



# DC Collective Equity Initiative

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Building Wealth with Food

# Who are we?



In summer 2019, Mayor Bowser asked the following agencies/organizations to participate in the Shared Equity in Economic Development (SEED) Fellowship. Through this collaboration, the Collective Equity Initiative was formed.

- DC Food Policy Council, DC Office of Planning (OP)
- Innovation & Equitable Development (Inno.Ed) Office, Department of Small & Local Business Development (DSLBD)
- Department of Employment Services (DOES)
- Washington Area Community Investment Fund (WACIF)





**Shared  
Equity in  
Economic  
Development**  
Fellowship

**The Shared Equity in Economic Development Fellowship (SEED)** convenes and equips city leaders with tools, resources, and expertise to build equitable economies using democratic business ownership through a year long program of leaderships development, peer-to-peer learning, and strategy design support.





# Defining Cooperatives



Jointly owned enterprises engaging in the production or distribution of goods, the supplying of services, or operation of a collectively owned property operated by its members for their mutual benefit.

Cooperatives can be owned and operated by workers, consumers, small businesses, non-profits, residents, or a combination thereof.

# Collective Equity Initiative's Key Focus

**We are looking to enhance the ecosystem for cooperatives owned by District residents, focusing on areas with low access to food.**

The combined challenges & solutions we seek to address are:

1. The relative low numbers of hyperlocally-owned food businesses serving or located in certain low-income areas of the District;
2. The need for additional wealth building opportunities for current residents; and
3. The inequities based on race, income, and other factors related to food access, business ownership, and employment in the District.

# Why cooperatives?

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History of cooperative ownership in Washington, DC

# History of Cooperatives in DC

- **Nannie Helen Burroughs and the Cooperative Industries of DC**
  - In 1936, with funding from the New Deal's Self-Help Cooperative Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Burroughs co-founded the **Cooperative Industries of DC**, a Lincoln Heights cooperative that produced chairs and brooms, canned foods, and made clothes.
  - Cooperative members were formerly unemployed African-American workers and homemakers.
  - The ambitious vision of the cooperative included: a roadside market, cannery, laundry, shoe repair shop, production of chairs, beauty salon, and a farm.
  - The cooperative served over 6,000 families in Northeast DC from 1934-38.

(Source: Tracy McCurty, Black Belt Justice Center)





# History of Cooperatives in DC

- **DC Commission for Cooperative Economic Development**

- On June 13, 1980 Barry issued a Mayoral Order establishing a Commission for Cooperative Economic Development.
- The Commission's first leader, Cornelius "Cornbread" Givens, said the group was "the very first commission of this kind anywhere in the nation."
- *"In Washington, as in every other major urban center in America, we have entire sections of our city which have been abandoned and neglected by the mainstream of economic activity...Although private enterprise has neglected or abandoned some areas of our city, we must not give up the fight. It is time for the citizens of these areas themselves to become owners and providers of the basic services needed for daily life. The cooperative movement is just what is needed to provide this opportunity."*

~ Mayor Marion Barry

(Source: Ajowa Ifateyo, Grassroots Economic Organizing)



# History of Food Cooperatives in DC

- **MLK Food Cooperative**

- In 1970 the Martin Luther King Jr. Food Cooperative was opened and operated by and for the residents of the Arthur Capper Public Housing community.
- It was one of, if not the first, food cooperative opened in a public housing community in the United States.
- By 1985, at least 5 other public housing communities in DC all had food coops that were run by their residents (Barry Farms, Kenilworth Parkside, Horizon House, Judiciary House, and Sursum Corda)



# Food cooperatives in DC

Mt Pleasant Food Co-op &  
Community Grocery Co-op (in formation)



Zenful Bites (catering)



# DC-based Organizations Helping Cooperatives

The DC Cooperative Stakeholders Group

Beloved Community Incubator

Black Workers Center

Capital Impact Partners

DC Cooperative Housing Coalition

DC Credit Union

Democracy@Work DC

Dreaming Out Loud

Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO)

U.S. Overseas Cooperative Development Council

Wacif (Washington Area Community Investment Fund)

# Why food?

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Building wealth and health in the food economy



# DC's food economy is growing rapidly.

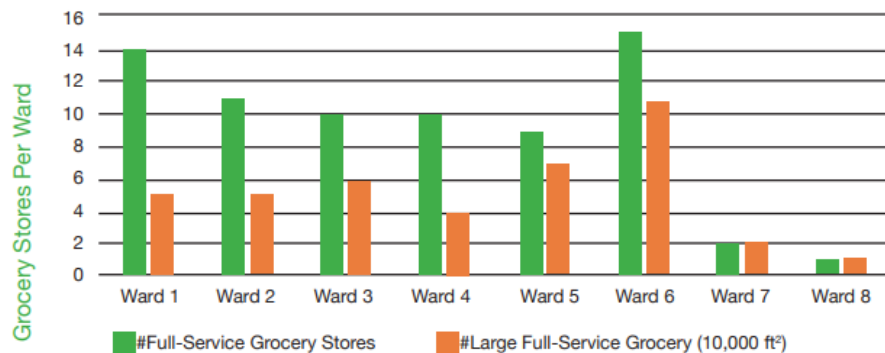
- **71,300** employees
- **8%** of total DC workforce
- **72%** employment growth from 2001-2016

