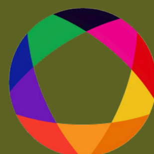
FOOD JUSTICE CASE STUDY
COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

Duke
SANFORD
WORLD FOOD POLICY CENTER

January 2022



COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DISCLAIMER

The World Food Policy Center (WFPC) is a research, education, and convening organization within Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy. Its mission is to advance connected and inclusive food system policy and practice in support of equity and resilience of local and global food systems. WFPC work centers on economic development through food justice; root causes and narratives of racial inequity in the food system; the role of institutions in supporting community-led food justice; decision-making, power, and benefit in food system governance; local food system analysis; and public health and nutrition. The conclusions and recommendations of any World Food Policy publication are solely those of its author(s), and do not reflect the views of Duke University or its other scholars.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

8 INTRODUCTION
- 9 Research approach

10 LOCAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT
- 10 East Durham

14 CASE: COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP
- 17 Community Potlucks
- 20 Community Food Cooperative
- 24 Sourcing from Black and Brown Communities & Farmers
- 27 East Durham Market

29 CONCLUSION
- 30 Antiracism & Systems-based Solutions
- 31 Broad Findings About Food Justice

33 REFERENCES

FIGURES & TABLES

11 Figure 1. Aerial photographs of a section of Hayti before (left) and after urban renewal
12 Figure 2. Map showing distribution of public amenities and nuisances in Durham Black neighborhoods are closer to incinerators and factories and have fewer parks and schools.
13 Figure 3. Chart of Type 2 diabetes rates among adult population in Durham County across race, 2017
18 Figure 4. Degrees of Citizen Participation
23 Table 1: CIP Community Food Cooperative Components
26 Table 2: CIP Supplier Approach
28 Table 3: East Durham Market Overview

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a multi-year case study of Communities in Partnership (CIP), a predominantly Black women-led, Black women founded, community-accountable organization that addresses social determinants of health through interconnected programs addressing food justice, entrepreneurship, and workforce development, affordable housing, transformative justice, and leadership development. This case study is intended to maintain its specificity and local contextuality while pointing to some key themes that may have broader utility for other organizations.

This report is co-authored by the World Food Policy Center (WFPC) and CIP. These organizations have collaborated on community participatory research & capacity-building projects for over four years. The WFPC has supported CIP's programs, and CIP has advised the WFPC across its food justice research project portfolio.

This case study explores CIP’s alternative models, or “counter-narratives” to white supremacy culture in the food system in Durham, North Carolina. The report focuses on the “how” of these alternative models and the impact of alternative processes. Our research seeks to explain how CIP's work counters narratives described by Alison Conrad in *Identifying and Countering White Supremacy Culture in Food Systems*, specifically:

- How do CIP’s processes demonstrate community members taking care of themselves?
- How does CIP’s food systems work center listening to the community?
- How is CIP’s food systems work different from food charity?
- What is the impact of community members taking care of themselves, listening to the community, and choosing alternatives to food charity?

CIP East Durham Market Produce Box

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CIP was founded by the community it serves

- Community members in East Durham created the organization together as a tool for racial, economic, and social liberation at the community level
- CIP uses food as a pathway to build community wealth and health, contextualized in a range of interconnected programs addressing the social determinants of health in East Durham

CIP programs are designed by and for community members

- CIP engaged community members at all stages, using asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry approaches to relationship building and strategic planning

CIP is creating a Black and Brown-owned food system, not another food charity

- CIP's cooperative approach to building sustainable food justice continues citizen participation beyond planning and into implementation
- A food cooperative builds relationships between owners and enables responsiveness to the community's desire for specific foods and programs

CIP is developing a circular economy between Black and Brown communities & farmers

- Using food as a tool for economic development, CIP is strengthening black and brown communities as a whole by patronizing Black and Brown farmers in the surrounding rural counties
- Patronizing Black and Brown farmers is seen as a resilience strategy to ensure resources will stay in and grow for Black and Brown communities

CIP is building for resilience & autonomy

- CIP is utilizing a tiered pricing strategy to enable both self-sufficiency and community support
- Minimizing reliance on grant funding allows CIP to retain greater control over programs and ensure long-term solvency

CIP LEVERAGES COMMUNITY ASSETS & RELATIONSHIPS TO DRIVE SYSTEMS CHANGE

The key reason CIP is so successful is that it is led by the people it serves. The resulting work is relationship-based, centered on the level of accountability and responsiveness one gives to family and neighbors. CIP is also grounded in a systems-level view of change, focused on the following characteristics:

VALUES	DESCRIPTION
Community-Rooted™	Community-Rooted™ (Smith et al., 2020) describes organizations like CIP committed to liberative community development practices and practices that put community members in control of the decisions that impact their lives. CIP amplifies the lived experience of residents through governance structures, decision-making practices, and strategies that reinforce accountability, enhance community ownership, and emphasize systems-level change.
Responsiveness in Relationship	CIP's work is grounded in deep relationships. As a result, CIP is less fixated on maintaining static organizational programs and priorities and more focused on the community's immediate, most pressing needs. This means that CIP can respond quickly to new needs, reaching people that may not have engaged with external programming.
Antiracism & Systems-Based Solutions	Executive Director Camryn Smith shared that for CIP, *"it's all about creating food systems that aren't predicated on oppression and scarcity, that are owned and operated and benefiting Black people specifically first, and then secondarily other people groups of color who have been directly impacted."* She shared that CIP is, *"fine-tuning our analysis to see the systems of inequality and how they basically work in tandem to have a lot of the outcomes that we were not wanting to impact our communities, ourselves or our kids."*

CIP'S APPROACH ILLUMINATES KEY CONCEPTS FOR FOOD JUSTICE

While CIP's work is locally contextual by design, key concepts that guide the organization's food systems work provide broadly relevant framing for food justice:

LIBERATION

Liberation is about creating the circumstances for freedom as well as the state of freedom itself. When communities do not control their own food conditions, they are not free. CIP creates liberation through a local food system owned by and benefiting those most impacted by current inequities. CIP is superseding and replacing the structures that allowed external organizations to dictate and design the food system on behalf of citizens in East Durham. CIP's programs reclaim the citizens' power to create their own food environment, providing food and economic control to Black and Brown households in East Durham.

NAMING & ADDRESSING WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

CIP's analysis of how white supremacy culture manifests in the food system illuminated targeted effort and action areas. CIP's work counters the paternalism, individualism, and eurocentrism inherent in white supremacy culture by creating democratic and collective processes that center the lived experience of East Durham's Black and Brown community.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

CIP's work centers participation in creating solutions that are relevant and sustainable long-term. CIP's food justice programs disrupt externally imposed manipulation as well as"well-intentioned" tokenism and consultation. CIP's approaches are about full citizen ownership and control of the food system and other interconnected systems in East Durham.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CIP centered on the gifts and inherent ability of East Durham residents to co-create a new food system. These approaches counter the deficit model and pathologization inherent in externally imposed programs addressing food insecurity in East Durham.

COOPERATIVE MODELS

CIP uses cooperative models to empower community members through democratic approaches for operations and decision-making. These models counter the power of individuals, institutions, and organizations to work "on behalf of" impacted communities in East Durham.

FOOD APARTHEID

CIP utilizes the framing defined by activist Karen Washington to continually reinforce that "food deserts" are not an outcome of natural systems but rather a predictable output of structural inequity. CIP explicitly understands how public policy and city planning decisions led to the absence of fresh food retail and high-paying food industry jobs in East Durham. CIP's programs address these issues head-on with an understanding of their historical context.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

CIP takes a systems view on the economic outcomes of its food programs. The Community Food Cooperative and East Durham Market are about providing subsidized food and economic development and circulating money within a community of Black and Brown producers and consumers. This conception of a circular economy multiplies wealth as money cycles through rather than exits these communities.

