

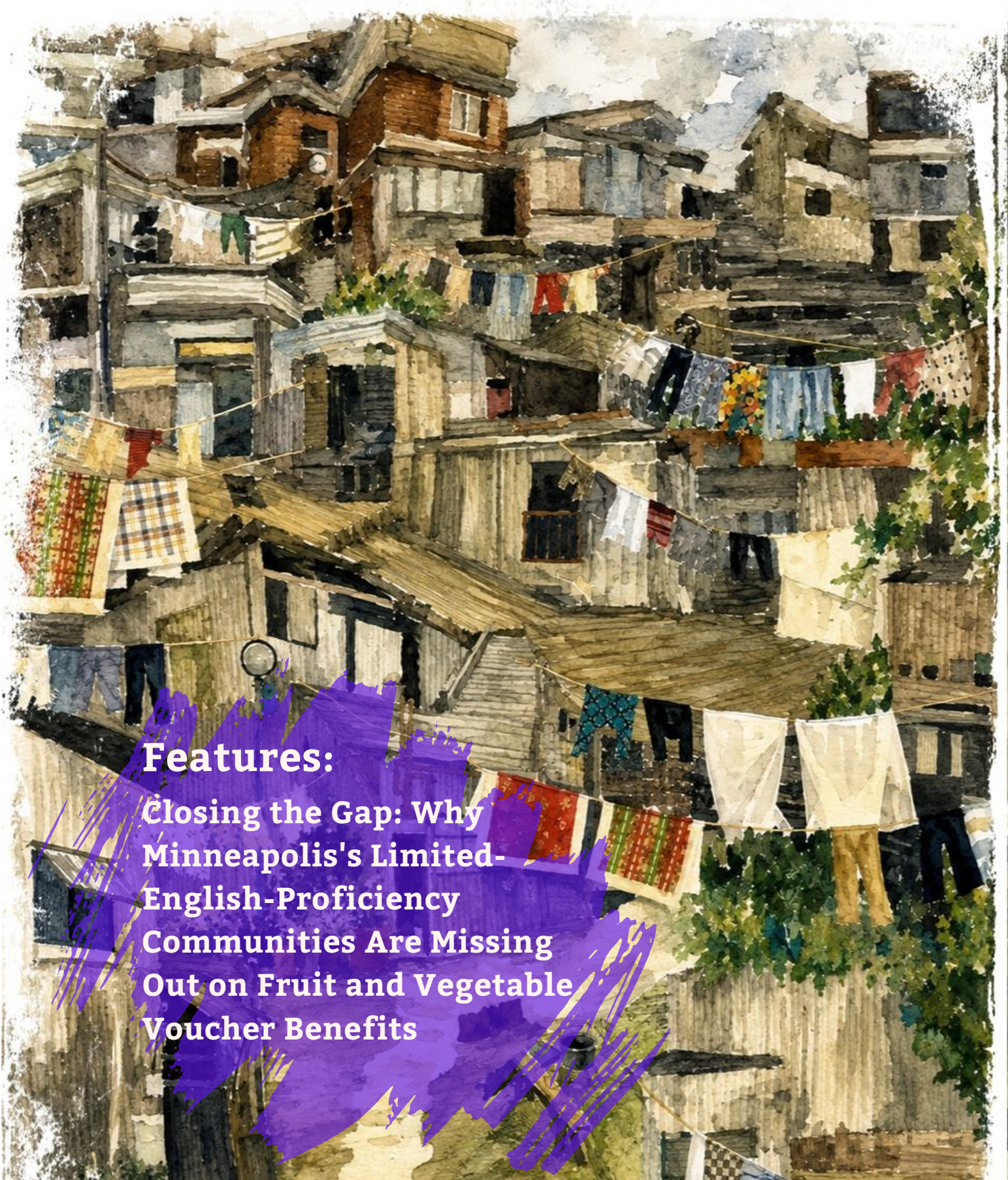


BICULTURAL ACTIVE LIVING LIFESTYLE E-MAGAZINE

AUGUST, 2026 | VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 7

Features:

**Closing the Gap: Why
Minneapolis's Limited-
English-Proficiency
Communities Are Missing
Out on Fruit and Vegetable
Voucher Benefits**



Project SUPPORT

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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.

