



BICULTURAL ACTIVE LIVING LIFESTYLE E-MAGAZINE

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Features:

A Culturally Responsive
Framework for
Implementing the CDC
Food Service Guidelines
in Diverse Communities



Project SUPPORT

Table of Contents

02~03	Introduction
04~15	Nutrition
16~23	Physical Activity
24~28	Project SUPPORT Events
29~31	Upcoming Events
32	Contact

INTRODUCTION



Project SUPPORT (Supporting Under-served through Produce Prescription, and Opportunities to Recreation-activity & Technical-assistance), is led by Asian Media Access(AMA), collaborated with Multi Cultural Community Alliance (MCCA), Project SUPPORT is a cross-cultural, cross-generational, and cross-sectoral initiative, aims to improve health, prevent chronic disease, and reduce health disparities among all members, with a special focus on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOCs) who face the highest risk, and bear the highest burden of chronic disease, named: African American/Black, Asian American and will put a special focus on young people from the two poorest but most diverse neighborhoods in MN – North Minneapolis, and Midway St. Paul.

Supported by CDC's REACH funding, AMA will leverage our extensive network of trusted community partners who provide subject matter expertise and have a history of successful engagement with the respective cultural and geographic communities. All partners have been involved in co-designing this Initiative – Project SUPPORT through below 2 culturally tailored strategies to promote Bicultural Healthy Living, especially for immigrant and refugee communities:

- **Nutrition:** Increase healthy cultural food access by 1) implementing Food Service Guidelines (FSG) at area Asian temples and Black churches; 2) expanding Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Programs (FFVP); and 3) expanding Produce Prescription (PRx) at area clinics/hospitals.
- **Physical Activity:** Increase policies, plans and community designs through North Minneapolis Blue Line and St. Paul SEARS Redevelopment to better connect residents with activity friendly routes to everyday destination to live/learn/work/play, and provide safe, culturally based places for increasing physical activities.

Please check the Project SUPPORT updates through our Bicultural Active Living Lifestyle (BALL) website, weblog, Facebook, and e-Magazine:

- BALL Facebook at – <https://www.facebook.com/ballequity/>
- BALL Monthly eMagazines: <https://ballequity.amamedia.org/project-support/>
- BALL Website: <https://ballequity.amamedia.org/>
- BALL Web Blog: <https://www.behavioralhealthequityproject.org/>

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NUTRITION



STRATEGY INTRO: Increase healthy cultural food access by implementing Food Service Guidelines (FSG) at area Asian Temples and Black Churches, and establishing Produce Rx at area clinics/hospitals.

A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CDC FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Over the past three years, Asian Media Access (AMA) has partnered with faith-based congregate dining programs to support implementation and assessment of the CDC's Food Service Guidelines (FSG). Through an iterative community-engaged process - guided by "Food is Medicine" experts from the Rochester Clinic and advisory committees representing Cambodian Buddhist temples, Hindu temples, and Black church partners - **AMA co-developed a Culturally Responsive Framework for implementing the CDC Food Service Guidelines in diverse cultural settings.** The framework provides practical guidance for integrating federal nutrition standards with culturally meaningful dietary traditions, demonstrating that nutrition policy implementation can advance health equity while preserving cultural identity, traditional food practices, and community trust.

AT A GLANCE

Food service guidelines are standards for healthier food, beverages, and food service operations in worksite and community settings. This page addresses food service guidelines topics such as the benefits, settings and venues, successful program examples, and resources.

Photo Courtesy: CDC's Food Service Guideline



CDC REACH's policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change model asks a hard question of any coalition: how do you write a policy broad enough to serve different community sites, without flattening the very cultural traditions that make each site meaningful? With newly finalized Healthy Food Service Policy Manual from Rochester Clinic answers that question with a two-layer design. The Core Manual - covering nutrition, food safety, environmental stewardship, volunteer training, and monitoring - stays intentionally reflective from FSG requirements which can be adoptable by any partner organization's Board. Everything that needs to reflect a specific community's food culture lives in a single, swappable section: Appendix - the Organization-Specific Implementation Guide.



Building Blocks of Food Service Guidelines

Build a Foundation	Strategize and Act	Monitor and Evaluate	Expand Your Initiative
			
- Assess environment - Select setting - Identify your team - Develop work plan	- Add to policies and contracts - Apply behavioral design - Work with vendors - Consider cultural foods - Collaborate with wellness staff - Use recognition programs	- Monitor guidelines - Evaluate guidelines - Use multiple data sources - Measure reach and impact - Track other benefits	- Apply to new settings or venues - Adapt to places where food is served or distributed

Photo Courtesy: CDC's Food Service Guideline

The first fully developed Appendix comes from AMA's faith-based Food Service Guideline (FSG) partner – the Hindu Temple community, whose recommendations now serve as a working model for how the appendix structure is meant to function in practice.

Why the Core Policy Stays Neutral

The Core Manual's Guiding Sections - Mission and Guiding Principles, Governance, Food and Nutrition Policy, Facility Efficiency, Food Safety, Volunteer Training, and Monitoring and Evaluation - are written to apply equally whether a site serves congregational meals, festival feasts, or a weekly community lunch. Each section states the **"what" (balanced nutrition, food safety compliance, waste reduction, ongoing evaluation) while explicitly leaving the "how" to the organization:** the policy notes that implementation strategies *"may be customized based on the organization's*

culture, mission, and community needs," and that appendices *"may be modified without changing the policies contained in this manual."* This structure matters on two levels: it demonstrates that genuine, site-level cultural tailoring is possible within CDC guidance, while also reflecting the same cultural principle that has anchored AMA's Bicultural Healthy Living Framework for over a decade.



Balancing Federal Standards with Traditional Wisdom

This two-layer design isn't just an administrative convenience — it's AMA's answer to a tension that sits underneath most federal nutrition guidance: CDC and USDA Food Service Guidelines were built around a default dietary model that assumes a largely Eurocentric meal pattern, and applying that model literally, ingredient-for-ingredient, to Asian communities, for example, can do more harm than good.