INTRODUCTION

This case study is the first of a series of case studies on alternative models or "counter-narratives" to *White Supremacy Culture in the Food System*. These studies focus on the "how" and the impact of alternative processes. Our research questions seek to explain how CIP's work is counter to the white narratives outlined by Conrad, specifically:

- How do CIP's processes demonstrate community members taking care of themselves?
- How does CIP's food systems work center listening to the community?
- How is CIP's food systems work different from food charity?
- What is the impact of community members taking care of themselves, listening to the community, and choosing alternatives to food charity?

This case study is intended to maintain its specificity and local contextuality while pointing to some key themes that may have broader utility for other organizations. The section on CIP's Food Justice Programs is intentionally and necessarily rooted in the specifics of East Durham and CIP, drawing heavily on the oral history methodology. The Key Concept callouts and Why It Works section provide more general insights informed by the qualitative research and literature review. Future case studies released in this series may be utilized as a collective to begin to understand broader themes across models that exist outside of white supremacy culture in the food system.

Because the core research questions are about how CIP was started, how CIP operates, and the impact of these organizational foundations and processes, the research is presented as both a process and descriptive case study (Yin, 2009, Mills et al., 2010). This methodology focuses more on the "what" of the research subject than the "why" of the research subject. We explain the development and nature of CIP's food systems programs sequentially over the eleven years of organizational activity from 2011 to 2021. The authors explain how and why decisions were made, how those decisions were implemented over time, and how the results of those decisions were experienced. As much as possible, authors use direct quotes from interviewees.

Left to right: Midori Brooks, Veronica Terry, Camryn Smith

RESEARCH APPROACH

This is a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) project, grounded in over four years of collaborative work between CIP and the WFPC, including two years of collaboration between authors Bryant and Towell. CBPR seeks to “ensure and establish structures for participation by communities affected by the issue being studied, representatives of organizations, and researchers in all aspects of the research process to improve health and well-being through taking action, including social change” (Viswanathan, 2004). In CBPR processes, mutual benefit is exchanged between academics and community partners. Community partners share unique knowledge that arises from lived experience, add depth to the interpretative process, and increase the relevance and utility of research (Hacker, 2013). The academic provides capacity and skill in data collection, analysis, writing, and presentation that allows the knowledge to reach a broader audience and supports the mobilization of the knowledge within the collaborative context. CBPR creates egalitarian roles amongst collaborators, which enhances the knowledge and skills of all participants (Mills et al., 2010).

This report is based on observational and experiential knowledge of the two authors, literature review, and semi-structured interviews with ten CIP staff and volunteers that occurred in May of 2021. Bryant selected interviewees who played an active role in initiating CIP's food systems programming or who currently have key operational insight. Bryant primarily facilitated the interviews, given his existing relationships with the interviewees. Each interviewee was asked a subset of a pre-approved set of questions relevant to their role about the organization’s development, operations, and impact during a single 60-90 minute video conference. Additional follow-up questions were added by Bryant as appropriate for context or clarity. The video conferences were recorded and transcribed.

Our interviews were processed to create a narrative about CIP’s programming that relies heavily on oral history methods. This approach centers on empowerment, orality, and subjectivity. Oral history is a tool for empowerment. It is a tool for oral culture communities to share their experiences and knowledge with dominant institutions that center written knowledge, such as academia. Documenting oral accounts allows marginalized communities to speak for themselves through a more natural and authentic medium, particularly within institutions that have historically been exclusionary to these communities. We centered orality and subjectivity in the writing of the study, "preserving the unique character of the interviewee’s speech, not ... ‘flattening the emotional content’... Interviews tell us ‘not just what happened but what people thought happened and how they have internalized and interpreted what happened’" (Abrams, 2010). We have maintained direct quotes throughout this report as much as possible with interviewee consent to amplify and accurately portray the perspective of CIP's staff and volunteers.

This report utilizes a literature review to 1) contextualize CIP's work within the broader history and present characteristics of Durham, NC, and 2) provide definitions of key terminology throughout the report. Works cited include pre-existing oral histories, municipal and federal reporting, public media, and external research. In addition, the Local Historical Context section draws heavily from another WFPC report by historian Melissa Norton titled *Power & Benefit on the Plate - The History of Food in Durham, North Carolina*.

LOCAL HISTORICAL CONTEXT

HISTORICAL CONTEXT FOR CURRENT RACIALIZED INEQUITIES IN EAST DURHAM

The land that today is called Durham is the ancestral home of the Occaneechi, Eno, Adshusheer, and Shocco people. By the time Europeans permanently settled in the area in the 1750s, most of the Native Peoples had left to join other tribes in the north and west with whom they had alliances (Norton, 2020). What is now called East Durham was built around The Durham Cotton Manufacturing Company mill in the 1880s. East Durham was a densely packed set of identical houses with a small commercial area facing the mill. By the early 1900s, it had grown to a relatively large community, composed primarily of white, working-class residents. East Durham grew for some time in the early 20th century as the textile industry flourished ("East Durham," n.d.). Eventually, textile production became less profitable, and local leaders attempted to lessen the area's economic reliance on agriculture and manufacturing.

