Why Democratize Development?

Across the country, residents and community institutions are coming together and organizing in new ways to create a people-powered alternative vision for housing policy and local development. This vision is not driven by profit, speculation, or the influx of new corporate capital. This vision is centered on self-determined community needs as millions of renters are just one rent increase or eviction away from experiencing homelessness. This vision cuts across philanthropic silos and connects housing needs with income inequality, criminal justice, climate justice, health, immigration, and LGBTQ issues to benefit all low-income and working-class communities.

At the heart of this driving force for change is a wave of community organizing efforts powered by residents taking back local development from the impacts of corporate land grabs, depressed wages, and lack of government action. Generations of discriminatory housing policy have harmed communities of color, which are disproportionately policed and targeted by the same legal system that criminalizes low-income people experiencing homelessness due to limited affordable housing. Residents are organizing for the right to make their own decisions on where and how they want to live and thrive, based on a deep understanding of the housing crisis’s systemic root causes.

This growing movement that democratizes housing development has a meaningful analysis of how the power of politicians, business community, corporations, developers, investors, and philanthropic resources have outweighed the restricted power of longtime residents to participate in and influence the market, engage in policy decision-making, and shape the public policy debates based on their own lived experiences. Movement leaders understand how current and historical market systems have driven gentrification, displacement, land speculation, unsafe housing conditions, runaway rent increases, and discriminatory eviction practices in service of increasing profits.

How Funders are Responding:

Neighborhood Funders Group’s Democratizing Development Program (DDP) brings together place-based and national funders to provide learning, analysis, and mutual support around organizing the field of philanthropy and genuinely partnering with communities to support sustainable development, community power building strategies and affordable housing. Our funders are working at the intersections of the housing crisis catalyzing change through collaboration with community stakeholders, addressing systems of inequity to create long-lasting benefits for low-income individuals, families, and communities of color in neighborhoods.

DDP members helped launch the Fund for an Inclusive California, a funder collaborative designed to advance racial and economic equity and community health in California’s cities. Members also worked to launch the Amplify Fund, a four-year funder collaborative that believes community power is the key driver of just and equitable development.
DDP Advances Strategies to:

- Protect renters by helping them build power from the ground up
- Invest in permanently affordable housing, community land trusts, and cooperative housing that take land and housing off the speculative market
- Preserve communities through strategic collaborations, policy advocacy, and law
- Address structural racism and the root causes to the housing crisis
- Produce affordable housing and advocate for equitable development
- Support local, regional, statewide, and national organizing infrastructure
- Advance conversations on community development and ownership models that allow residents to influence local decisions and create longer-term benefits for themselves
- Embed equitable solutions and strategies for public infrastructure and other systems that can otherwise negatively impact neighborhoods
- Share best practices, challenges, opportunities and equity-centered grantmaking approaches through convenings, webinars, and other peer-learning opportunities

Join Us and Take Action:

We invite funders to the DDP network to deepen our efforts by investing in community solutions and mobilizing to build a robust, energized, and empowering network of organizations and funders. Together, we will:

- **Strategize** around intersectional approaches that protect tenants, preserve communities, and produce affordable housing solutions that address low-income community needs
- **Engage** a broad range of funders at the intersections of housing, community safety and justice, education, health, jobs, climate, gender, and racial justice to center the needs of low-income communities and communities of color
- **Advance** conversations on community development and ownership models that allow residents to influence local decisions and create longer-term benefits for themselves
- **Embed** equitable solutions and strategies for public infrastructure and other systems that can otherwise negatively impact neighborhoods
- **Share** best practices, challenges, opportunities and equity-centered grantmaking approaches through convenings, webinars, and other peer-learning opportunities

Interested in learning more about DDP?

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