of Wealth in Los Angeles* (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 2016), https://www.aasc.ucla.edu/besol/Color_of_Wealth_Report.pdf
[32] LA Forward and Inclusive Action for the City, "LA County Overview" *LA 101 Civics Guide* (2024), https://www.la101.guide/county-of-la

choice to move beyond their more traditional poverty alleviation work and take up this the mantle, using their voice, brand, and investments to address systemic issues in the region. In 2020, incited by the confluence of the growing Black Lives Matter movement and the upcoming celebration of their 100-year anniversary and inspired by CWB work in Cleveland and the UK, they more intentionally stepped into helping to organize a new alternative economy for LA, powered by CWB. They saw that they use their substantial convening power to pull together both grassroots activists and institutional and government initiatives in an attempt to a coordinate seemingly disparate activities to build a more intentional coalition and cohere a common agenda around CWB.

The region already has a robust and growing ecosystem for inclusive and democratic enterprises, including the LA Co-op Lab, an education, training, and finance hub dedicated to building capacity for local worker cooperatives,[33] and local government support for social enterprise such as LA County's Economic Mobility Initiative (EMI) and the Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise spearheaded by the City's Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) Office of Small Business.[34] The LA:RISE initiatives provide technical assistance and match existing social enterprises with graduates of workforce development programming in the City, creating a pipeline of employment for more than 7,500 LA residents.[35] The United Way is working with City and County governments to expand this ecosystem but is also making initial direct investments in food markets, shared kitchen spaces and food hubs, kitchen cooperatives, and entrepreneurship programs to build out a more sustainable alternative food economy in the region.

From the state-wide Public Banking Alliance to the more place-based Public Bank LA,[36] there is a strong commitment among progressive policy advocates to deconstruct existing and build new financial infrastructure. In addition to their robust partnerships with other philanthropic and lending entities (including CDFIs), the United Way of Greater Los Angeles also has two independent financial instruments that support community prosperity in the region: the Women's Investment Network – Los Angeles (WIN-LA) and the Prosperity Fund.[37] While the former supports individuals – Black and Latina women specifically – the latter finances (up to $ 150,000) locally-rooted solutions that advance CWB. Finally, the United Way has been working with the County to leverage their corporate and public partnerships (which include power players such as Paramount Pictures) to reroute food procurement contracts to local businesses (including cooperatives and social enterprises).

One of the key strengths of the LA model is the commitment to integrated praxis across all five pillars of CWB so that real people can see real change in real time. By taking a place-based, issue-focused approach to their initial investments in CWB, the UWGLA has faced the polarity

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[33] Gilda Haas, "How the City of Los Angeles Can Become a City of Worker-Owners," *Nonprofit Quarterly* (2023), https://nonprofitquarterly.org/how-the-city-of-angels-can-become-a-city-of-worker-owners/
[34] See: LA County's Economic Mobility Initiative and Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise
[35] See: LA:RISE - Los Angeles Regional Initiative for Social Enterprise - Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Los Angeles
[36] See: Public Banking Alliance and Public Bank LA
[37] See: Women's Investment Network – Los Angeles and Prosperity Fund

between addressing urgent needs and animating long-term strategy head on, giving communities a chance to taste progress in the short-term, so that they continue to stay engaged long-term. Yet, in spite of this bold vision and deep respect and camaraderie among partner organizations, the work of CWB in LA is still fairly segregated and stitching the pieces and actions together can be quite labor intensive. Government is supportive, but not a driving force and lacks connected focus on CWB. As a result, the United Way has been investing in resources – from human to digital to data to newer financial instruments – to cultivate a much more robust, leaderful ecosystem that is prepared to leverage the five pillars as tools for truly transformative wealth-building in greater Los Angeles.