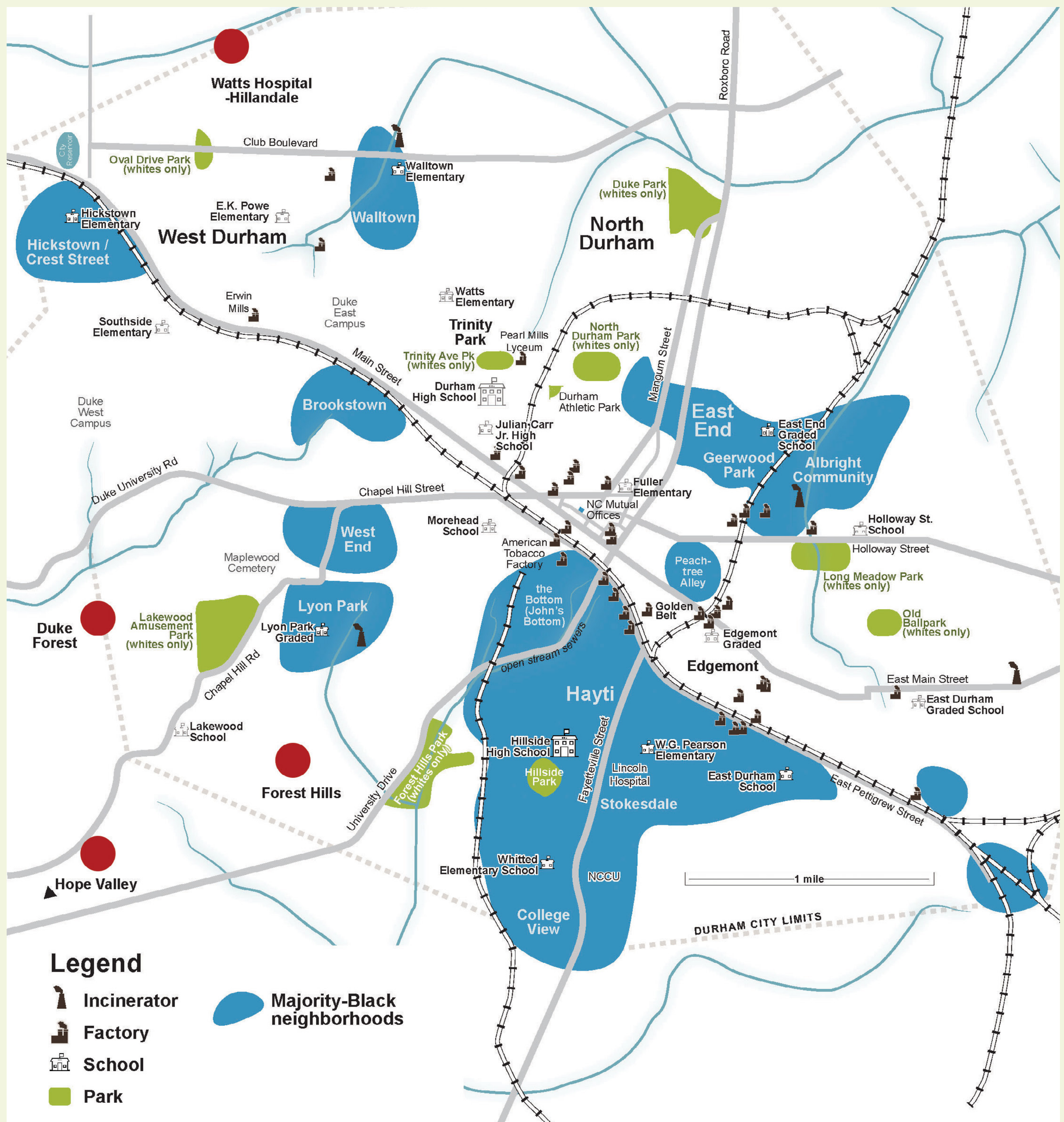
In the 1950s, the "Research Triangle Park" was built in Durham to attract technology companies to the area. This was followed by a period of "Urban Renewal" through the 1960s-1970s that was not unique to Durham, but was especially pronounced in the city. During this time, the construction of Highway 147 was planned to spur further economic development and trade. The road was designed to pass through the vibrant and predominantly Black community of Hayti just south of downtown Durham. Over 4,000 families and 500 businesses were displaced from Hayti through eminent domain to enable the construction of this highway. Most of these people were not compensated for lost housing and businesses (Norton, 2020). (See Figure 1, Hayti neighboorhood before and after the construction of Highway 147 between 1960-1970.)

Hundreds of former residents of Hayti migrated to East Durham after the destruction of Hayti, many moving into the new public housing development, Few Gardens (Few Gardens, n.d.). Over the next few decades, the neighborhood transitioned from a white, working-class to a predominantly Black, working-class community, primarily due to white flight following the influx of new Black residents. As the demographics shifted, fewer public funds went to improvement projects in East Durham. (Figure 2.) Zoning was allowed more toxic industries in the neighborhood, such as solid waste disposal sites, incinerators, and factories (*Mapping Durham Waste Sites*, 2020). Over time, this disinvestment resulted in a more toxic built environment in East Durham. These environmental factors shaped health, economic, and other social outcomes. Currently, the median household income in Old East Durham is less than 43% of the median income for the city as a whole (American Community Survey, 2021). Residents are also 47% more likely to have diabetes than an average Durham resident (DataWorks NC with Research Action, n.d.). (Figure 3.)

Figure 1. Aerial photographs of a section of Hayti before (left) and after urban renewal (right). Only one building, St. Joseph's AME church, from this area is still standing. The original streets are shown for reference.

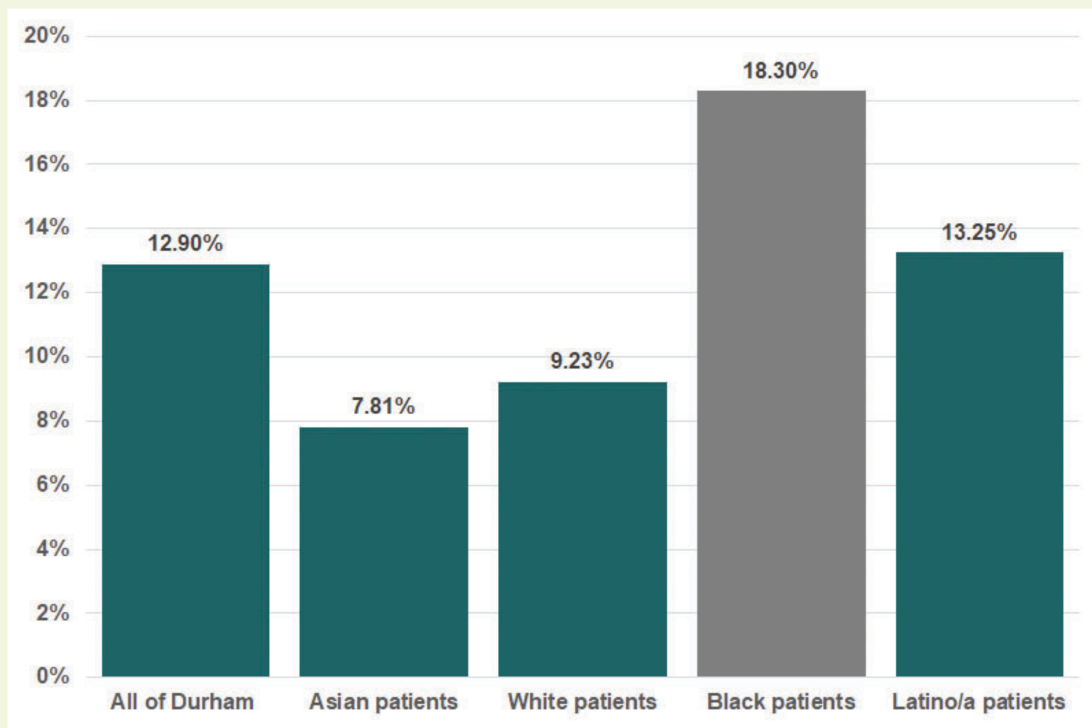
Source: Open Durham.

Figure 2. Map showing distribution of public amenities and nuisances in Durham Black neighborhoods are closer to incinerators and factories and have fewer parks and schools. The red circles indicate neighborhoods with racial deed restrictions.



Source: Hill's 1937 City Directory, Durham Public Works Department 1937 city map, and Open Durham. Courtesy Tim Stallmann, Research Action Design

Figure 3. Chart of Type 2 diabetes rates among adult population in Durham County across race, 2017



Source: Durham Neighborhood Compass

GENTRIFICATION HAS EXACERBATED ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

Over time, the "Research Triangle" grew to become a colloquial name for the region - representing not only the park in Durham but also a broader technology and intellectual economy. This boom has attracted many new residents from across the country, seeking high-paying jobs at the companies and institutions located here. These newcomers earn significantly more than the average existing Durham resident. In fact, in the 2015-16 tax filing year, their per-capita adjusted gross income (AGI) was about $16,000 higher than the typical Durham resident. This influx of highly educated and high-earning residents has raised the cost of housing significantly in neighborhoods near downtown Durham. This increase in the cost of housing is leading to eviction and displacement of the residents who have lived in Durham for decades, many of whom are Black, Latinx, and/or working class. (Johson & McDaniel, n.d.)

East Durham is one of the neighborhoods where housing prices have skyrocketed, and significant stress has been put on the existing community. In fact, the Zillow home value index for Old East Durham increased from $53,000 in 2012 to $243,000 in 2021. (Zillow, n.d.) In addition, while the bordering neighborhood, Old Five Points, had a median household income of $64,837 in 2018, Old East Durham's median household income was $24,473 (DataWorks NC with Research Action, n.d.). This median household income level has likely increased in the last three years due to the influx of new, wealthier residents increasingly moving into East Durham.