- Example 1* - Dairy as default, alternatives as exception. CDC's own Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities checklist directs facilities to *"offer a variety of low-fat dairy products (or dairy alternatives) daily, such as milk, yogurt, cheese, and fortified soy beverages,"* and the companion beverage standard calls for fat-free or low-fat milk *"with no added sugars"* when milk is served, and alternatives are permitted.

But a large majority of East and Southeast Asians are lactase non-persistent, so a checklist that treats dairy as the default and soy or other alternatives as the substitute has the compliance logic backwards for these communities. But again, USDA's own child-and-adult nutrition program rules make the hierarchy explicit: milk substitutes that aren't *"nutritionally equivalent to fluid milk"* require a signed medical statement from a state-recognized authority before they can even be credited. In other words, the federal framework asks a lactose-intolerant member to produce medical paperwork to justify eating the way their culture always has, while the Eurocentric default requires no justification at all.

- Example 2* - CDC's food service and nutrition guidance explicitly instructs implementers to *"assess the cultural food preferences of your priority population"* and *"incorporate findings into food service and charitable food distribution guidelines, policies, and practices."* The Appendix model is AMA's structured answer: rather than leaving cultural assessment as a vague aspiration, it becomes a standing, revisable section of the policy itself, built with the community it serves.

Taken together, these two examples point to the same reframe: ***treat the federal standard as an outcome, not a recipe***. The Core Manual states the nutritional and public-health intent - adequate calcium and protein, reduced added sugar, balanced nutrition, food safety - and leaves it to each community's Appendix to support the culturally authentic path to that outcome. So instead of defaulting to dairy and treating soy milk, tofu, sesame, leafy greens, or dried small fish as an exception requiring justification, an Appendix can make those foods the primary path to the same calcium and protein targets, no medical note required.

Instead of *"eliminate white rice,"* an appendix builds toward gradually introducing brown rice or mixed grains alongside it, as the Hindu Temple's recommendations do - a substitution model, not a subtraction model. The same mismatch shows up elsewhere: blanket sodium-reduction targets can inadvertently target fermented and pickled foods that carry deep cultural and prebiotic value, and Western nutrition science has no real category for the food-as-medicine, warming/cooling food logic that shapes many Asian culinary traditions, including the Hindu Temple's own prasadam practices.



Photo Courtesy: Hindu Society of MN



This is the respectful cultural integration process to enable: federal standards define *"what health outcome the community is working toward"*; the Appendix, built with and by the community itself, defines *"what that looks like on their table."* Compliance is measured against the shared outcome, not against whether a specific traditional food was replaced with its Eurocentric equivalent.

*Sources: CDC Food Service Guidelines for Federal Facilities (Prepared Foods and Beverages checklists); USDA/CACFP Fluid Milk Crediting guidance; CDC "Strategies for Food Service and Nutrition Guidelines."

Appendix in Practice: The Hindu Temple Model

Rather than rewriting nutrition or safety policy to fit one tradition, the Temple's Appendix translates the manual's five policy areas into concrete, culturally specific practice:

- **Cultural Considerations** — recognizing vegetarian food service as the baseline, honoring festival-specific fasting and feast cycles, reflecting regional Indian cuisines, observing onion-and-garlic restrictions tied to particular religious observances, and treating prasadam (sanctified food offerings) as its own preparation category with its own considerations.
- **Nutrition Recommendations** — gradual, non-disruptive shifts rather than abrupt substitutions: moving toward brown rice or mixed grains over time, increasing lentils, beans, and seasonal vegetables, trimming back fried offerings and added sugar in traditional desserts “while preserving authentic flavor,” and pairing festival desserts with fruit.
- **Environmental Recommendations** — moving from disposable to reusable service ware where practical, adding compost/recycling/landfill sorting stations, and reducing waste through better attendance forecasting for large festival meals.
- **Volunteer Training Priorities** — safe food handling, healthier cooking techniques, waste segregation, allergen awareness, and - notably - festival food logistics, acknowledging that large-scale communal meals require cultural planning skillset.
- **Suggested Performance Indicators** — the percentage of whole-grain dishes served, reduction in fried foods and added sugars, volunteer training completion, food waste diversion rate, and community satisfaction.

Next Steps

With the Hindu Temple's Appendix now complete, the Temple Advisory Committee is positioned to formally adopt the core manual and begin drafting baseline assessments covering current menu practices, food safety walkthroughs, and volunteer training gaps. These assessments will be co-designed with all stakeholders and will inform the implementation timeline, sample menus, budget considerations, and performance dashboards — supporting the shared goal of improving health while honoring cultural traditions. This manual and its site-specific appendices reflect AMA's ongoing, three-year commitment to policy work that is both structurally consistent for federal accountability and genuinely rooted in the communities it serves.



Photo Courtesy: Hindu Society of MN



Photo Courtesy: The Village

GROWING THE NETWORK: EXPANDING FRESH PRODUCE ACCESS POINTS

For over a decade, Asian Media Access (AMA) has anchored its work in the policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes that make healthy food accessible to Minneapolis' AAPI and BIPOC communities. This year, that work took a meaningful step outward – into Rochester, Minnesota – through a new partnership with The Village Global Farmers Market and the Rochester Cultural Center.

