

# Economic Development as a Health Promotion Strategy: *Opportunities for Maximizing Impact*

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# What is Northwest Health Foundation?

- Independent, nonprofit foundation that seeks to advance, support, and promote the health of the people of Oregon and southwest Washington.
- We achieve our mission through:
  - Grant making
  - Technical assistance and training
  - Convening
  - Partnerships with community
  - Commissioning research
  - Policy advocacy

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# What do economics have to do with health?

- Unemployment linked to higher prevalence of ill health and high excess mortality
- Strong evidence that longer term unemployment causes deterioration in mental health in those who were previously healthy
- Job insecurity → negative psychological health effects.



# Economics and health - unemployment

- Chronic stress and anxiety associated with long-term unemployed may also affect physical health.
- 2010 Pew Research Center survey: 24% of long-term unemployed “sought professional help for depression or other emotional issues while out of work.”
- Mel Bartley at University College London: we need “springboards” rather than “safety nets”, i.e. “positive help in the shape of social, emotional, and improved financial support, as well as the opportunity for education and training.”
  - Job Growers Inc – Marion County. Grant to develop cognitive behavioral techniques to provide behavioral and emotional support for long-term unemployed



# Poverty and Health

- Low SES individuals have poorer health outcomes and higher death rates than those who are better off
- Relative deprivation is also associated with poorer health and higher rates of premature death
- All indicators of socio-economic status – income, class, housing ownership, education – point to worse health outcomes for those in the low end of the spectrum



# Poverty and Health, cont'd

- Poverty is a barrier to fundamental building blocks for health: adequate housing, good nutrition, and opportunities for civic engagement.
- Income levels affect how parents care for their children, e.g. where they go to school; how engaged a parent can be when working two or more jobs.
- Poverty creates an unfair cycle that prevents children from experiencing the same opportunities throughout life: Poverty early in life increases risk for cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and some cancers later in life.



# Reflecting on the evidence

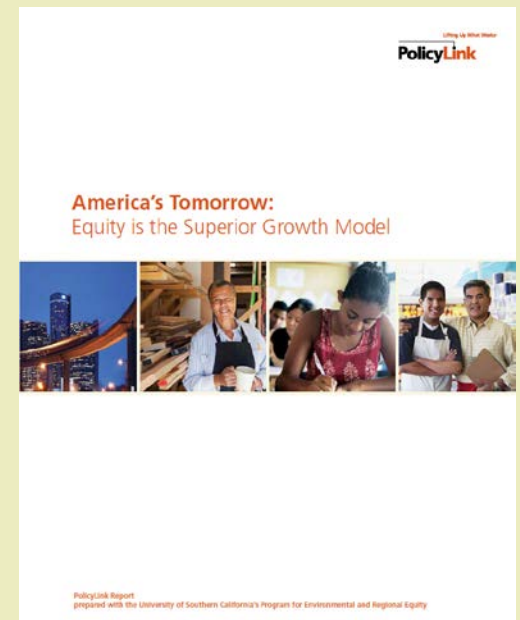
**To increase likelihood of success, community investments could:**

- Focus on reducing the proportion of children born into and living in poverty
- Ensure access to education, training, and stable employment opportunities
- Couple job creation with better access to affordable housing



# How NWHF discovers opportunities for impact

- Community outreach
- Research that validates effective strategies
- Partnerships with organizations that share common goals and aspirations
- Responsive grant funding programs



# Economic Opportunity as a social determinant of health

- Kaiser Permanente Community Fund – awards \$2.5 million per year
- Economic opportunity one of three focus areas
- Previous grantees in the field:
  - Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.
  - Adelante Mujeres
  - Innovative Changes
  - Portland Development Commission
  - Hacienda CDC
  - Verde