CASE: COMMUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

CIP WAS FOUNDED BY THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES

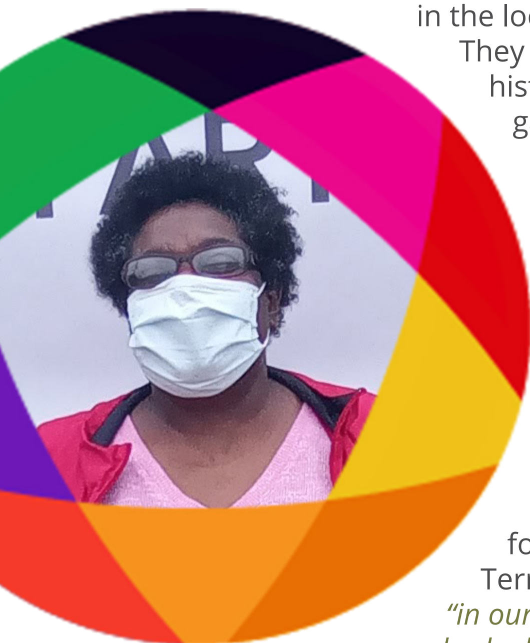
KEY TAKEAWAYS

Community members in East Durham created the organization together as a tool for racial, economic, and social liberation at the community level

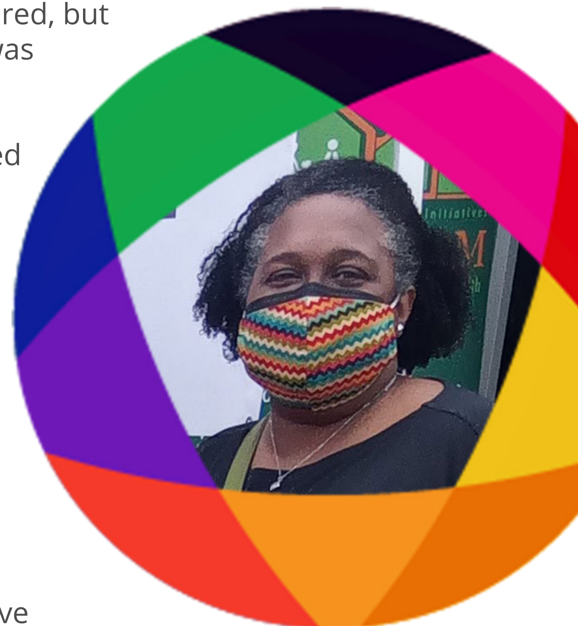
CIP uses food as a pathway to build community wealth and health, contextualized in a range of interconnected programs addressing the social determinants of health in East Durham

CIP's history

Communities in Partnership (CIP) was founded by a group of community members in East Durham in 2011. CIP founders shared that, at the time, they were fed up with over-policing, pressures of gentrification, structural poverty, and constant intrusion from outside actors in the neighborhood, including large nonprofits and government. Constant efforts to "help" residents of East Durham almost always treated the symptoms of poverty, such as hunger, but never addressed the root causes of poverty in the area. These root causes are explored in the local context section. They include the historical racial wealth gap and municipal disinvestment in the neighborhood. At the time of CIP's founding, poverty and disempowerment placed social and economic pressure on the community. One founder, Veronica Terry, shared that *"in our neighborhood... we had a lot of shooting going on."* She explained how this escalated over time, tragically in a shooting that involved children in 2011. Thankfully the children recovered, but that shooting was a final straw. In the aftermath, neighbors rallied together. According to Terry: *"...they were tired of this going on. They wanted to make a change."*



Veronica Terry



Camryn Smith

After the shooting, co-founder and current executive director Camryn Smith recalls being told by police and local organizations to *"... board up our windows, board up our front doors, run to and from our cars... and don't stand outside talking to your neighbors... don't let your children play outside."* Despite pressure to shut down the community from those outside the neighborhood, Smith, Terry, and other community leaders instead decided to intentionally work together to strengthen it. In addition, Smith said *"...we decided that we wanted to focus on building the narrative about ourselves and our community that was reflective of who we really were and not the overarching narrative that was created by other people about us."*

KEY CONCEPT

White Supremacy Culture

White supremacy culture is the "idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are [inherently] superior to People of Color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions"(Okun, n.d.). Whiteness is a social construct tied to physical features like light skin characteristic of Europeans which has expanded to include a range of ideas, beliefs, practices, and cultural concepts that emerged in Europe. As Europeans colonized other parts of the world, they differentiated themselves as "white" through tying this identifier to Western European physical and cultural features. This provided a contrast between themselves as "us" and the people experiencing colonialism as "them," as non-white people. This distinction was a psychological and political tool to justify the violence inherent in the colonial activity. Over time, the prioritization of white cultural forms was baked into the design of governmental, educational, social, and economic systems (Jacobson 2002, Garner 2007). It persists in our laws, media, and culture in ways that continue processes of white domination implicitly. White supremacy culture is often unnamed and unacknowledged as eurocentric processes, practices, and ideologies have been encoded as the status quo.

A Duke World Food Policy Center report, Identifying and Countering White Supremacy Culture in Food Systems explores how white supremacy culture specifically impacts the food system. This paper explores how whiteness dictates health and nutrition standards, shapes our conception of farming and gardening, leads to white-led programs serving non-white beneficiaries, and perpetuates historical inequities, particularly land and labor (Conrad, 2020).

Smith and others in East Durham engaged in community organizing to address policing policy in the city, including growing Durham's Fostering Alternatives to Drug Enforcement Coalition. The founders participated in antiracist training with the Racial Equity Institute and others through these organizing activities. Smith said *"...as we grew in our racial equity analysis, we began to see that all systems, like housing, education, food systems, healthcare, all of these and more are actually interwoven and interconnected."*

She shared how CIP's work looks at the root cause of inequity across these systems, *"...how white supremacy culture and the intentionality with which systems that are rooted in white supremacy have been created and just never questioned and replicated and stabilized and protected, and how those negatively impact Black folks in Northeast (Durham)."*

The founders created spaces for community members to come together and talk about what they wanted for East Durham. Then, they went door to door, meeting neighbors to learn about their needs and dreams. From this collaborative process and informed by antiracism training and organizing activities, CIP arrived at the following vision and mission:

CIP VISION

We envision East Durham and the surrounding area as a vibrant place where all residents have an exceptional quality of life with the economic and political power to impact decision making that affects their community.

CIP MISSION

Our mission is to organize and cultivate long-term residents, especially residents of color and low wealth, to work towards racial, economic, and social liberation.

With this lens, CIP has started its work by focusing on the most immediate needs of its community members: food, health, and housing. CIP's current pillars are food justice, affordable housing, entrepreneurship & workforce development, and antiracism leadership training. All of these pillars are interrelated and connected. This paper specifically focuses on the food justice programs and the vision to use food to build collective community wealth and health.

KEY CONCEPTS

Liberation

Liberation is both an action and a state of being. It is "the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression; release" and the resulting "freedom from limits on thought or behavior" ("Liberation," 2021).

Liberation requires assessing the current manifestations of inequity from the perspective of oppressed groups, who recognize and can name how this inequity shows up as subjective and objective forces that shape their lived experiences. This can occur in interpersonal interactions, manifest in institutional policy and practice, and even within oneself, through beliefs. Liberatory action is led by oppressed groups and directly confronts and challenges the existing hierarchical order in its many manifestations. Liberation entails dismantling the systems that allow certain groups to be controlled and dominated by others. As systems are dismantled, there is room to create new systems, a freer flow of resources, and a disaggregation of power that allows for self-determination for all people (Friere, 1985).