FEEDING FELLOWSHIP: FOOD SERVICE GUIDELINES OBSERVATIONS AT HIGH PRAISE MINISTRIES – THE DESTINY CENTER

A Summary of Three Food Service Guidelines Community Assessments, July–August 2026

High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center, located at 1200 7th Street N in North Minneapolis, has long served as a catalyst of change for individuals across the Twin Cities Metropolitan community. Grounded in a mission that holds “the Holy Bible as its most powerful resource and guide,” the ministry resolves that scripture “gives clear preventive and responsive support for every issue known to mankind.” That mission extends beyond the sanctuary and into the neighborhood - through community meals, produce giveaways, children's activities, and events that bring residents together around food, fellowship, and resources.



Photo Courtesy: High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center

Between July and August 2026, three congregated dinning opportunities at The Destiny Center were observed using the CDC Food Service Guidelines (FSG) framework. The purpose of this assessment was to understand the current food environment at the Church's congregated dinning setting in a North Minneapolis neighborhood that experiences significant food insecurity and higher rates of diet-related chronic disease - and to document how well that food environment aligns with national nutrition standards for worksite and public-facility food service. Rather than evaluating any single meal in isolation, the assessment looked across three very different menus to identify recurring strengths and opportunities, with the broader goal of supporting healthier food access, informed partnership-building, and culturally grounded nutrition strategies for the host site - High Praise Ministries, the Destiny Center. Each event paired congregate dining with fruit and vegetable giveaways, children's games, and community resources, offering a window into how a faith-based organization is shaping a healthy food environment for the neighborhoods it serves.



Photo Courtesy: High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center

North Minneapolis has long been home to a large African American community, and the menus observed across all three events reflected that cultural identity. Catfish, rib tips, chicken wings, Southern greens, and macaroni and cheese - staples of African American and Southern soul food traditions - appeared alongside jerk chicken and beef patties rooted in the Caribbean diaspora, itself deeply woven into Black foodways in the Twin Cities. The CDC's Food Service Guidelines Toolkit specifically encourages organizations to "consider cultural foods" when strategizing healthier food environments - recognizing that lasting change comes from building on a community's own food traditions, not replacing them. Across all three events, The Destiny Center and its partners did exactly that: introducing plant-based and produce-forward options alongside, rather than instead of, the foods that carry cultural

meaning for the community.

Observation 1: Community BBQ - July 19, 2026.

The first assessment took place at a Community BBQ that drew approximately 350 attendees to a neighborhood experiencing significant food insecurity. Alongside a free community meal, The Destiny Center operated a mobile food shelf, extending the event's reach well past a single meal. Food selections observed:



Photo Courtesy: High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center

- Entrées: hamburger, hot dog, grilled chicken, and a Beyond Meat® plant-based burger
- Desserts: vegan carrot cake, cotton candy, and ice cones
- Beverages: bottled water and soft drinks
- Mobile food shelf: fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, bread, canned beans, and dry lentils

Observations:

- The menu reflected a classic African American cookout tradition - hamburgers, hot dogs, and grilled chicken - a cultural touchstone for community gatherings in North Minneapolis and beyond.
- A plant-based entrée and a vegan dessert were offered alongside that traditional cookout fare, expanding choice rather than replacing familiar foods.
- The mobile food shelf paired the meal with take-home fresh produce and plant proteins, connecting a single-day event to ongoing household food security.
- Meals were served on recyclable trays without disposable utensils, an environmentally conscious choice that also meant most food was eaten by hand.
- Fresh produce and prepared foods were exposed to outdoor summer conditions, including direct sunlight, for portions of the event.

Observation 2: "Divine Connection" - July 24, 2026

The second assessment took place during the Regional Gatherings, hosted at The Destiny Center for approximately 150 attendees. The event offered a diverse food selection while complimentary healthy offerings. Food selections observed:

- Meals available: catfish, rib tips, and chicken wings, each served with coleslaw and French fries - a menu rooted in African American Southern and soul food tradition

- Complimentary offerings: fresh watermelon donated by Cub Foods, wellness smoothie samples in four flavors, and vegan taco samples served in mini peppers
- Beverages: water, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages available through a bar
- Serving materials: plastic plates and paper towels

Observations:

- Catfish, rib tips, and chicken wings with coleslaw represent enduring staples of African American soul food - dishes with deep cultural resonance at faith-based gatherings and family celebrations alike.
- The vegan taco samples, served in a familiar, easy-to-eat format, offered a low-barrier introduction to plant-based foods without displacing the traditional Southern menu.