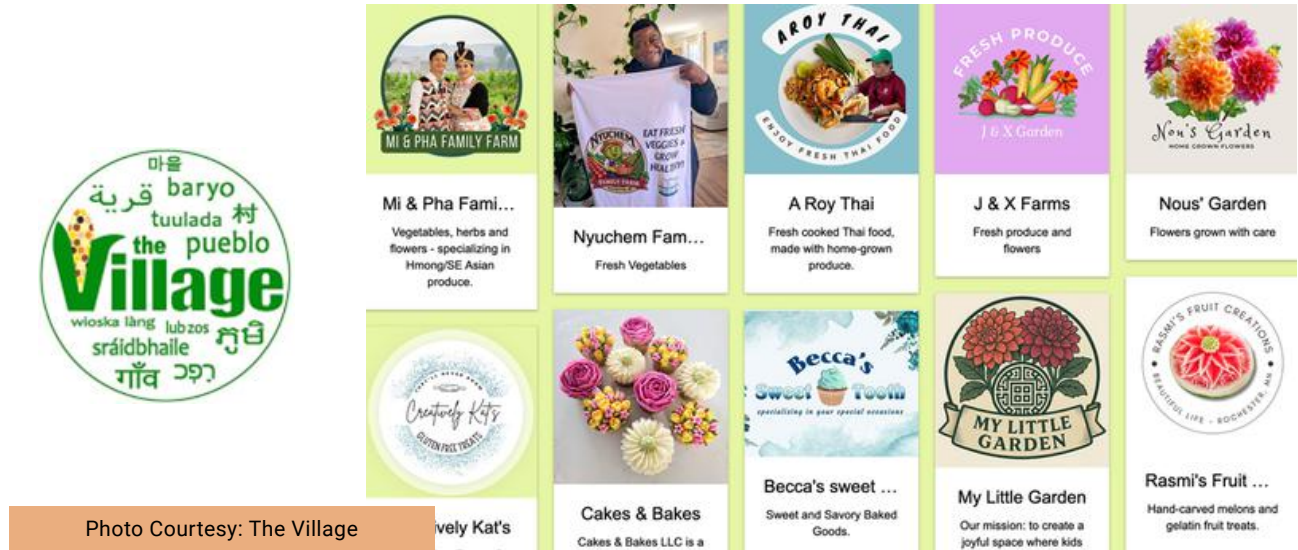
The result is “Move to the Market,” a Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program (FVVP) built in collaboration with the City of Rochester's Office of the Mayor, designed around a simple, powerful idea: when transportation, language, and cultural unfamiliarity stand between a family and fresh produce, a market that meets people where they already gather can close that gap.

Rochester's immigrant communities - including a growing Cambodian population anchored around the local Buddhist temple - have long faced the same structural barriers AMA has documented across Minnesota: limited transit access to full-service grocers, produce that doesn't reflect home cuisines, and outreach materials that arrive in a language residents don't read. The Village Global Farmers Market, with its multilingual identity (its own logo carries “Village” translated into Korean, Arabic, Tagalog, Chinese, Polish, Vietnamese, Irish, and Hebrew) already embodies the kind of welcoming, culturally-

Photo Courtesy: The Village



plural space REACH's PSE strategy calls for. Pairing that market with the trusted, established relationships of the Rochester Cultural Center and the Cambodian Temple gave AMA a natural, low-barrier entry point with Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program (FVVP) ideas.



That early collaboration with Rochester Cambodian Temple and Cultural Center directly became the proof point for the model: **when the program is introduced by trusted community messengers, in a community's own gathering space, seniors who might otherwise never encounter a farmers market voucher program sign up, show up, and keep coming back.** The “Move to the Market,” just implemented a month ago, AMA and The Village has designed a simple three-step pathway:

- Visit The Village Global Farmers Market
- Enroll – eligible participants receive fruit and vegetable food vouchers
- Shop – vouchers are redeemed for fresh, local produce at the market



To deepen this collaboration, AMA, The Village, and the Rochester Cultural Center have outlined a coordinated enrollment push for the summer season:

- July–September enrollment drive: The Village and Rochester Cultural Center will lead on-the-ground enrollment of new FVVP members directly at the Global Farmers Market, extending reach beyond the initial Temple-based introduction.
- Targeted outreach to Cambodian Temple and Cultural Center seniors: Seniors connected through the Temple will be offered vouchers as an incentive to formally enroll, encouraging them to visit The Village market and begin shopping for fresh fruit and vegetables using their new benefit.
- Data-sharing back to AMA: New enrollee information will be routed to AMA on a regular basis, ensuring the expansion is documented as part of AMA's broader PSE strategy and coalition reporting.



Photo Courtesy: The Village



What makes the Rochester expansion notable isn't just the number of new FVVP or new participants - it's the sequence: relationship first, trusted-messenger introduction second, voucher and market access third. It mirrors our Bicultural Healthy Living Framework's core insight that health behavior change moves through culture and community, not around it. As enrollment ramps up this summer, AMA and its Rochester partners see "Move to the Market" as a template for future FVVP expansion sites — proof that culturally-rooted partnerships, not just program dollars, are what make food access programs stick.

Asian Media Access gratefully acknowledges The Village Global Farmers Market, the Rochester Cultural Center, the Rochester Cambodian Temple community, and the Rochester Office of the Mayor for their partnership in bringing this program to life.



Photo Courtesy: The Village



ASIAN MEDIA ACCESS HOSTS TRAIN-THE-TRAINER WORKSHOP TO EXPAND FRESH PRODUCE ACCESS

On June 23–24, Asian Media Access hosted a two-day Train-the-Trainer Workshop at the University of Minnesota Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), bringing together 38 advocates committed to improving produce access and nutrition equity throughout North Minneapolis.

The training was led by the University of Minnesota SoLaHmo (Somali, Latinx, and Hmong) Research Team, led by Dr. Beatriz Torres in partnership with community organizations participating in the SankofaPOWER Initiative, a community-driven digital platform designed to connect residents with healthy food resources while supporting data collection and awareness campaign of produce access.

Train-the-Trainer Workshop

The workshop prepared participants to confidently introduce the SankofaPOWER, along with the City of Minneapolis Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program (FFVP) and Produce Prescription (PRx) initiatives. Participants learned not only how produce access data collected and these nutrition incentive programs work, but also how to engage neighbors, answer questions, reduce barriers to participation, and encourage more families to enroll in programs that increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. By using a Train-the-Trainer model, participants will now become the advocates to share these resources with additional community organizations, faith communities, neighborhood groups, and residents, creating a multiplying effect that expands healthy food access throughout underserved communities.



Introducing the SankofaPOWER Digital Platform

A major feature of the workshop was the introduction of the SankofaPOWER Digital Platform, an interactive community resource that combines GIS mapping, community storytelling, and neighborhood asset mapping to improve healthy food access.