CIP is predominantly Black women-led and Black women-founded, which is, in itself, liberatory.

Food Justice

Food justice is 'the struggle against racism, exploitation, and oppression taking place within the food system that addresses inequality's root causes both within and beyond the food chain' (Hislop, 2014). Food justice takes a systems view on outcomes in the food system like hunger, malnutrition, and diet-related disease, identifying and addressing the root causes of these issues. It is about uprooting inequalities of wealth, land and resource control, centralized and unrepresentative decision-making power, and institutionalized racism across the food system (Alkon & Agyeman, 2010).

Solutions to create food justice are diverse and context-specific. They represent localized and disaggregated approaches developed by those most impacted. But, broadly speaking, they create community wealth and ownership, form more cooperative decision-making processes, and center Black and Brown communities in their design. CIP's food justice programs, outlined in this case study, accomplish these goals through centering community members in the design, leadership, and benefit of a Black and Brown-owned food system in East Durham and the surrounding rural communities.

CIP'S PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED BY AND FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

KEY TAKEAWAY

CIP engaged community members at all stages, using an asset-based community development and appreciative inquiry approach to relationship building and strategic planning

Community potlucks

One of the first programs that CIP put in place in 2011 to build towards a shared vision for East Durham was a series of monthly potlucks. Residents could talk about what they wanted to see in the community. The founders went door-to-door, inviting neighbors to attend and to bring both food and ideas to share communally. Everyone purchased their own ingredients and carefully created the dishes they brought. The potluck format was important for CIP's liberatory approach, as a visual and physical representation that everyone in attendance brings their own unique and meaningful gifts to share. The potluck format also served to place neighborly communing over the negative experiences of violence, fear, and outside intervention. Describing the rationale for community potlucks, a long-time staff member and East Durham resident reflected, *"people thought about engaging in this space before they arrived, and they knew that their presence demanded their participation."*

In these early potlucks, community members came together to dream about what might be possible. Residents shared ideas for community events such as Halloween Trunk or Treat, weekend neighborhood cleanup, and ways of growing and eating healthier food. Many of these neighborhood ideas came to life in the coming years, including the range of food systems programs outlined in this case study. These sessions were guided by a spirit of appreciative inquiry and facilitated by community members trained in asset-based community development methodologies. These approaches allowed CIP to focus on what was already great about East Durham and its residents, and build programming from the premise that community members had a lot to contribute and could lead their own solutions.

KEY CONCEPTS

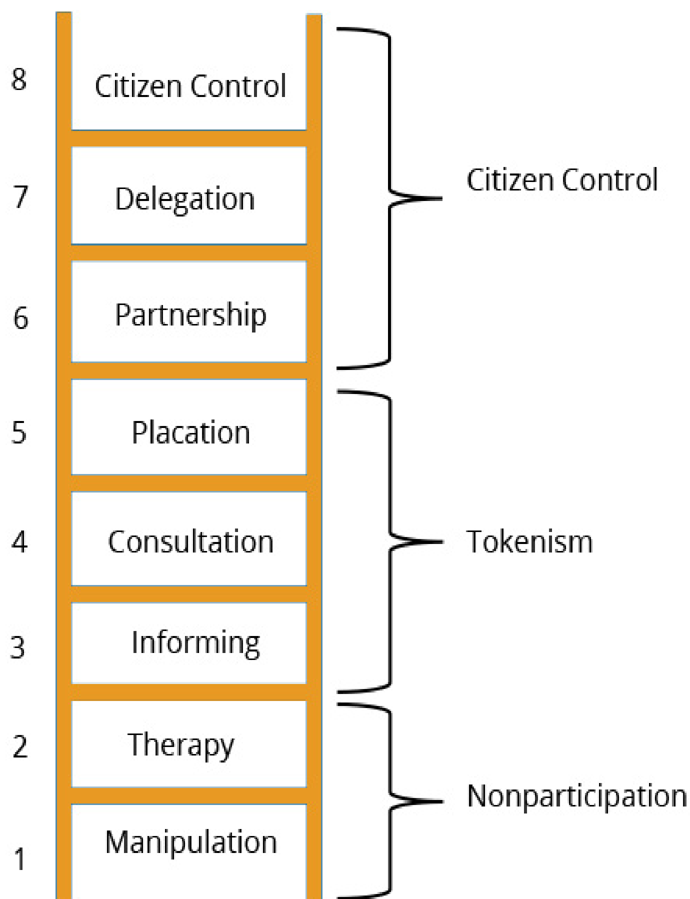
Appreciative inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is about recognizing the best in people and places, focusing stakeholders on self-determined change that centers on what could be. Appreciative inquiry focuses on social cohesion, creativity, and positive analysis to drive change and strategy. This is divergent from other common methods for change management and strategic planning, which focus more on identifying challenges and problem-solving (*Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*, n.d.).

Asset-based community development

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is connected to appreciative inquiry. It builds a plan for local development on the foundation of existing, positive assets in the community. These assets can be natural resources like land features, social or political capital in community connection and activism, cultural assets like regional cuisine, human capital in local citizens' skills and abilities, financial capital, or the built environment, such as historic buildings (Emery et al., 2006). ABCD focuses on connecting these assets through relationships across a community so that the community can act together more effectively. By organizing and sharing resources, local stakeholders build power to improve conditions based on existing collective strengths (Asset-Based Community Development Toolkit, n.d.).

Figure 4. Degrees of Citizen Participation



This format was very different from the standard practice for nonprofit or government engagement in East Durham, which interviewees described as transactional and disempowering. Typical interventions in East Durham focused on food charity, food distribution rather than the participant experience or relationship-building. Interviewees explained that these interventions did not allow room for participant feedback or involvement and seemed to assume that community members had nothing to contribute towards the work. In contrast, CIP's potlucks were fully owned by and fully supported by the community, both financially and operationally. This community-driven approach deepened relationships, created collective spaces, and allowed for the self-determination of solutions.

KEY CONCEPT

Citizen participation

Liberatory community development allows citizens to control the initiatives that impact themselves and their families. CIP utilizes the Arnstein Ladder framework to articulate how community members participate in planning and program execution across CIP initiatives and to contrast with how East Durham residents are often engaged by outside organizations.

Arnstein's ladder presents citizen participation in varying degrees, ranging from manipulated - or coerced - participation to full citizen control of the activities impacting their community. The lowest level of the ladder, Nonparticipation (manipulation or therapy), occurs when citizens are forced to accept programming that impacts them without input. Tokenism entails access to information, consultation about programming, or some accommodations but still maintains the power of external actors to dictate activity. Finally, CIP aims for citizen control, which occurs through partnership, delegation, and democratization of activity, such that all who desire to be agents in the activity can fully participate as equals (Arnstein, 1969). (Figure 4.)

Photographs of community potlucks. Credit: CIP

CIP IS CREATING A BLACK AND BROWN-OWNED FOOD SYSTEM, NOT ANOTHER FOOD CHARITY

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The cooperative approach to building food justice continues citizen participation beyond planning and implementation.

A food cooperative builds relationships between owners and enables responsiveness to the community's desire for specific foods and programs.