*BUT:*

- **\$36,161**: average income in food & beverage retail
- **\$30,844**: average income in food services & drinking
- **\$72,935**: DC median household income

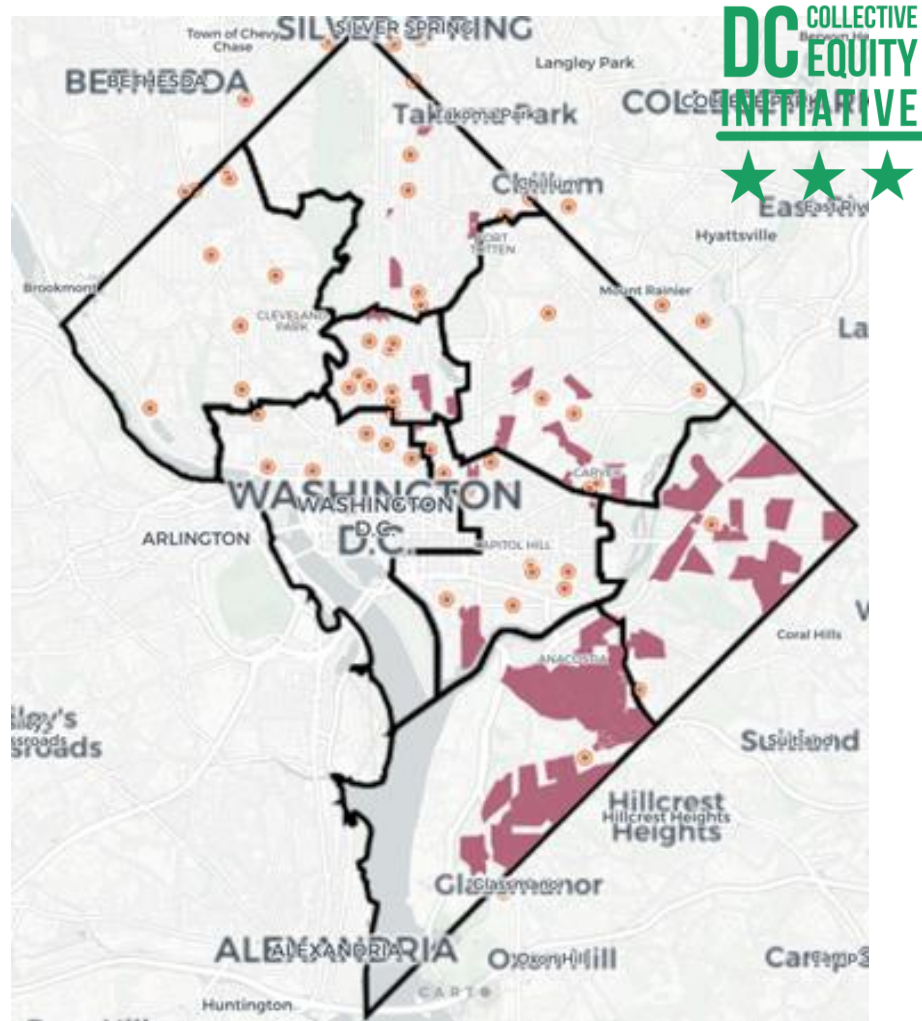
Wards 7 and 8 and parts of other Wards are underserved by food businesses.

Grocery Stores in the District (2018)



Ward in the District

Source: Authors' analysis (2018). Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Businesses Licenses.



# The local economy is built on local businesses

Hyperlocally owned food businesses are infrastructure for communities: both residents who own, work, and shop, and the overall business ecosystem.

To create positive retail environments, small food establishments anchor commercial corridors attracting customers and other businesses.



# Vibrant hyperlocal business environments matter

- Independent retailers
- Urban agriculture
- Small-scale food production





# Washington, DC Site Visit: October 2-5, 2019





# Advisory Panel

**Ashley Colpaart**, Founder and CEO, The Food Corridor, Fort Collins, CO

**Devita Davison**, Executive Director, FoodLab Detroit, Detroit, MI

**Susan Ma**, Industrial Business Development Manager, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, City and County of San Francisco, CA

**Trinh Nguyen**, Director of the Mayor's Office of Workforce Development, Economic Development Cabinet, City of Boston, MA

**Dami Odetola**, Vice President, National Cooperative Bank, Washington D.C.

**Diana Ponce De León**, Program Manager, Invest in Neighborhoods Division, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, City and County of San Francisco, CA

**Evette Roots**, Social Enterprise Specialist, Office of Community Wealth Building, City of Richmond, VA

**Jordan Turner**, Economic Development Coordinator, Louisville Forward, Louisville, KY




# Collective Equity Initiative Action Plan (by June 2020)

- Create a DC Good Food Investment Fund to invest in locally-owned food businesses
- Identify regulatory barriers to shared commercial kitchens
- Host DC food business speaker series, highlighting: coop governance, small markets, CDFIs, & other requested topics
- Create toolkit for government agencies and public to understand food cooperative structures





A photograph of a row of colorful row houses in Washington D.C. The houses are painted in shades of red, blue, and purple. The windows are lit up, and the street in front is visible. A person is walking on the sidewalk to the right.

**Thank you!**  
**Questions?**

**DC** COLLECTIVE  
EQUITY  
INITIATIVE