# Case Study: Portland Mercado (Hacienda CDC)

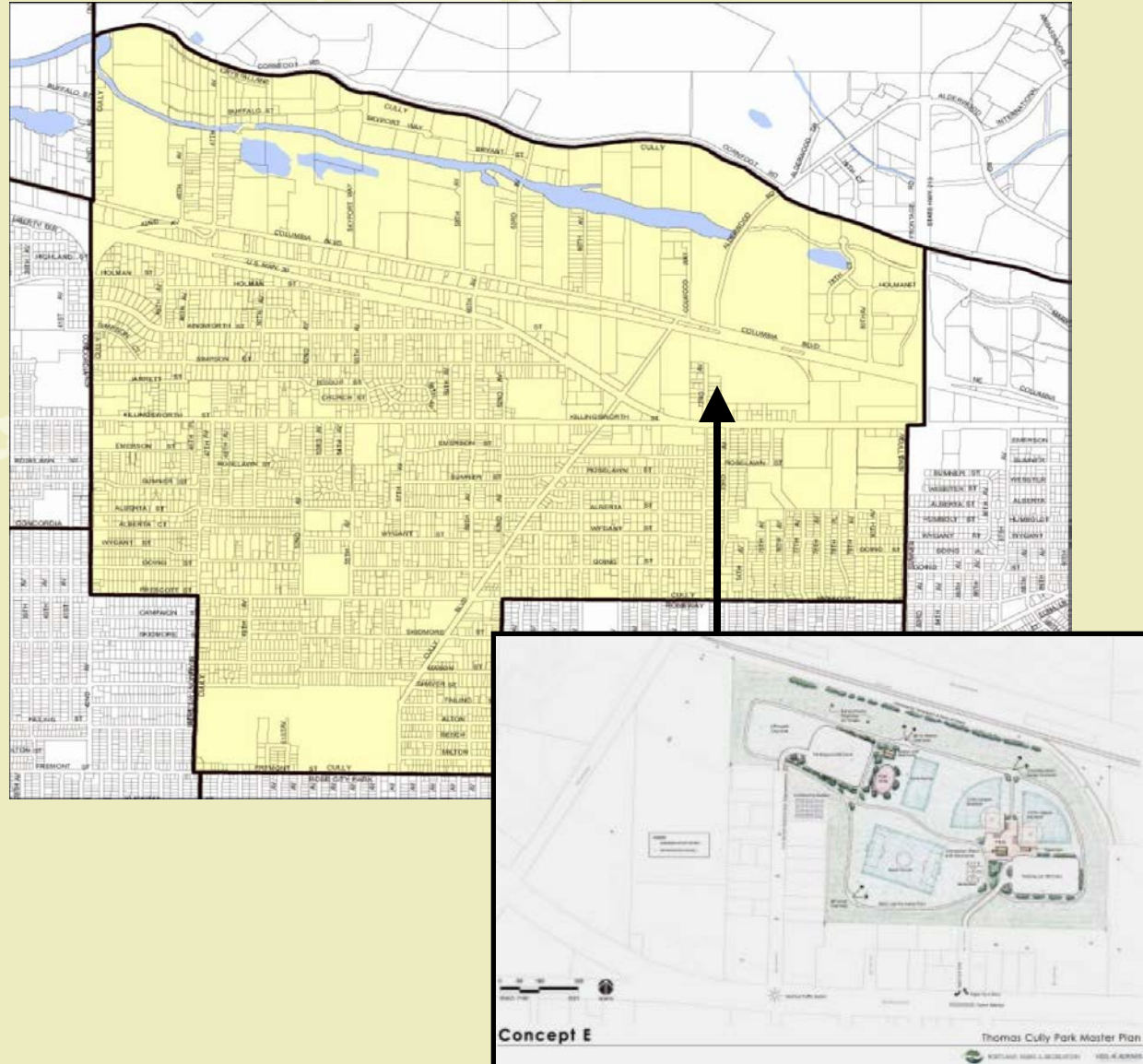
## Project Strategies:

- Based on solid market analysis
- Micro-enterprise development (up to 20 new businesses)
- Individual development accounts
- Intensive TA / counseling
- Cooperative governance structure
- Partnership with PDC
- Diverse funding strategy



# Case Study: Thomas Cully Park (Verde)

Cully is the most diverse and one of the lowest income neighborhoods in Portland. It is also the most park-deficient. The City owns a 25-acre plot that residents would like transformed into a park.



# Case Study: Thomas Cully Park (Verde)

## Project Goals:

- Economic opportunity (workforce / contracting guarantees for employing local residents)
- Public / private partnership
- Community empowerment / self-determination
- Safe place for recreation
- New community garden
- Major partners:



# How does NWHF measure its impact?

- Grant-by-grant evaluation
- Initiative evaluation
- Broader systemic / policy shifts
- Independent, third party feedback (e.g., Grantee Perception Report)
- Contribution rather than attribution
- Evaluation in the philanthropic sector is not an exact science

# Creating vibrant, healthy communities: what will it take?

Initially, conversations to:

- Achieve better understanding of sectors – what does NWHF and other philanthropies have in common with banks when it comes to community development?
- Identify shared values
- Identify common interests
- Understand community needs and objectives

# Contact Information

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