Community Food Cooperative

Community health, grounded in healthy foods, was a primary focus of discussion at the community potlucks. However, there was no access to fresh produce nearby in 2011. The closest grocery store, Save-A-Lot, was outside of East Durham and difficult to access for the elderly and those without a car. Even if community members could get to Save-A-Lot or another nearby option, they described the quality as "third choice," with spoiled produce and many highly processed items. The USDA terminology for this type of environment is a food desert, but CIP prefers to use the term food apartheid, framed by community activist and organizer Karen Washington (Washington, n.d.). Food apartheid acknowledges that the absence of food retail, the lack of walkability, and the poor quality of food options directly result from conscious choices by investors, historical and current policymakers, and individuals living in a community now and in the past.

One community member we interviewed said, *"when other people feed you, you're pretty certain that your health disparities are going to actually increase, not decrease, especially for Black folks."* It was therefore vital to CIP to create a food space that it owned, that was welcoming to the community, that provided healthy options at accessible prices.

The Community Food Cooperative (co-op) started as a dream about a small food retail location with top-quality fresh produce. It was informed over time through conversations at the potlucks. The idea evolved as community members participated in antiracist training and organizing, learning about research on social movements, and discussing food cooperative models that they had seen work in other marginalized communities. They decided to go with a cooperative model because it was grounded in community and requires engagement and participation from everyone. Smith shared about the choice saying, *"Black people have always used the cooperative movement as a tool of nurturing and resiliency...Nobody can work for you better than you can work for yourself."*

The founders shared that they quickly realized that supporting this vision would require additional resources, particularly in economic disinvestment and low wealth in East Durham. In addition, long-term sustainability would require grant funding and capital infusion. So, with the support of the Duke legal clinic, Communities in Partnership applied for 501c3 nonprofit status in 2016. Soon after, CIP received its first grant from the Duke Office of Durham and Community affairs to subsidize the co-op. Over the years, the co-op has received additional funding from Duke and a range of other governmental and philanthropic organizations.

The co-op began in May 2017, with 30 initial members. Until the pandemic ended, in-person meetings, co-op distribution coincided with the potlucks. Community members would enjoy a meal and create their own boxes with coop products to take home. They chose fresh local produce, some dry goods, and miscellaneous other necessary items like toothbrushes or feminine health products, all at no additional charge above their membership dues. Distribution occurred monthly on Thursday nights in the beginning and increased to twice a month during the COVID-19

KEY CONCEPTS

Food desert vs. Food apartheid

The term **'food desert'** originated in the United Kingdom in the 1990s and quickly gained popularity as a shorthand to describe "'regions in which access to food retailers that stock fresh, affordable, and healthy food options are lacking or nonexistent.'" The term simplified complex discourses about food access, creating a binary distinction between areas that were/were not food deserts. This term was picked up by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It became a tool for geographically identifying areas more likely to experience food insecurity, generally based on grocery stores' location and transportation availability (Widener, 2018).

Activist Karen Washington has challenged the utility and accuracy of this concept, coining the term **food apartheid** to better describe why some areas have a poor food environment. Washington said, *"'Desert' also makes us think of an empty, absolutely desolate place. But when we're talking about these places, there is so much life and vibrancy and potential...What I would rather say instead of 'food desert' is 'food apartheid,' because 'food apartheid' looks at the whole food system, along with race, geography, faith, and economics. You say 'food apartheid' and you get to the root cause of some of the problems around the food system. It brings in hunger and poverty. It brings us to the more important question: What are some of the social inequalities that you see, and what are you doing to erase some of the injustices?"* (Brones, 2018). Food apartheid acknowledges the structural, racialized forces that have shaped an area's economic and ecological outcomes. It asserts that the presence or absence of grocery stores and other food sources is not a natural phenomenon but rather a result of explicit decision-making by policymakers, powerful institutions, and businesses.

Cooperative Models

Cooperatives are enterprises that are owned and controlled by the people who benefit from them and are operated collaboratively to provide services to members (Lund, 2013). Formal cooperatives are democratically owned and controlled, with the principle of «one member, one vote.» This means that each member owns exactly one share of the enterprise and has an equal vote for key decision-making.

Cooperatives operate based on shared purpose and member benefit, which can be social, cultural, and economic. Historically, marginalized groups have formed cooperatives to create power and autonomy through a collective organization. As individuals, marginalized people may have limited capital, political power, or access to land. However, when many individuals share resources as a cooperative, they can garner the benefits that other enterprises have based on size and accumulated wealth.

African Americans have formed cooperative models since the first indentured servants arrived in the United States. Still, the first recorded examples of Black cooperatives were mutual aid societies in the late 1700s. Black farmers were instrumental in the creation of community supported agriculture models and other producer-led cooperatives in the U.S. Many Black-owned consumer cooperatives have also been established across the country, including grocery stores, gas stations, credit unions, insurance co-ops, and some housing co-ops (Gordon Nembhard, 2014).

pandemic. During the pandemic, boxes were pre-prepared for pick-up. The co-op grew significantly over the years, reaching hundreds of members by 2018. In 2020, CIP's co-op had over 950 member households. Features of the Community Food Cooperative are described in greater detail in Table 1.

The co-op is about much more than feeding people. Interviewees consistently described it as a psychologically safe, community-driven, and community-building space. When asked about the relationships CIP has with the community, volunteer Amy Mejia shared, *"After the co-op, I sometimes like to go visit someone I call grandma and she's not my grandmother... She really likes to make curtido, which is the Salvadorian pickled cabbage and carrots. And so, I bring her some of the carrots and the cabbage. And we just hang out and talk and she feeds me most of the time because she always got food there. And she's one of the elders in my community. I'm saying this story because it's like this is the type of relationships that already exist. This is one of the most treasured people in my community, in East Durham... She's actually the mother of the Polanco family. So I'm talking about some of the pillar Latina community leaders of our area... And so, in terms of the nature of the relationships (CIP has with the community)... it's deep, it's love. It's natural."*

Photograph of CIP Co-Op during COVID-19 pandemic. Credit: CIP

Table 1: CIP Community Food Cooperative Components

Component	Description
Membership Fee / Buy-in	Co-op members pay a $5 monthly fee to buy into the community food cooperative. As mentioned before, ownership and autonomy are integral to the vision of CIP's programs. Participants are co-op members, not recipients, reinforced by a monthly fee. This creates a sense of ownership and choice distinct from charity models, where recipients feel less empowered to speak up about what they want and need. The co-op is still supported by grants and donations to CIP, as the cost of quality produce is too high for members to bear alone. However, the membership fee of $5 is significantly lower than the market rate of the products. In addition, it is subsidized to account for economic outcomes related to structural racism, disinvestment, and gentrification that are explored in the local context section. Later in this case study, we will discuss the East Durham Market, a promising alternative to relying on external funding to subsidize the co-op.
Community-Run	Members are expected to volunteer at distribution quarterly. Additionally, CIP employs staff who are community members. Seeing familiar faces and interacting with neighbors makes the co-op a very welcoming space compared to other spaces to get fresh food in the city that are often dominated by white, wealthy customers, workers, or volunteers. A community member we interviewed explained, the co-op is *"run by and serving the folks in the neighborhood, which is just really powerful to be a part of."*
Community Meetings	Co-op distribution occurs around shared community meetings, during which members socialize, hear from speakers, and form deeper relationships. These meetings are not just about distributing food as quickly and efficiently as possible but rather about creating moments of joy, collective learning, and conversation. In the past, farmers have come to talk about their current produce, city politicians have come to engage with the community, and members have participated in training and education. Important announcements are shared in the meetings, such as upcoming events, available programs, and public health information. For example, when lead was found in the community water supply, residents were notified in the meeting and told how to properly process their water. During the COVID-19 pandemic, CIP shared information about its community vaccination clinic during co-op distribution.
Organizing & Advocacy	The co-op creates a space for broader conversations and coalition building. For example, residents who had had challenges accessing Durham Social Services were provided a forum at a co-op distribution meeting to engage with DSS leadership.