Richmond, VA

On the other side of the country, Richmond, the capital of Virginia and the former capital of the Confederacy with a largely 'unhealed' history, is also advancing CWB, leveraging the power of local government to do so.[38] While Richmond boasts a vibrant Black culture with a number of flourishing neighborhoods, including the famous Jackson Ward, once considered to be the "Harlem of the South,"[39] it remains a bifurcated city particularly along lines of race. For example, Richmond has experienced significant population growth over the last decade – an 11 % increase, to be specific, making it the second-fastest growing region in the state.[40] However, even with a median household income of nearly $ 60,000, 48 % of Richmonders receive some sort of benefit from social services (e.g. SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, etc.).[41]

Gentrification is a key issue. What was once considered the impoverished 'inner city' has been rebranded as hip 'urban living', with Black Americans often representing many of the poverty statistics. These divides are amplified by the lack of a multijurisdictional government. Though surrounded by the wealthier Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover counties, the City of Richmond is administratively independent from any county, meaning that there is little to no opportunity for wealth distribution across jurisdictions.[42]

In response, the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building (OCWB) was established in 2014 by Former Mayor Dwight C. Jones. Informed by a 2011 legislative mandate (which established the Mayor's Anti-Poverty Commission eventually known as the Maggie L. Walker Initiative for Expanding Opportunity and Fighting Poverty) and inspired by early experiments with CWB, establishing the office was part of the City's aspirational goal to reduce poverty in the city by 40 % by 2030.[43] Dr. Thad Williamson, Professor of Leadership Studies and

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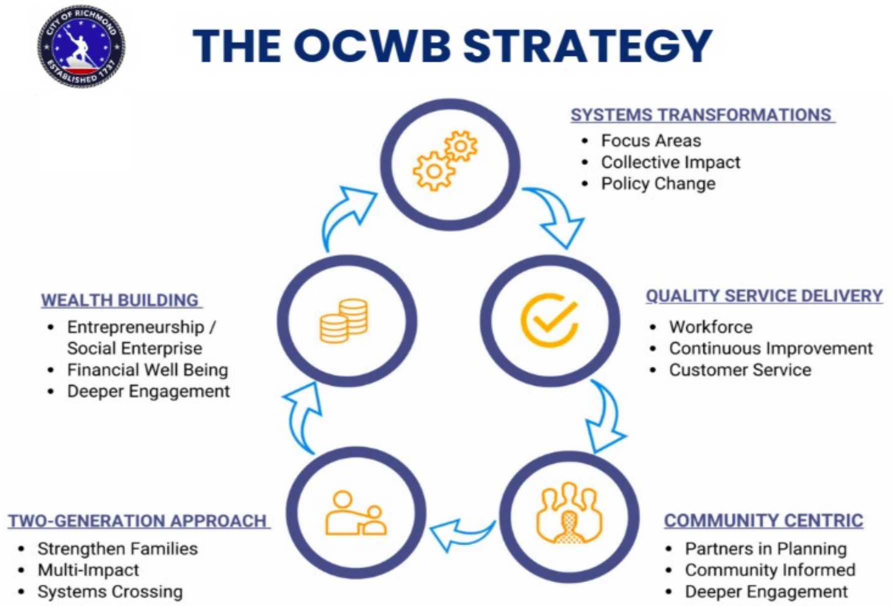
[38] Ben Campbell, *Richmond's Unhealed History* (Brandylane Publishers, Inc., 2011).
[39] See: Historic Jackson Ward Association n.d.
[40] Economic Development Authority of the City of Richmond, "Experience Richmond: Demographics" (2024), https://www.richmondeda.com/richmond-demographics/.
[41] U.S. Census Bureau, "Richmond city, Virginia" (2020), https://data.census.gov/profile/Richmond_city,_Virginia?g=050XX00US51760
[42] Jeffrey S. Zax, "The Effects of Jurisdiction Types and Numbers on Local Public Finance," (National Bureau of Economic Research, 1988), https://www.nber.org/system/files/chapters/c7884/c7884.pdf
[43] Office of Community Wealth Building, *Year One Annual Report* (City of Richmond, 2016), https://www.rva.gov/sites/default/files/2021-03/OCWB_Annual_Report_April_2016.pdf