Photo Courtesy: High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center

- These healthy additions were made possible through partnerships with an outside grocery donor and wellness food providers, rather than by altering the traditional menu itself.
- Water was available alongside soft drinks and alcohol; the Gathering concluded after 9:00 p.m., with food service occurring near the end of the program.

Observation 3: National Night Out Community Day - August 4, 2026

The third assessment was conducted during a National Night Out Community Day, an evening neighborhood gathering with approximately 150 participants centered on food, games, family activities, music, and fellowship. A diverse food selection was available and a community food shelf distributed donated groceries and restaurant foods. Food selections observed:

- Asian-inspired selection: Saigon and vegetarian egg rolls, cream cheese wontons, takoyaki, gyoza, egg roll and spicy chicken salads, sesame chicken, chicken curry, lemongrass chicken, vegetable curry, sesame shrimp, firecracker shrimp, bottled water, soft drinks, and Vietnamese iced coffee
- Caribbean and Southern selection: jerk chicken with rice, curry chicken with rice, Jamaican beef patty, curry chicken patty, Southern greens, and macaroni and cheese
- Additional foods provided: homemade vegan meatballs, cotton candy, ice cones, and s'mores
- Community food shelf: fresh produce, pastries and baked goods, meat products, and prepared restaurant foods donated by grocery stores and restaurants,

including Olive Garden and KFC

Observations:

- Southern greens and macaroni and cheese - two of the most recognizable staples of African American soul food - appeared alongside jerk chicken and beef patties, reflecting the shared culinary threads that run between Southern Black foodways and the Caribbean diaspora present in the North Minneapolis community.
- Each cultural food selection included at least one vegetable-forward option - vegetable curry and vegetarian egg rolls alongside the Asian-inspired dishes, and Southern greens alongside the Caribbean and Southern dishes.
- Organizers supplemented these offerings with homemade vegan meatballs, introducing a plant-based option in a familiar, recognizable food format rather than an unfamiliar one.
- The most distinctive practice observed was the intentional placement of fresh produce between pastries and meat products on the community food shelf, positioning fruits and vegetables directly within participants' normal path of food selection rather than in a separate, easily bypassed area.
- Handwashing facilities were not present in the food service area, despite the majority of foods - egg rolls, patties, vegan meatballs, cotton candy, and s'mores - being eaten by hand.
- Complimentary drinking water was not readily available.



Photo Courtesy: High Praise Ministries - The Destiny Center

Patterns Across Three Events

Viewed together, the three observations show a consistent approach across very different event formats - a free community BBQ, a regional gathering, and a neighborhood National Night Out celebration. Across all three, the food selections were anchored in African American and African diaspora culinary traditions - cookout staples, catfish, rib tips, chicken wings, Southern greens, and macaroni and cheese - reflecting the cultural identity of the North Minneapolis community The Destiny



Center serves. Asian entrees, Caribbean dishes like jerk chicken and beef patties, and an Asian-inspired selection at the National Night Out event, added further diversity to the offerings, mirroring the multicultural makeup of the broader neighborhood.

Within that cultural foundation, The Destiny Center and its partners consistently expanded healthier choices rather than replacing traditional foods: a plant-based burger next to hamburgers and hot dogs, vegan tacos alongside catfish and rib tips, and vegan meatballs and vegetable curry beside jerk chicken and macaroni and cheese. This approach reflects the CDC toolkit's guidance to "consider cultural foods" - building healthier options into a community's existing food traditions rather than asking the community to change their cultural diets.

Fresh produce appeared at every event, whether through a mobile food shelf, a grocery store donation, or the deliberate arrangement of a food shelf table. Community partnerships - with Cub Foods, wellness food providers, restaurants, and grocery donors - played a visible role in making these healthier additions possible without requiring The Destiny Center to fund or prepare them alone.

At the same time, each event surfaced similar friction points: foods eaten by hand without accompanying handwashing or sanitizing stations, complimentary water that was less visible or accessible than soft drinks and sugar-sweetened options, and, at the outdoor summer BBQ, produce and prepared foods exposed to direct sunlight for portions of the event. Together, these three assessments capture a faith-based organization actively shaping its food environment - through cultural relevance, choice, visibility, sampling, and partnership - in a way that reflects both its mission of compassionate community support and the CDC's Food Service Guidelines for healthier food service in public settings.