Source: CIP

CIP IS DEVELOPING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY BETWEEN BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES & FARMERS

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CIP uses food as a tool for economic development. Specifically strengthening Black and Brown communities as a whole by expanding markets and networks for Black and Brown farmers in Durham and the surrounding counties, both urban and rural.

Expanding markets and networks for Black and Brown farmers is seen as a resilience strategy to ensure resources will stay in and increase for Black and Brown Communities.

Sourcing from Black and Brown farmers

As CIP's Community Food Co-op matured to efficient, consistent operations, CIP had increased capacity to envision new functions of the food co-op. Smith shared that *"it started off being a way for us to feed ourselves in the ever-increasing inability for people to be able to take care of themselves, especially with the cutback and the restrictive way they deal with the food stamps. But it became much bigger... we started thinking about it in terms of our systems lens."* CIP began to look at the cooperative as a tool of broader economic development, particularly for the benefit of Black and Brown food producers.

The employees and the co-op members wanted to source food from Black and Brown farmers in Durham and in the surrounding rural counties, to support their businesses and bolster the economic connectivity between these communities. The goal was to create a circular economy, to strengthen the ties between rural, Black and Brown farmers and urban Black and Brown people so that resources stay and grow within their communities. Making this a reality for the co-op has been the work of Georie Bryant, co-author of this case study. Table 2. outlines some important aspects of Bryant's work with the farmers and the vision for the East Durham Market.

CIP purchased $63,500 of produce and meat from Black and Brown farmers in 2020. These farmers are located in Caswell, Person, Granville, Warren, Halifax, Edgecombe, Wilson, Martin, Orange, Rockingham, and Duplin counties, all within 2 hours of Durham. One staff member, Kristin Henry said, *"CIP's relationship is to fully value and support as best as we can, the Black and Brown farmers so that they're getting the full value of the food that they're growing and the time that they're spending, and the resources that they're putting into the high-quality products that they're bringing us. And not just trying to get the cheapest, most abundant amount of food."*

Farmer Berry Hines from Bee Blessed Pure Honey and Georie Bryant. Credit: CIP

KEY CONCEPT

Circular Economy

The term circular economy can refer to an economic system that reuses and reintegrates waste for ecological sustainability ("What Is a Circular Economy?," n.d.), but in this case, we are using the term circular economy to suggest that resources, particularly financial resources, continually flow within a community to generate wealth and prosperity. We are contrasting this to a model where the majority of spending in a neighborhood goes to businesses whose ownership or physical location is outside of that neighborhood.

In communities like East Durham experiencing food apartheid, a lot of food spending goes to fast food or convenience store chains, with the economic benefit going to corporations. By creating a food system that is locally owned, CIP is instead allowing co-op members to support local, Black and Brown-owned businesses, which in turn helps them to grow and benefit the larger community. As more income is earned and spent locally, the collective wealth of the community can grow over time and be shared amongst community members rather than being removed from the community.

Farmer Michael Graves from Porte Lu and CIP staff. Credit: CIP

Table 2: CIP Supplier Approach

Component	Description
Respect & Relationships	Often in the context of white-led nonprofit work the authors have experienced, leaders will complain that they “can’t find Black farmers,” or have difficulty coordinating and communicating with them. To meet diversity or equity targets, efforts to find and purchase from these farmers are often treated as a “check the box” activity. Farmers have shared that working with these organizations is challenging. They must accommodate complex processes and are often asked to lower their price. These requirements for additional labor and lower revenue can make selling produce in these contexts burdensome and unprofitable. In contrast, CIP considers the needs of the farmers and endeavors to form genuine relationships with them, getting to know each other as people, understanding their goals, their family history and heritage around farming, and their lives outside of work. CIP thinks of the farmers as artisans - acknowledging that they often put a great deal of care into a small plot of land. CIP pays the full market rate for the produce, recognizing the value of how the food was produced
Technical Assistance & Support	Bryant supports CIP’s farmers with technical assistance as they navigate government programs, apply for grants and other funding, and consider selling in other food service contexts. He helps them understand how to market their products and businesses and prepares them to engage across contexts to ensure they are successful and fairly compensated.
Affinity & Community	Black and Brown communities in rural and urban settings have been separated not only by geography, but also often by policy and business interests. Government initiatives have classified counties as “rural” or “urban” for decades to determine eligibility for federal programs that target rural areas. In North Carolina, the authors have observed these programs distinguishing and dividing these communities economically and socially, weakening existing relationships. CIP creates a circular economy that allows the farmers to sell their produce to people that look like them and for community members to support those farmers in many ways. This creation of community based on affinity not only breaks down separation but allows for new kinds of relationships to form. Volunteer Amy Mejia shared, *“I think it is healing for our community to get fed food from Black and Brown farmers. I get so much joy and spiritual connection knowing that my food came from Tahz Walker, Cristina Rivera Chapman, or Baba Bernard Obi. It’s beautiful that I know that. And I’m sure our community feels grateful as well to know that.”*

CIP IS BUILDING FOR RESILIENCE & AUTONOMY

KEY TAKEAWAYS

CIP is utilizing a tiered pricing strategy to enable both self-sufficiency and community support

Minimizing reliance on grant funding allows CIP to retain greater control over programs and ensure long-term solvency.

East Durham Market

CIP's long-term goal is to support local autonomy and ownership of the food system, finding ways to nurture an ecosystem of Black and Brown-owned food businesses without reliance on outside funding, particularly from philanthropy. While donations have been essential in supporting the development of the food co-op, CIP has begun to develop other markets for the farmers' produce, which can sustain their businesses long-term

In the summer of 2020, CIP launched the East Durham Market, which sells pre-packaged boxes of seasonal fresh produce selections from local farmers during a monthly outdoor market. Table 3. describes the market in greater detail.

Photos: Goods for sale at East Durham Market. Credit: CIP.

Table 3: East Durham Market Overview

COMPONENT	DESCRIPTION
Market Expansion	The same Black and Brown farmers who supply the Co-op also supply the East Durham market. However, the East Durham Market customer base is much larger. It extends outside East Durham to include more wealthy consumers, who have demonstrated a willingness to pay a higher cost for the fresh produce and meats. This includes many affluent new residents described in the Local Context section. Volunteer Tirzah Villegas who works at Duke shared that many of her colleagues enjoy purchasing produce from the East Durham Market. She describes them as *"people who have the resources and still want to have food that they consider more ethically sourced, more ethically grown, and people who care about supporting Black and Brown farmers."*
Tiered Pricing	The East Durham Market utilizes a tiered pricing system to ensure equitable access to market products without undercutting revenue generation. The standard market price for East Durham Market produce boxes includes a small mark-up that allows CIP to pay fair prices to farmers, provide living wages for employees, and generate revenue to support CIP's other programs. Customers utilizing SNAP or WIC receive boxes for half-price, thanks to a Double Bucks grant from Blue Cross NC. Additionally, customers can use their SNAP and WIC benefits to purchase the produce. This allows East Durham Market boxes to act as a supplement for co-op members at an affordable price. This tiered pricing system allows CIP to access the benefits of economic growth in the area while still offering affordable options to community members.
Earned Income & Self-sufficiency	As the East Durham Market grows and reaches consumers with more resources, the revenue generated can offset the community food cooperative's grant funding needs. Unfortunately, most grant application processes dictate how funds should be allocated, often neglecting to fund labor or overhead expenses. For example, CIP has challenges convincing funders to invest in living wages for program staff. In contrast, funders are often excited to support programming or capital investments. CIP designed the East Durham Market to eventually become self-sustaining, without dependence or reliance on external funding or support. Lessening reliance on external funders will provide greater autonomy to define programs and decide how to use resources. This is very different from typical charity models that rely on ongoing donations to feed people without fundamentally altering the economic circumstances that created the hunger and need.