Participants explored how the platform helps residents locate:

- Produce Prescription (PRx) participating clinics
- Fruit and Vegetable Voucher redemption locations
- Farmers markets accepting vouchers
- Community gardens
- Food shelves
- Local grocery stores
- Fresh produce distribution sites
- Other neighborhood food resources

The digital platform is designed to help residents quickly identify healthy food options close to home while strengthening community awareness of available nutrition resources. Throughout the two-day workshop, participants engaged in interactive activities focused on identifying both challenges and opportunities within their communities. They discussed barriers affecting healthy food access, as well as existing community strengths. Recognizing these assets helps communities build solutions from strengths rather than deficits.

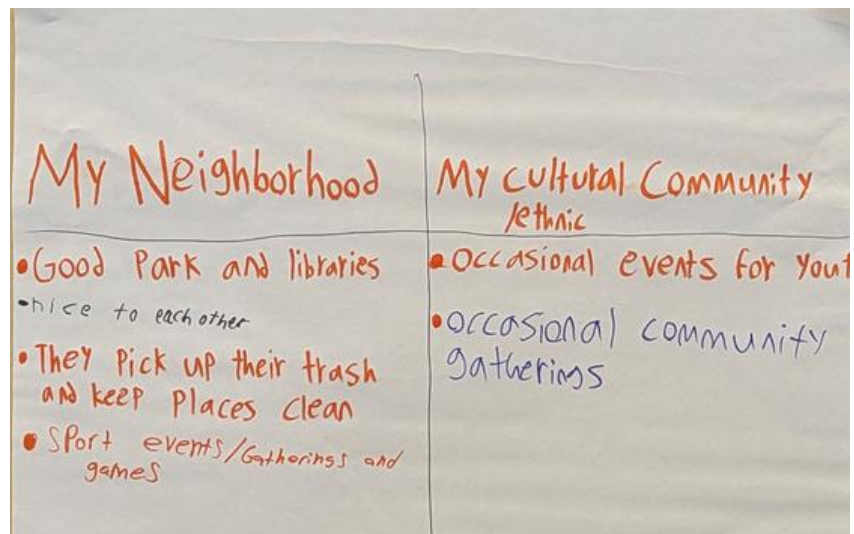
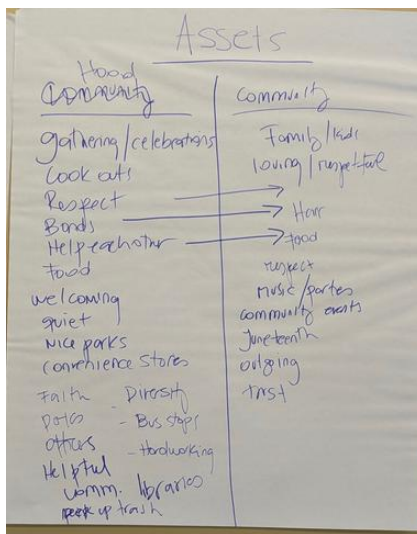
Participatory Action Research in Practice

The workshop also introduced participants to the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), emphasizing that community members are not simply recipients of services but active partners in creating healthier neighborhoods with information they engaged with. Participants learned how community engagement using PAR methods can simultaneously:

- Increase awareness of the Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program

- Expand enrollment in Produce Prescription programs
- Collect community feedback, and Identify gaps in healthy food access
- Engage healthcare providers and community organizations to become participating partners to expand those programs
- Strengthen the SankofaPOWER Digital Platform with community-generated information

This approach ensures that survey and interviewing process directly support community actions with continuous improvement, and mobilize the communities for policy changes.



Capturing Community Stories

At the workshop, participants also helped shape the questions asked and explored how to better facilitate a community storytelling process that documents residents' experiences with food, gardening, and healthy eating. This approach aims to help mobilize residents toward a greater appreciation of fresh fruits and vegetables. The video interview questions encourage authentic conversations rather than predetermined answers, allowing residents to share their own experiences and perspectives. Example discussion prompts include:

- What does "good food" mean to you? How would you describe it compared to food that isn't as healthy?
- Have you ever visited a farm or community garden? Share a memorable experience, or if you haven't visited one, would you like to? Interviewers can also use the SankofaPOWER map to identify nearby community gardens.
- Have you ever eaten or cooked with freshly picked fruits, vegetables, or herbs? Tell us about the experience. What did it taste like? How did it make you feel?
- Reminder: Resource Sharing about Fruit and Vegetable Voucher and Produce Prescription programs

These stories provide valuable insights into community food experiences while strengthening relationships between residents and local produce resources. The process emphasized that improving food security requires more than simply providing information. It requires understanding residents' desires for fresh fruits and vegetables, cultivating trusted community relationships, applying culturally responsive communication techniques, and actively mobilizing for better policies — all in service of promoting nutrition equity throughout North Minneapolis.



Looking Forward

Following the Train-the-Trainer education and community mobilization through surveying and interviewing, the workshop demonstrated how local leadership can transform information into action - creating sustainable pathways toward healthier communities where every resident has greater access to fresh fruits, vegetables, and culturally appropriate healthy foods. This June Train-the-Trainer workshop represents another important milestone in Project SUPPORT's mission to build healthier, more equitable communities through community leadership, food access, and collaborative actions. As participants return to their neighborhoods, they will continue expanding awareness of the Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Programs, the Produce Prescription, and the SankofaPOWER Digital Platform — helping more families connect with affordable, nutritious food while strengthening the network of organizations working together to improve food security across North Minneapolis.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Physical Activity: Increase policies, plans and community designs through North Minneapolis Blue Line and St. Paul SEARS Redevelopment to better connect residents with activity friendly routes to everyday destination to live/learn/work/play, and provide safe, culturally based places for increasing physical activities.