These observations mark the close of the assessment phase, but not the end of the process. A Final Recommendation Report and accompanying policy suggestions will be developed in partnership with The Destiny Center's Advisory Committee, drawing directly on the strengths and opportunities identified across all three events. The goal of that next phase is to translate these observations into practical, healthier, culturally grounded meal patterns for African American churchgoers - building on the foods already central to fellowship and celebration in this community, rather than introducing standards that feel disconnected from it. In keeping with the approach observed throughout this assessment, that work will aim to expand healthy choices from within the community's own food traditions, so that improved nutrition and cultural identity move forward together.



Photo Courtesy: Minneapolis Farmer Market

CLOSING THE GAP: WHY MINNEAPOLIS'S LIMITED-ENGLISH-PROFICIENCY COMMUNITIES ARE MISSING OUT ON FRUIT AND VEGETABLE VOUCHER BENEFITS

Fruit and vegetable voucher incentives and produce prescription programs are among the most well-supported public health strategies for improving nutrition in the United States. Yet in cities like Minneapolis, a persistent barrier - language - is keeping some of the residents who could benefit most from ever finding out these programs exist.

An Evidence-Based Practice, Not a Trend

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies fruit and vegetable incentives and produce prescriptions as evidence-based public health strategies, meaning they are backed by research showing measurable improvements in health outcomes rather than good intentions alone. The logic is straightforward but powerful:

- Fruit and vegetable incentive programs provide coupons or cash-value incentives that shoppers can use at the point of purchase - at farmers' markets, grocery stores, mobile markets, or through community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares.
- Produce prescription programs allow health care providers to "prescribe" fruits



Photo Courtesy: Minneapolis Farmer Market

and vegetables to patients managing chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, or heart disease, often paired with vouchers redeemable in the patient's own community.

Nationally, only about 1 in 10 U.S. adults eats the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day. The CDC points to well-documented access gaps for people in rural areas, tribal communities, lower-income neighborhoods, people with disabilities - and notably, people who lack access to culturally preferred foods, a category that disproportionately affects immigrant and refugee communities.

These programs don't just improve individual health. They also strengthen local food economies by increasing demand for produce grown and sold by local farmers, food hubs, and retailers - many of whom are themselves members of the communities being served.



The Overlooked Barrier: Language Access in Minneapolis

Minneapolis is home to large Hmong, Chinese, Somali, Latino, and other immigrant communities - many of whom face food insecurity at higher rates than the citywide average. But even a well-funded, well-designed voucher program only works if the people - it's meant to serve can:

1. Find out the program exists in a language they read or speak,
2. Understand eligibility and enrollment steps without confusion, and
3. Navigate redemption at a participating retailer or market.

For residents with limited English proficiency (LEP), each of these steps can become a quiet, invisible dead end. Outreach materials printed only in English don't reach Hmong- or Somali-speaking elders. Enrollment forms full of health care and

government jargon are difficult to navigate even for fluent English speakers, let alone someone translating on the fly. And if a retailer's staff can't explain how a voucher works at checkout, an eligible shopper may simply walk away rather than risk the confusion.

The result is a familiar pattern in public health: a program with real evidence of effectiveness fails to reach some of the people who need it most - not because the program doesn't work, but because it was never fully translated and understood in language or in trust, into the communities it aims to serve.



Photo Courtesy: Minneapolis Farmer Market

How Asian Media Access Is Helping Close That Gap

Asian Media Access (AMA) has taken on a role that mirrors several of the "potential local activities" the CDC recommends for strengthening these programs at the community level:

- Translating outreach and program materials. AMA has worked to translate Minneapolis voucher program materials into Hmong and Chinese, making eligibility information, enrollment instructions, and redemption guidance accessible to residents who would otherwise be excluded by language alone.
- Identifying funding sources for pilot programs. Consistent with CDC guidance to help local providers "identify funding sources for developing and implementing pilot programs" - whether for purchasing produce, funding the incentive itself, or supporting nutrition education - AMA works to connect community-based pilots with the resources needed to get off the ground.
- Connecting programs to local, culturally relevant food sources. The CDC recommends linking voucher and prescription programs to "farmers and food business owners who are members of communities being served." This matters enormously for culturally preferred produce - bitter melon, Chinese long beans,

Hmong mustard greens - that may not be stocked at every voucher-accepting retailer.