Philosophy, Politics, Economics and Law at the University of Richmond's Jepson School of Leadership Studies (and a collaborator with TDC Founder Gar Alperovitz in articulating early CWB theory) was chosen to head up the new office.[44] The Maggie L. Walker Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), an independent body composed of those impacted by poverty, community organization representatives, business owners, and service providers, was selected to review and provide recommendations for the strategies and policies of OCWB.[45]

Since its founding, the Office's approach has evolved significantly. What started as a small team of three with a $ 3.4 million budget has expanded to 32-person staff with an annual budget of $ 4.5 million.[46] Beyond simply alleviating poverty or providing human services across employment, education, and housing, OCWB is now committed to facilitating "equitable solutions that improve the quality of life and *enhance wealth development opportunities* for the City of Richmond's most impacted communities."[47] In partnership with the Living Wage Certification Program, Economic Development's Office of Minority Business Development, and RVA Financial, the OCWB employs a two-generation approach to deliver quality services to address the root causes of poverty and economic mobility for Richmond's residents.[48]

Figure I: The City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building Vision and Model



Source: City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building website: Vision and Model V2 | Richmond

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[44] Nathan Cushing, "Thad Williamson: The man driving the city's anti-poverty initiatives," *RVA News* (2014), https://rvanews.com/news/thad-williamson-the-man-driving-the-citys-anti-poverty-initiatives/113275

[45] See: OCWB 2021

[46] Office of Community Wealth Building, Maggie L. Walker Initiative Citizens Advisory Board," *2023 Annual Report* (2023), Maggie L. Walker Initiative Citizens Advisory Board Annual Report.pdf

[47] See: https://rva.gov/community-wealth-building/about-us

[48] See: https://rva.gov/community-wealth-building/our-approach

Though one of the first CWB approaches is anchored within a local government, the understanding of CWB in the City of Richmond is still fairly rudimentary, rooted in debt reduction and financial empowerment services and programming. There is a clear lack of a focus of ownership in their overarching CWB strategy. A big challenge has been to find strong proofs of concept and metrics that demonstrate *inclusive* prosperity and benefits across multiple generations. Like most cities, the work of CWB is fragmented in Richmond – not only in the city, but also within the local government and nonprofit sector. There is a lot of unnecessary redundancy in the social services ecosystem, which can be especially challenging for residents in crisis who are simply trying to get their needs addressed.

Ultimately, cross-sectoral collaboration – both within and beyond the City – is critical for the success of CWB in Richmond. So, while Richmond has been outwardly advancing a CWB strategy for longer, it could learn something from LA's more nascent model and the role that United Way is positioning itself to play. This emerging model of a 'backbone' intermediary to provide both the infrastructure to hold complex relationships over time (including with politicians and political administrations) and the resources to help build capacity and advance development on the ground, could be a useful one in accelerating the work in Richmond, and many other places as well. While government is a necessary partner for the ultimate success of a CWB approach to economic development, a community-rooted entity to hold the ecosystem and sustain power over the long term is equally important.

Richmond and Los Angeles both demonstrate innovative and important evolutions of CWB institutional forms – a CWB office internal to government in the case of the former and an external intermediary that holds a broader coalition in the case of the latter. They have both set bold goals for building a more just and equitable economy. And as part of that, they, each in their own way, are reshaping the relations of local economic institutions in service to local community need, bringing policy and resources closer to the ground to broaden not just resident participation and engagement, but the practice of democracy at the local level and the balance of power in the economy. Combining the approaches from both of these places to advance an inside and an outside strategy[49] could be a key to sustaining and accelerating CWB efforts.