SEARS REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT SUPPORTS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN VISION FOR NEAR-BY RICE STREET CORRIDOR

Since 2024, Asian Media Access (AMA) has actively participated in the Rice Street Visioning Study as part of its broader Sears Redevelopment Project, ensuring that diverse community voices help shape one of Saint Paul's most significant transportation and public realm investments. Through community engagement, stakeholder meetings, and ongoing feedback sessions, AMA has contributed recommendations that support equitable transportation, healthy communities, and culturally inclusive neighborhood development.

The Rice Street Visioning Study is a collaborative initiative led by Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul, and the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB), in coordination with Metro Transit's METRO G Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. The project focuses on the Rice Street corridor extending from John Ireland Boulevard to Pennsylvania Avenue, serving as a critical connection between downtown Saint Paul, the State Capitol area, and surrounding neighborhoods, especially the former Sears site.

Building on Community Voices

Since joining the planning process in 2024, AMA has represented residents, cultural organizations, businesses, and community partners through the Sears Redevelopment Project. Community members participated in listening sessions, design reviews, and public engagement activities that emphasized creating a transportation corridor that is safe, accessible, environmentally sustainable, and welcoming for everyone.



Many of the community priorities advocated throughout the engagement process are reflected in the Sears project's recommended design, which including:

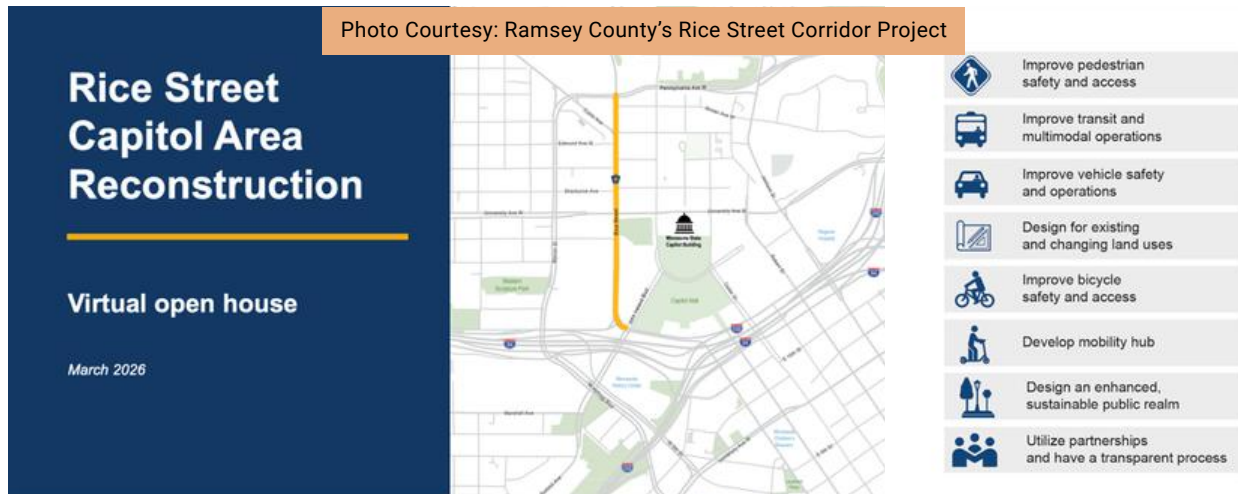
- Improved pedestrian safety and accessibility
- Enhanced bicycle infrastructure
- Safer public transit access
- Traffic calming strategies
- Expanded tree canopy and green infrastructure
- Public spaces that support neighborhood vitality
- Improved connections between transportation, housing, businesses, and community services

These priorities closely align with AMA's long-term vision of creating healthier, more connected neighborhoods through community-centered planning. The nearly finalized concept incorporates numerous features requested during the public engagement process, including:

- A protected two-way bikeway separated from pedestrian sidewalks between John Ireland Boulevard and University Avenue.
- A shared-use path extending north toward Pennsylvania Avenue.
- New pedestrian refuge medians that allow people to cross one direction of traffic at a time.
- Additional medians designed to calm traffic, improve bus safety and reduce unsafe passing.
- Expanded boulevard space supporting trees, landscaping, stormwater management, and a greener streetscape.
- Design elements intended to slow vehicle speeds while improving safety for all roadway users.

These improvements support Ramsey County's commitment to an all-abilities

transportation network, encouraging walking, bicycling, transit use, and safer travel for residents of all ages and abilities.



Advancing the Sears Redevelopment Vision

AMA views the Rice Street improvements as an important component of the broader Sears Redevelopment Project, which seeks to strengthen mobility, economic opportunity, public health, and community well-being throughout the corridor. Improved transportation infrastructure will help residents safely access employment centers, neighborhood businesses, schools, healthcare providers, parks, and future redevelopment opportunities. Enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities also support healthier lifestyles while reducing transportation barriers for families, older adults, youth, and individuals without access to private vehicles. **The proposed Mobility Hub near the intersection of Rice Street and University Avenue further complements AMA's vision by creating stronger connections among walking, bicycling, transit, and future community development initiatives.**

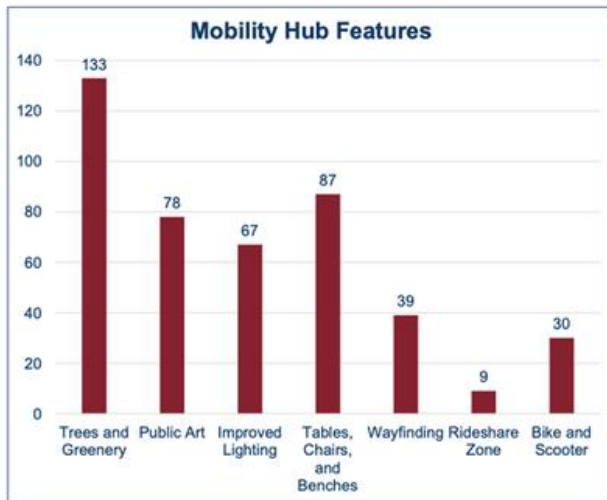
Coordinated projects

- 1 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard Community Commons
- 2 Metro Transit G Line
- 3 John Ireland Bridge
- 4 Rice Street Reconstruction (McCarrons Area)
- 5 Capital City Bikeway Phase III
- 6 **Sears Site Redevelopment**
- 7 Wabasha Capital City Bikeway