- Supporting technology adoption at food businesses. Many small, immigrant-owned grocers and markets need training and support to accept incentive vouchers as payment. Helping these businesses adopt the right point-of-sale systems keeps redemption options close to home for the communities they serve.
- Strengthening links to food hubs and collective buying networks. By connecting incentive programs to regional food hubs, AMA helps ensure a reliable supply of culturally preferred produce reaches redemption sites.



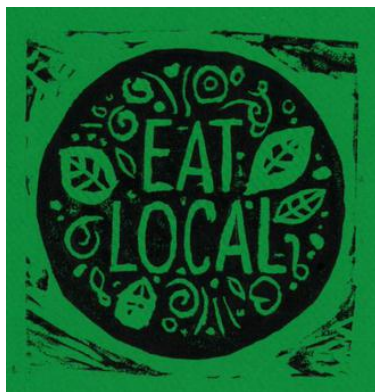
Proof of Concept: Rochester's First FFVP Site

AMA's Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program offers a strong case for why language- and culture-first outreach matters. AMA helped launch the Rochester city's first Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program (FFVP) site - called "Move to the Market," the program was built through a partnership between AMA, The Village Global Farmers Market, the Rochester Cultural Center, and the City of Rochester's Office of the Mayor. It follows the same pattern that has anchored AMA's approach for over a decade: meet people where they already gather, introduce the program through messengers they already trust, and let the voucher access follow naturally from there.

Rochester's immigrant communities - including a growing Cambodian population centered around the local Buddhist temple - face the same barriers AMA has documented across Minnesota: limited transit to full-service grocery stores, produce that doesn't reflect home cuisines, and outreach materials that never arrive in a language residents read. The Village Global Farmers Market was a natural partner: its own logo already carries the word "Village" translated into Korean, Arabic, Tagalog, Chinese, Polish, Vietnamese, Irish, and Hebrew, reflecting the same multilingual, multicultural welcome that AMA's language-access work in Minneapolis is built around.

How it works. "Move to the Market" runs on a simple, three-step pathway:

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



AMA's initial collaboration with the Rochester Cambodian Temple and the Rochester Cultural Center became the model's first real test - and it worked. When the program was introduced by trusted community messengers, inside a space the community already gathered in, seniors who might otherwise never have encountered a farmers market voucher program signed up, showed up, and kept coming back.

What stands out about this launch isn't just that it's the first FFVP site in Rochester - it's the sequence AMA used to get there: relationship first, trusted-messenger introduction second, voucher and market access third. That mirrors the same insight driving AMA's language-access work in Minneapolis - that health behavior change moves through culture and community, not around it. AMA and its Rochester partners now see "Move to the Market" as a template for future FFVP expansion sites: evidence that culturally rooted partnerships, not just program dollars, are what make food access programs actually stick.

Why This Work Matters

Public health strategies are only as strong as their weakest point of access. A produce prescription program can be clinically sound and financially well-supported, but if a Hmong grandmother managing diabetes can't read the enrollment form, or a Chinese-speaking shopper doesn't know her local corner store accepts the voucher, the program's promise goes unfulfilled for her.

Organizations like Asian Media Access do the essential work of translation - not just of language, but of trust, cultural relevance, and logistics - that turns a well-designed policy into something a community can actually use. As Minneapolis and other cities look to expand fruit and vegetable incentive and produce prescription programs, sustained investment in this kind of community-level, language-accessible work will determine whether these evidence-based interventions reach everyone they were designed to help.

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: A NEW TOD MASTER PLAN MOVING FORWARD

The 17-acre former Sears site sits at the southwest corner of St. Paul's Capitol District, just a stone's throw from the Minnesota State Capitol, within the Rondo and Frogtown neighborhoods - communities still living with the lasting impact of Interstate 94 construction, which demolished Rondo Avenue and displaced hundreds of Black families in the 1960s.

Since 2023, Asian Media Access (with its staff – Ange Hwang, Donnell Bratton, and John Yang), the Asian American Business Resilience Network (AABRN), the Frogtown Rondo Black Church Alliance (FRBCA), the Rondo Community Land Trust, and more than 30 partner organizations have run one of the most sustained community planning processes with over 100 neighborhood meetings, a door-knocking campaign across Rondo and Frogtown, 3D-modeling sessions at community festivals, and walk-and-bike audits of every street bordering the site.