St. Paul, MN[50]

CWB efforts in St. Paul, specifically, and broadly Minneapolis, Minnesota, are beginning to demonstrate what that combined approach could look like. Commonly known as the Twin Cities, these combined cities are the most populous areas of the midwestern state. While the area is the most racially diverse in Minnesota,[51] like Los Angeles and Richmond, the Twin Cities have been shaped by long-standing racial disparities. Median household income ranges from as low as

[49] Deepak Bhargava and Stephanie Luce, *Practical Radicals: Seven Strategies to Change the World* (The New Press, 2023), https://thenewpress.org/books/practical-radicals/

[50] This section includes excerpts from the following case study: Nairuti Shastry, "Twin Cities, MN: A Case Study of Community Wealth Building (CWB)," The Democracy Collaborative, accessed July 24, 2025: https://www.democracycollaborative.org/twin-cities-mn

$ 16,500 to as high as $ 250,000[52] while the poverty rate for Black residents in the Twin Cities is four times the rate as their white neighbors.[53] In 2020, this decades-long tension culminated in the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis at the hands of a group of police officers.[54]

Well before Floyd's death and, perhaps, increasingly so as a result, residents of the Twin Cities are motivated to see change. From the collective ways of the original indigenous Dakota peoples to the politics of social democracy brought over by early Scandinavian immigrants and the recent influx of Hmong immigrants, the ethos of the Twin Cities has been grounded in deep solidarity. Indeed, the Cities were at the epicenter of the food cooperative movement in the late twentieth century. According to Nexus Community Partners founder, President, and CEO, Repa Mekha, the region has been a sort of laboratory for progressivism, echoed by the state at large,[55] and is fertile ground for innovation.

Indeed, Nexus Community Partners has been the heartbeat of the CWB movement in the Twin Cities since its founding in 2004. Initially dedicated to accelerating small business development among communities of color, after a learning journey to connect with efforts around the country at the intersection of economic development and community engagement, including the 'Cleveland Model' in Ohio, Nexus changed course, recognizing that in order to effectively address the structural barriers faced by communities of color in the Twin Cities, a collective approach that centered ownership of land, labor, and capital was critical.[56] With support from The Democracy Collaborative, Nexus adopted a CWB approach, working closely with city government to advance strategic interventions in each of the five pillars.

While cooperativism has a storied history in Minnesota, from 2016 to 2025 Nexus, alongside local, has helped start/convert seven cooperatives and incorporate seven others who are working towards launch. Cooperative economics is now seen as a core strategy to building inclusive and democratic enterprise with the Shared Ownership Center at Nexus (SOC@N) at the helm of cooperative development in the region. From supporting worker conversions from retiring business owners – an estimated 26,000 businesses employing more than 320,000 workers, nearly a third of whom are of color[57] – to supporting entrepreneurs of color in starting up new cooperatives, Nexus works alongside the public and private sectors, community leaders, CDFIs,

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[51] DEED Labor Market Information Office, "Twin Cities Disparities by Race Report," (2024), 24-02TC_tcm1045-341196.pdf

[52] Metropolitan Council, "Equity Considerations Dataset" (2024), https://metrocouncil.org/Data-and-Maps/Research-and-Data/Equity-focused-Research/Equity-Considerations-Dataset.aspx

[53] Minneapolis Department of Community Planning and Economic Development, "Minneapolis 2040" (2024), https://minneapolis2040.com/goals/eliminate-disparities/

[54] Evan Hill et al., "How George Floyd was Killed in Police Custody," The New York Times (2020), https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html

[55] Adam Edelman, "How Minnesota is becoming a laboratory in pushing progressive policy," NBC News (2023), https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/minnesota-becoming-laboratory-progressive-policy-rcna79816

[56] Nexus Community Partners, "The Changing Face of Business: Worker Ownership and Community Wealth Building in St. Paul" (2019), https://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ImpactBriefDraft_16_FOR-PRINTER.pdf

[57] Nexus Community Partners, "Impact Brief: Business Conversions to Worker Cooperatives" (2017), https://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/BusinessConversions-FOR-PRINT.pdf

workforce investment boards, academic institutions, and media outlets to bring worker ownership to scale.[58]