Photo Courtesy: Ramsey County's Rice Street Corridor Project

Rice Street and University Avenue mobility hub



Trees and greenery

Tables, chairs, benches



Public art

Community Priorities

- ⊕ Improved bicyclist and pedestrian safety
- ⊕ Design elements that help slow traffic
- ⊕ Space for trees and greening
- ⊕ Space for on-street parking north of University Avenue

City & County Considerations

- ✓ Supports county's commitment to an all-abilities transportation network
- ✓ More pedestrian and bicycle-focused use of space, consistent with city and county street design policies
- ✓ More ability to accommodate snow storage, an important consideration for city maintenance purposes

Photo Courtesy: Ramsey County's Rice Street Corridor Project

As the project moves toward implementation, Asian Media Access remains committed to working alongside Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul, CAAPB, Metro Transit, neighborhood organizations, and community residents to ensure that Rice Street becomes a safer, greener, and more vibrant corridor reflecting the aspirations of the people who live, work, and travel there. Through continued collaboration, the Sears Redevelopment Project demonstrates how community-driven planning can transform public infrastructure into long-term investments in health, equity, mobility, and neighborhood vitality.



WHAT NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORS MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT THE BLUE LINE EXTENSION: A CONVERSATION WITH COMMISSIONER IRENE FERNANDO



Photo Courtesy: Hennepin County Blue Line Extension

In a conversation about the METRO Blue Line Extension, Hennepin County Board Chair and District 2 Commissioner Irene Fernando shared several key points that many Northside neighbors may not fully realize about the project - insights that reframe the light rail line as far more than a transportation upgrade passing through their community.

It's Not Just About Who Rides – It's About Who's Been Waiting

Fernando often gets asked why ridership matters so much to her. Her answer cuts to the heart of the project's purpose: who rides tells us everything about who has been waiting for it, and these communities have waited long enough. This isn't a minor talking point. It reflects a deliberate reframing of the entire project – from a transit statistics exercise into a question of equity and overdue investment. Many residents may not realize that the Blue Line Extension is explicitly designed around this principle: prioritizing the communities that have historically been left out of regional transit investment.

Transit Is Treated Like Parks, Roads, and 911 – Not a Luxury

Another point Fernando emphasizes that may surprise residents: transit is classified as a public good, on the same level as parks, roads, and emergency services. This matters because it shifts how the investment should be understood – not as a discretionary amenity that communities have to justify, but as essential infrastructure that benefits everyone and builds a more connected, compassionate community.

Half of Riders Have Zero Cars

Perhaps the most striking fact Northside neighbors may not be aware of: half of Blue Line riders come from households with zero cars. This isn't an abstract statistic — it means the nightshift healthcare worker traveling home safely after a late shift, the elder trying to reliably reach health appointments, and the mother navigating her day with grocery bags and a toddler are not hypothetical riders. They are the core reason this project exists. The line also serves neighbors who choose transit by preference, for climate reasons or simple convenience — but the zero-car statistic underscores why reliable service isn't optional for so many along the corridor.



Rail Investment Goes Far Beyond the Train Itself

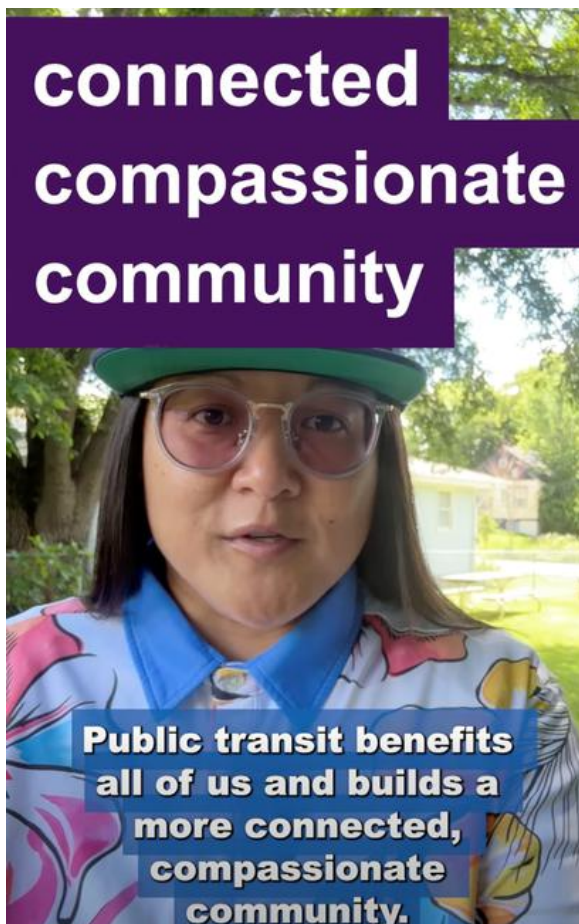
Many residents think of the Blue Line Extension purely in terms of the ride — but Fernando is clear that rail doesn't just move people. It attracts people, investment, and grows a tax base while creating economic opportunity that lasts for decades. That means the project's impact isn't limited to commute times; it's tied to what gets built around each station — housing, small businesses, and job opportunities that can anchor community wealth for generations.

Anti-Displacement Protections Were Built In From the Start – Not an Afterthought

What many Northside neighbors may not know is that after the original freight-rail route fell through in 2020, Fernando and District 1 Commissioner Jeff Lunde used that reset as an opportunity to embed anti-displacement protections directly into the project rather than treating them as a later add-on. That effort created the Anti-Displacement Workgroup, whose recommendations led the Minnesota Legislature to establish the community-led Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Program (ACPP) in 2024 – allocating \$10 million annually toward housing stability, land acquisition, and local economic development along the corridor.