That process has also produced a real shift in strategy. AMA's own April 2024 vision for the site explicitly proposed preserving the existing Sears building rather than demolishing it, citing the sentimental value residents attached to the structure, and framed redevelopment around "*revamping the site into a vibrant community hub*"

using the building that was already there. The plan moving forward today is different: it calls for demolishing the existing Sears building and surface parking lot outright, specifically in order to clear the site for a full Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) build-out rather than working around the old structure. That's a meaningful pivot - from adaptive reuse of what already exists to a clean-slate TOD framework organized around the site's proximity to the Green Line and the future Capitol-Rice transit Station Hub.



Current thinking, carried forward under the Rondo Community Land Trust's stewardship, organizes the now-cleared site around a few core TOD-aligned ideas:

- Smaller, phased TOD blocks in place of one superblock - dividing the demolished site into multiple connected parcels that can each be built out over time and by multiple developers, including community-rooted ones, rather than one monolithic redevelopment.
- A traffic and circulation plan connecting those new blocks - rebuilding the street grid so people and vehicles can move between the site's new parcels and out to Rice Street, Marion Street, University Avenue, and the future transit station, instead of the site continuing to function as an isolated superblock the way the current Sears footprint does.
- Everyday destinations - a grocery store, neighborhood-serving retail, a day care, a visitor center, and a mobility hub - chosen because community engagement consistently named access to daily needs as the top priority, not just housing.
- Cultural placekeeping for Rondo's legacy, including public art, interpretive storytelling elements, and design coordinated with CAAPB to ensure the neighborhood's history is built into the site rather than mentioned after the fact.

- Safety-first street design, responding directly to walk-and-bike audits that found severely deteriorated sidewalks on Marion Street, a hostile multi-lane crossing at Rice/Rondo/John Ireland, and a site cut off from the Capitol Mall by the old Sears building itself.
- Wellness and community-serving space - concepts raised through engagement include a wellness center, gathering and gym space, and flexible cultural plazas alongside the housing and retail.

These responses to specific things AMA, AABRN, and FRBCA heard directly from residents over three years of engagement, layered onto a TOD strategy that only became possible once the plan shifted toward clearing the site rather than preserving the existing building - which is also why the Rondo Community Land Trust inherited a plan with real community buy-in already built in, rather than starting from a blank site plan, to *"break up the scale of the superblock, establish a substantial population at the doorstep of the Capitol, and act as a catalyst for the mixed-use regeneration of the district."*



The \$500 million figure attached to this project isn't a single line item - it's the private investment the master plan is designed to unlock once public infrastructure is in place. Based on the current concept, that investment covers:

- 1,300+ new housing units across a range of types, sizes, and price points, consistent with CAAPB's own land use goal of a "diversity of new housing."
- 250,000+ square feet of commercial, retail, and community space - including the grocery store, neighborhood-serving retail, workplaces, and limited evening dining and entertainment destinations.
- Everyday-needs infrastructure such as a day care, a visitor center, and a mobility and welcoming hub connecting the site to Metro Transit routes and the future Capitol Rice transit station.

- Community and cultural space, including wellness and gathering facilities, flexible cultural plazas, and public art and interpretive elements documenting Rondo's history - the pieces of the plan that came directly out of AMA and FRBCA's community engagement.
- A rebuilt public realm: demolition of the existing Sears building and surface parking lot to clear the site for TOD blocks, a new street grid connecting those blocks and breaking up the superblock, a programmable open green space of at least a quarter acre, walkable and well-lit connections to the surrounding parks and the Capitol Mall, and stormwater and streetscape improvements along the site's perimeter.



Put together, this is a description of an entire urban village, not a single building - which is also why the public infrastructure piece matters so much. Housing developers, grocers, and retailers can finance their own buildings; none of them can individually justify financing new sewer lines, rebuilt streets, or a redesigned public right-of-way that benefits the whole 17-acre site. That gap is exactly what the state bonding request is built to close.

The Bonding Bill Behind the Numbers

That's where HF 4617 and its Senate companion, SF 4558, came in. Introduced in the 94th Legislature in March 2026, the bills authorized up to \$95 million in state appropriation bonds - publicly discussed as a \$34 million near-term ask - to fund predesign, demolition, environmental remediation, and construction of the site's sanitary sewer, water, streets, sidewalks, lighting, and streetscape infrastructure, with proceeds flowing through the Metropolitan Council to the City of St. Paul. Unfortunately, both bills missed their committee deadlines and were not included in the 2026 Capital Investment Omnibus package before the legislative session adjourned.