To combat displacement and support corridor revitalization in the region, Nexus also helps community members to purchase and own real estate in the form of real estate investment cooperatives (REICs). From the initial assessment to engaging with stakeholders and designing a process of co-governance to connecting leaders to legal and financial resources, Nexus has supported the launch of two REICs – including a group of 35 Black women who collectively purchased a shopping center[59] – and is providing ongoing consultation to another eight at various stages of development in the region. Nexus has also been deeply involved with the organizing and fundraising efforts (by setting up a community investment fund) of the East Phillips Neighborhood Institute (EPNI) which successfully stopped the demolition of a 230,000-square-foot warehouse site by buying back the land from the city and using the space to build a cooperatively-owned, solar-powered indoor farm and community housing hub in this predominantly Indigenous and working class neighborhood.[60]

First and foremost, across all of their cooperative development work, Nexus – in partnership with other organizations – has worked tirelessly to innovate capital stacks that take full advantage of the broad spectrum of capital available to CWB activity in a particular place. By pulling in federal, state, and local grant dollars and partnering with CDFIs and local regional banks and coordinating efforts with other funders and nonprofit organizations in the region, Nexus has been able to help finance close to a dozen cooperatives in the Twin Cities.

Nexus also administers two funds – the Open Road Fund with an initial investment from a local foundation and the Local Fund launched by the City of St. Paul. The Open Road Fund is a commitment by the Bush Foundation to redistribute $ 100 million to Black and Indigenous communities across Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota to address the racial wealth gap.[61] The Local Fund, on the other hand, is a newer $ 2.5 million partnership with the City of St. Paul – set up using American Rescue Plan Act money – that includes technical assistance and grants for 1) worker cooperative start-ups, business conversions to worker ownership, and existing co-ops; as well as 2) predevelopment, acquisition, demolition, and rehabilitation of commercial and mixed-use vacant properties located in Qualified Census Tracts towards community-owned real estate.[62]

Nexus has positioned itself as the backbone organization advancing CWB in the Twin Cities, supporting community groups to build capacity and deliver successful strategies across each other five pillars while liaising with anchor institutions and partnering directly with the City of St. Paul. For a few years now, Nexus has convened the East Side Funders Group – 19 funders

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[58] Nexus 2019.
[59] Nexus Community Partners, "Brooklyn Park Business Analysis" (2020), https://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/2020_BrooklynPark-ImpactBrief.pdf
[60] East Phillips Neighborhood Institute, "Vision" (2023), https://www.epnifarm.org/vision
[61] Nexus Community Partners, "First Steps on the Open Road" (2024), https://nexuscp.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/First-steps-report-v3.pdf
[62] See: Build community wealth through the LOCAL Fund for Shared Ownership | Saint Paul Minnesota

coming together to align strategies and resources to strengthen the economic vitality of the East Side of St. Paul with CWB at a priority focus area.[63] In June of 2024, Nexus co-hosted the National Conference on Black Cooperative Agenda alongside the City of St. Paul.[64] Later that year, in October, the City of St. Paul and Nexus partnered with other national nonprofits to put on the Shared Ownership Equity Summit.[65] All of this points to an increasing commitment from local government, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector to advance cooperative development and more equitable wealth building in the Twin Cities.

Building off of this momentum, the City of St. Paul is stepping up even more: in addition to the Local Fund, the City's Department of Planning and Development is currently developing an anti-displacement plan rooted in CWB and advancing a technical study to integrate CWB across all of its functions.[66] By weaving together a robust local ecosystem to support sustained CWB activity, Nexus has helped to model and lift up the art of the possible, while building trust and shifting relationships, setting the table for government support and scale driven by and accountable to community. This backbone-driven coalition model evolving in St. Paul models the kind of resilient local infrastructure that can integrate a plurality of solidarity economy activity across all five pillars to produce tangible returns at scale, even in times of national rupture and uncertainty.

Conclusion

If we do not democratize the economy, wealth and power will continue to concentrate in the hands of an ever more powerful plutocratic elite which will continue to erode all other forms of social or political democratic practices, as we are seeing now in the US. The continued global rise of reactionary right-wing politics and regressive populist-style movements is in part a consequence of this concentrated and extractive economic arrangement which has led to crumbling public infrastructure, environmental degradation, and widening economic, regional, and racial inequalities, all of which contribute to increased social atomization, stalled social mobility, and a widespread sense of economic disempowerment and alienation from politics.