This Is a Generational Equity Investment

Lastly, Fernando describes the Blue Line Extension as a generational equity investment in communities of color that have historically been underinvested in - communities across North Minneapolis, New Hope, Robbinsdale, Crystal, Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park that are transit-reliant, racially diverse, and shaped by a long history of disinvestment. For Fernando, this project represents a chance to change the trajectory of what's possible for so many neighbors who have waited far too long for this level of investment in their community.



A Crucial Moment for the Project's Future

Conversations like this one don't happen in a vacuum - they happen because organizations like Asian Media Access (AMA) have positioned ourselves as a key link between Hennepin County leadership and the residents the Blue Line Extension is meant to serve. AMA has played a central role in creating spaces where decision-makers can hear directly from Northside residents, and where residents can hear directly from the people shaping the project.

That work goes beyond hosting events. AMA has focused on reaching the hardest-to-reach populations along the corridor - immigrant and refugee communities who are often left out of traditional public engagement processes due to language barriers, unfamiliarity with government processes, or distrust built from a history of being overlooked. Through culturally grounded outreach, multi-language engagement, and trusted relationships built over years of community work, AMA has been able to bring these voices into rooms they might otherwise never have accessed.

Just as importantly, AMA has worked to ensure that feedback gathered from these conversations doesn't stop at the listening sessions - it carries forward into the policy and engineering process itself. That means resident concerns about safety, station design, displacement, and cultural preservation aren't just heard; they're documented, elevated, and factored into the technical and policy decisions still being finalized. **This kind of sustained community mobilization is itself a key piece of what will push the Blue Line Extension forward: a project this large succeeds only when the communities it's built for are genuinely part of building it.**

All of this progress is building toward what happens next. The Blue Line Extension is approaching a pivotal milestone: completing 90% of the engineering design study, a threshold that will help secure the funding needed to move the project forward into construction. This is a crucial time for Northside residents, community organizations, and regional partners to stay engaged and vocal in support of the project. Securing that investment and finishing the engineering work will help carry forward the vision Commissioner Fernando describes - *a rail line that changes what's possible for the communities that have waited longest*. Join us in supporting these final miles: community support at this stage will directly shape whether the Blue Line Extension reaches the finish line.



PROJECT SUPPORT EVENTS

June 07

TAIWAN ONLINE LIBRARY TEA PARTY

In partnership with the Taiwan Online Library, the Afternoon Tea & Literary Gathering brought community members together for an afternoon of books, conversation, and tea. Asian Media Access (AMA) shared multilingual community resources and exchanged translated educational materials, including information about the Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program in Chinese. The event fostered social connectedness among immigrant families by creating opportunities to increase awareness of community health and nutrition resources in a culturally affirming setting.



June 24~27

2026 AAJA CONFERENCE

Asian Media Access (AMA) participated as an exhibitor at the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA) Annual Convention, which convened media professionals, and industry leaders from across the country to exchange ideas on strengthening coverage of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities. AMA used this opportunity to promote our Bicultural Healthy Living Initiative by sharing culturally responsive nutrition and physical activity resources and engaging attendees in discussions about community-based strategies to improve equity and healthy living.



June 27~28

AAUC UNITY SUMMIT

Asian Media Access (AMA), in partnership with the Asian American Unity Coalition (AAUC), co-sponsored the Unity Summit at University of MN campus, convening Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) leaders for two days of workshops, and collaborative learning. The summit strengthened partnerships among community organizations, expanded trusted messenger networks, and facilitated the exchange of culturally responsive strategies to improve outreach, health communication, and capacity building across diverse populations.



June 29

KAREN REFUGEE FAMILIES LEARN TO RIDE PUBLIC TRANSIT

Working with the Metro Transit, Karen refugee families participated in a hands-on public transportation orientation to learn how to safely and confidently use buses and light rail. Through language interpretation and guided instruction, participants developed practical transit skills while increasing awareness of safe, accessible transportation options. The activity demonstrated a culturally responsive approach to advancing Active People strategies by helping families overcome transportation barriers and improve access to essential community resources and opportunities for active living. Photo Courtesy: KaRen Organization of Minnesota (KOM)



July 6

TIBETAN AMERICANS SHOWCASING THE COMMUNITY POWER AT MINNEAPOLIS CITY HALL

Organized by the Tibetan American Foundation, community members gathered at Minneapolis City Hall as the Minneapolis City Council formally adopted an honorary resolution proclaiming July 6 as the "Day of Compassion" in recognition of the 91st birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The celebration honored the cultural heritage and contributions of Minnesota's Tibetan American community while providing opportunities for civic engagement and , cross-cultural dialogue. The event reinforced Project SUPPORT's goals through strengthening trusted community partnerships and social connectedness, in order to foster health and well-being across diverse populations. Photo Courtesy: VTAG USA



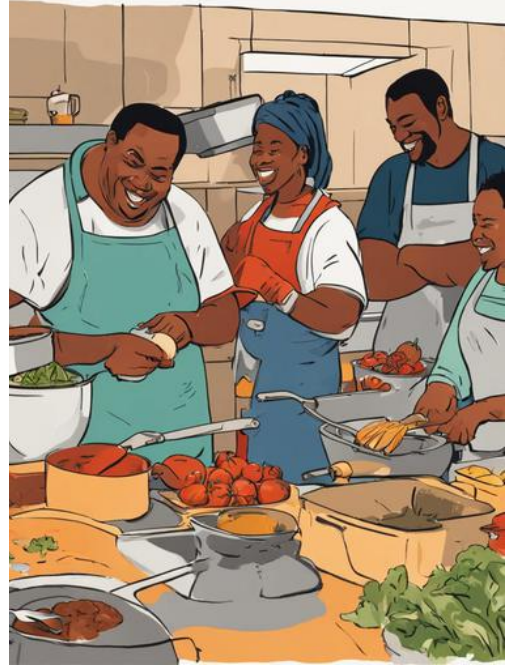
UPCOMING EVENTS

COMMUNITY COOKS WORKSHOP

DATE/TIME: July 22, August 5, 19, 2026, 5:00pm-8:00pm

PLACE: Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, 4150 Dupont Avenue North Minneapolis, MN, 55412, email communitycooks@afcmn.org for more information

Are you looking for a space to connect, learn, and share a meal together? Community Cooks Workshops bring people together through food, conversation, and hands-on cooking experiences. Whether you love cooking or are just getting started, this is a space for you.