CONCLUSION

CIP LEVERAGES COMMUNITY ASSETS & RELATIONSHIPS TO DRIVE SYSTEMS CHANGE

Community-Rooted™

Smith says that what is different about CIP's model is that it is, *"led by people that are the most directly impacted on varying levels... and those of us that are actually leading CIP also live in the community. So the choices that we make impact us and our families as well."* Smith, other CIP founders, and research partners developed and trademarked the framework 'Community-Rooted™' to describe organizations like CIP that are committed to liberative community development practices, practices that put community members in control of the decisions that impact their lives (Smith et al., 2020). CIP amplifies the lived experience of residents through governance structures, decision-making practices, and strategies that reinforce accountability, enhance community ownership, and emphasize systems-level change. Everything about the food justice work is grounded in a vision for East Durham that was collectively defined by community members coming together in those early potlucks.

One staff member reflected on the difference between CIP and the national nonprofit they worked at earlier in their career. They shared, *"even though we worked with a lot of 'grassroots organizations' a lot of times it was still the people on staff making the calls. They're the ones leading the agenda, which has a lot to do with the funders, because if you can't get the money, then you can't do the work. And so with Communities In Partnership, it's very community driven in just the literal sense of that term. Where the priorities come from neighborhood meetings, come from the struggles that neighbors are having. The organization literally came from the neighbors here coming together and making it happen step by step. Not with the purpose of creating an organization, but more with the purpose of coming together and addressing issues. So, I see a lot of the agenda being set very much by day-to-day people, even though there are staff. It's still very much in step with the people that we work with and serve."*

A volunteer who is a Duke graduate student reflected on an informal motto of CIP, "nothing about us without us." She said, *"I think that pretty much says it all. There are so many nonprofits here in Durham that are led by Duke students like me, who aren't from here, who can look at things and say, 'Oh, I think this is what needs to happen.' But it's people who are making decisions that don't necessarily affect them. People who can just walk away if things go south. And I really appreciate that CIP is led by people who are making decisions that are going to affect their own lives or making decisions for their own communities."*

Responsiveness in relationship

Because CIP is run by those directly impacted, CIP's work is grounded in deep relationships. CIP is less fixated on maintaining static organizational programs and priorities, and more focused on the immediate, most pressing needs of the community. This means that CIP is able to respond quickly to new needs, reaching people that may not have engaged with external programming.

For example, volunteer Alex Hawkins shared that, *"when COVID arose, we provided masks with the food. We provided literature on safe practices during COVID. When the election came around we provided the handouts on where voting can take place. Just in this last month we've been providing information on vaccinations and supporting a vaccination clinic for 250, 300 people."* The co-op does not just distribute food. It also is a tool for community-building and information sharing, which proved vital during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Antiracism & systems-based solutions

Smith shared that for CIP, *"it's all about creating food systems that aren't predicated on oppression and scarcity, that are owned and operated and benefiting Black people specifically first, and then secondarily other people groups of color who have been directly impacted."* She shared that CIP is, *"fine-tuning our analysis to see the systems of inequality and how they basically work in tandem to have a lot of the outcomes that we were not wanting to impact our communities, ourselves or our kids."*

CIP's food co-op is not just about feeding people, she explains. It is about creating an alternative to the food, economic, and social systems that were harming residents of East Durham. It is about creating a system that links a diverse set of community assets, and community needs to create a food-based economy. As a result, everyone has a role in the system and receives benefits.

A staff member, Chaniqua Simpson, spoke to how CIP's model rejects structures that embody white supremacy in access to food. She said, *"white supremacy tells us beggars can't be choosers, that's what people in power tell us."* Working at CIP has helped Simpson to *"embody and to think critically about how white supremacy and capitalism and patriarchy and all these things tell us how to engage with people, especially if we want to fill gaps in food access and what that means."*

CIP Staff Kristen Henry and Chaniqua Simpson co-op pickup during pandemic. Credit: CIP

CIP'S APPROACH ILLUMINATES BROAD FINDINGS ABOUT FOOD JUSTICE

While CIP's work is locally contextual by design, key concepts that guide the organization's food systems work provide broadly relevant framing for food justice:

LIBERATION

Liberation is about creating the circumstances for freedom as well as the state of freedom itself. When communities do not control their own food conditions, it is clear that structures are in place that allow certain people groups and institutions to dictate what happens in the food system. Liberation happens when citizens reclaim the power to create their food environment through solutions they define, design, and implement, as CIP did in East Durham.

WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

Paternalism, individualism, and eurocentrism are baked into the economic, cultural, and governmental framing of the food system at local and national scales (Conrad 2020). A clear analysis of how white supremacy culture manifests in a specific context can inform targeted effort and action for organizations focused on creating food justice. CIP's early organizing demonstrated this critical analysis and proactively incorporated empowerment, collectivism, and processes that center cultural relevance for East Durham's Black and Brown community.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

CIP frames its work using Arnstein's ladder, arguing that citizen leadership and participation are integral to solutions that are relevant and sustainable long-term. CIP's food justice programs disrupt externally imposed manipulation as well as "well-intentioned" tokenism and consultation. Other organizations can emulate this model by evaluating the degree of ownership and control of those most impacted by any intervention.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY (A.I.) AND ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (ABCD)

CIP centered on the gifts and inherent ability of East Durham residents to co-create a new food system. These approaches counter the deficit model and pathologization that is often inherent to externally imposed programs addressing food insecurity. Many playbooks and trainings exist for A.I. and ABCD which can support other communities that wish to employ these methodologies.

COOPERATIVE MODELS

CIP uses cooperative models to empower community members through democratic approaches for operations and decision-making. These models counter the power of individuals, institutions, and organizations to work "on behalf of" impacted communities. Cooperatives are well-defined legally, but can take many operational forms to appropriately accommodate cultural norms in a specific context.

FOOD APARTHEID

CIP utilizes the framing defined by activist Karen Washington to continually reinforce that "food deserts" are not an outcome of natural systems, but rather a predictable output of structural inequity. CIP explicitly understands how public policy and city planning decisions led to the absence of fresh food retail and high-paying food industry jobs in East Durham. An understanding of the historical context of racialized and economic exploitation in an area is essential to contextualize modern outcomes and move towards reparative food justice.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

CIP takes a systems view on the economic outcomes of its food programs. The Community Food Cooperative and East Durham Market are not only about providing subsidized food, but also about economic development and circulating money within a community of Black and Brown producers and consumers. Food system interventions can build community wealth by buying supplies and services from businesses in the impacted community, recirculating resources to create a "multiplier effect."

CIP's work is grounded in liberation, which centers those most directly impacted and empowers them to define the change that happens in their own community. Diverse stakeholders come together in place-based organizations, which are naturally bounded in size by the requirements of proximity and meaningful relationships. As a result of this diversity, local context, and disaggregation, liberatory community development is community-defined and has an emergent quality that resists predefinition and prescription. CIP's food systems programming is one case in one context, intended to challenge the dominant narrative that "communities can't take care of themselves." There are as many models for community ownership as there are unique communities. We hope to conduct future case studies of these models and to continue highlighting broadly applicable learnings through further research.

Credit: CIP. Sorting collard greens for sale.

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