Community Wealth Building is a powerful antidote to these trends, offering an action-oriented means to address structural inequalities of wealth through broadening asset ownership but also working to shift power imbalances by moving people from being solely bystanders within, or even victims of, the economy to active agents who can collectively shape the economic future of their community.[67] This focus on economic agency and community self-determination requires participation, collaboration, and inclusion, bringing all local stakeholders together to co-create

[63] See: East Side Funders Group
[64] Bintah Kanteh, "St. Paul Hosts National Conference on Black Cooperative Agenda," The Minnesota Spokesman Recorder (2024), https://spokesman-recorder.com/2024/07/05/national-conference-black-cooperative-agenda/
[65] Nexus Community Partners, "Recap: St. Paul Shared Ownership Equity Summit" (2024), https://nexuscp.org/recap-st-paul-shared-ownership-equity-summit/
[66] See: Anti-Displacement Plan and Community Wealth Building Technical Study | Saint Paul Minnesota
[67] Guinan, J. and O'Neill, M. (2020) *The case for Community Wealth Building*, Cambridge: Polity.

and reconstruct their local economies. Through these tools, CWB breaks down barriers and reduces remoteness, building confidence and trust and, with it, greater social cohesion. Democratizing economic institutions creates a virtuous feedback loop, strengthening practice and building culture upon which to build and prefigure a more equitable political-economic system and a just social contract.

Early CWB experiments in Cleveland and Preston show that this work does deliver positive impact in community – from better paid jobs and the local recirculation of institutional spending flows to improved mental and physical health outcomes in local populations. While it is still too soon to determine the depth of institutional displacement and reconstruction occurring in places practicing CWB to truly achieve local economic system change, the maturing strategic application of CWB and the work occurring in places as diverse as LA and Richmond, as well as Chicago and Scotland, point to a shift in institutional behaviors and a reordering of political relationships. Here, the potential for Community Wealth Building to offer a new economic paradigm is revealed, redefining government legitimacy and reshaping not just policy but also the practice of democracy itself.

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ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

Founded in 2013 in Seoul, the GSEF – Global Forum for Social and Solidarity Economy – is a global organization of local governments and civil society actors committed to promoting and developing the social and solidarity economy. Its 90 members, present in 35 countries, represent the diversity of SSE stakeholders: local governments, networks of actors, associations, cooperatives, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, universities, etc. The GSEF supports the development of the SSE around the world by promoting dialogue between public authorities and SSE actors in order to jointly develop local public policies that contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the emergence of ecosystems conducive to the SSE.

The GSEF thematic working groups (WGs) were voted on at the General Assembly on May 5, 2023. The WG on "The Impact of SSE Public Policies on the Achievement of the SDGs" brings together some fifteen researchers from all continents. It is led by Marguerite Mendell (Karl Polanyi Institute) and Timothée Duverger (Chair Terr'ESS, Sciences Po Bordeaux) and supported by the GSEF General Secretariat employee working on his CIFRE thesis.

Following on from research already conducted by the GSEF in partnership with UNRISD, which led to the production of guidelines for local SSE policies, in January 2024 the Research WG launched a call for contributions to gather proposals for working papers focusing on three recurring processes in public action: development, implementation, and evaluation. Through the analysis of these processes of SSE public policy development, the authors of the papers (both researchers and SSE actors) were asked to examine two fundamental dimensions: the contribution of these local policies to the achievement of sustainable development goals, and the paradoxes associated with the institutionalization of the SSE.

A reading committee composed of GT members evaluated more than forty proposals, including the seventeen working papers now published under the title *Local SSE Policies enabling the Socio-Ecological Transition*. Each paper is available on the GSEF website, free of charge, in its original language (English, French, or Spanish) and in English. This publication and the English translations were made possible thanks to financial support from Caisse des Dépôts.

The concrete examples provided by these working papers will feed into programs to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and support the development of public policies favorable to the SSE.

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