ECONOMIC PROSPERITY LUNCH, LEARN, AND CONNECT

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, July 22, 2026, 12:00pm-1:00pm

PLACE: 240 Plato Blvd, St Paul, MN 55107, register: <https://hmong.tfaforms.net/90>

RUN YOUR BUSINESS — WE'LL HELP YOU MAKE IT STRONGER

Join us for expert guidance from a CPA on the financial essentials every business owner should know.

- TAX BASICS FOR BUSINESSES
- BOOKKEEPING BEST PRACTICES
- CASH FLOW MANAGEMENT
- LLC VS. S-CORP WHICH IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

LUNCH & LEARN
JULY 22, 2026
12:00-1:00PM
In person | Lunch Provided!

VIRTUAL CPA CONSULTATIONS
JULY 29, 2026 & AUGUST 5, 2026
By Appointment

HAP ECONOMIC PROSPERITY **mncpa**

Join HAP Economic Prosperity and the MNCPA for a free Lunch & Learn designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners build a stronger financial foundation for their business. Topics will include but are not limited to tax basics for businesses, bookkeeping best practices, cash flow management, and LLC vs. S-Corp business structures.

COMMUNITY HEALTH & RESOURCE FAIR

DATE/TIME: Saturday, July 25, 2026,
10:00am-5:00pm
PLACE: 1075 Arcade St, St Paul, MN
55106

Join your neighbors for a free, family-friendly day of health, resources, and community connection. On-site you'll find:

- Free health screenings (eye, blood pressure & more)
- Food, fun & prizes for all ages
- Live music & performances
- Clothing & shoes corner
- Local resources & community partners
- Free admission. Everyone is welcome!



5TH EASTSIDE
COMMUNITY HEALTH & RESOURCES FAIR

Stronger Together. Healthier Together.
Join your neighbors for a free, family-friendly day of health, resources, and connection.

SATURDAY JULY 25, 2026
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
1075 ARCADE ST.
ST. PAUL, MN 55106

HEALTH SCREENINGS
Eye, Blood Pressure & More

FOOD, FUN & PRIZES
For All Ages!

LIVE MUSIC & PERFORMANCES
Celebrate Our Community

CLOTHING & SHOES CORNER
Free Items for Those in Need

LOCAL RESOURCES & SUPPORT
Community Partners Here to Help

FREE ADMISSION | EVERYONE WELCOME!

HAP **Capital** **thrivent** **Medica**

Thanks to our community partners and sponsors



NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTHSOURCE
Community Events

Save the dates!

Join us for an exciting lineup of **FREE** events happening this year! Our individual clinic community health fairs will have:

- music
- community resources
- raffle prizes
- kids activities
- free food
- and more!

All are welcome to attend!

For more information call 612-583-9411 or visit neighborhoodhealthsource.org

Follow us on social media for community and clinic updates!

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nhsmpls) [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/nhsmpls) [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com/@nhsmpls) [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnHSMPLS)

THURSDAY MAY 07
CENTRAL CLINIC CINCO DE MAYO COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR
4:30-7PM at Central Clinic
2301 Central Ave NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418

FRIDAY JUNE 12
TAKE PRIDE IN YOURSELF RESOURCE FAIR
5:30-8PM at LUSH Lounge & Theater
990 Central Ave NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413

THURSDAY JULY 09
NORTH METRO CLINIC ICE CREAM SOCIAL COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR
4:30-7PM at North Metro Clinic
10081 Dogwood Street NW, Suite 100
Coon Rapids, MN 55448

THURSDAY AUGUST 06
FREMONT CLINIC FAMILY FUN FESTIVAL COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR
4:30-7PM at Fremont Clinic
3300 Fremont Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55412

THURSDAY OCTOBER 29
SHERIDAN CLINIC TRUNK OR TREAT COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR
4:30-7PM at Sheridan Clinic
342 13th Ave NE
Minneapolis, MN 55413

NEIGHBORHOOD HEALTHSOURCE COMMUNITY EVENTS

DATE/TIME: Thursday, August 6, 2026, 4:30pm-7:00pm
PLACE: Fremont Clinic, 3300 Fremont Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55412

DATE/TIME: Thursday, October 29, 2026, 4:30pm-7:00pm
PLACE: Sheridan Clinic, 342 14th Ave NE,
Minneapolis, MN 55413



ASIAN STREET FOOD NIGHT MARKET

DATE/TIME: Saturday, August 8, 2026, 10:00am-10:00pm and Sunday, August 9, 2026, 10:00am-9:00pm

PLACE: Pan Asian Center, 3001 White Bear Ave BLDG A, Maplewood, MN 55109

**Location may change. The event location is subject to change pending approval to host in Downtown Minneapolis on Nicollet Mall. If approved, this would be the first-ever Asian Street Food Night Market Edition on Nicollet Mall and one of the first street food night markets in Downtown Minneapolis.*

The wait is over! We're excited to share that the Asian Street Food Night Market Edition is returning in 2026—with an expanded experience featuring street food vendors, desserts and drinks, local shopping, entertainment, and community activities.

2026 INDIAFEST THEME: WEAVES AND TRADITIONAL FABRICS OF INDIA.

DATE/TIME: Saturday, August 15, 2026, 11:00am-9:00pm

PLACE: Capitol Grounds, 13 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard., St Paul, MN 55155

Indiafest showcases the richness of the Indian culture through dance, music, cuisine, regional displays and a bazaar with beautiful clothing, jewelry and other Indian merchandise

The entire upper and lower mall of the State Capitol Grounds in downtown St Paul is transformed into a mini-India, with over a hundred booths showcasing scores of non-profit organizations associated with India, that work in the state of MN.





Contact Us

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Partnering with