However, the redevelopment effort has already caught the momentum of a high-speed train. When the 95th Legislature convenes on January 12, 2027, the community expects to have a completed Sears Redevelopment Master Plan in hand – and to build on that momentum to move the redevelopment forward.

Legislative Request — \$34M

\$34 million in General Obligation (GO) bonds for publicly owned underground infrastructure.

- Sanitary sewer systems
- Water systems
- Stormwater systems

Funds limited strictly to public infrastructure. No funding for buildings, demolition, or site development.

Why State Investment

- Adjacent to the State Capitol – statewide significance
- Infrastructure must be in place before development can occur
- Systems are non-revenue generating and require public investment

Mixed-Use Development Housing, commercial retail, and public green spaces 130+ new housing units and 250,000+ sq. ft. of commercial and community space	Transit-Oriented Steps from the Green Line LRT and major bus routes – reducing car dependency and connecting residents to jobs across the Twin Cities metro
Economic Impact Thousands of construction jobs over time and support hundreds of permanent jobs in commercial, retail, and community spaces Create walkable amenities – dining, retail, and housing – for legislators, Capitol staff, and the broader Capitol complex community	Public Revenue \$200M in private investment unlocked – returning a long-vacant Capitol Area site to Minnesota's tax rolls Supports long-term tax base growth and sustained economic activity in a key state government district



BROOKLYN BOULEVARD CORRIDOR PLAN

Photo Courtesy: [City of Brooklyn Park's Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan](#)

AMA'S AAPI CORRIDOR VISION HELPS SHAPE BLUE LINE EXTENSION PLANNING AROUND BROOKLYN BOULEVARD

The City of Brooklyn Park just released long-awaited Blue Line Extension Area Development Plan – “*Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan*” that incorporates many key concepts that Asian Media Access (AMA) has been advising for since early 2024. The plan's Purpose statement commits to:

“...cultivating a healthy and thriving retail corridor that reflects Brooklyn Park’s unique culture...”

Its Land Use chapter goes further, naming the Station Area’s business character directly:

“...the area has experienced growth in ethnic and cultural businesses that serve the surrounding community.”

And its Background section ties the corridor's redevelopment explicitly to equity, describing Brooklyn Boulevard as an area “*home to predominantly people of color today*” where investment is a chance to “*advance racial equity and healing.*”

None of this is new to AMA. In January 2024, AMA Executive Director Ange Hwang published “*Imaging an AAPI Cultural Corridor along the Blue Line*” in China Insight, calling on the City and regional planners to treat this same corridor's AAPI business cluster as a cultural and economic asset worth designing around - not a byproduct of redevelopment. One month later, AMA convened the Blue Line Extension AAPI

Economic Development Summit II with the Lao Center of Minnesota, Hennepin County, the Asian American Business Resilience Network (AABRN), and the City of Brooklyn Park itself as partners. Two and a half years later, the City's own plan is finally catching up to that conversation.

Anchored by What's Already There

The plan's Station Area recommendations are built around exactly the businesses AMA pointed to from the start: Dragon Star Supermarket and Tii Cup, an Asian grocery store, sit at the corner of West Broadway and Brooklyn Boulevard and already anchor the daily foot traffic the plan's proposed "Market Street" is designed to extend. They are not isolated tenants - they sit within a broader cluster of Asian-owned restaurants and small businesses that has grown up around this intersection, exactly the "growth in ethnic and cultural businesses" the plan's own Land Use chapter describes. This AAPI cultural cluster is precisely what gives Market Street a reason to exist in the first place: the daily customer base, the walkable retail rhythm, and the cultural identity the plan is trying to design

toward already live at this corner. The plan itself acknowledges these are the retailers worth building around, not displacing - its own market study found vacant storefronts in this corridor are best suited to small, locally-owned tenants like these rather than national chains. If the City is serious about the Market Street concept connecting Brooklyn Boulevard to the Starlite Center, Dragon Star, Tii Cup, and the other Asian-owned restaurants clustered at this intersection should be treated as co-designers of that street, not just existing conditions to work around - the same seat at the table AMA gave AAPI business owners at its own Blue Line Extension summits.

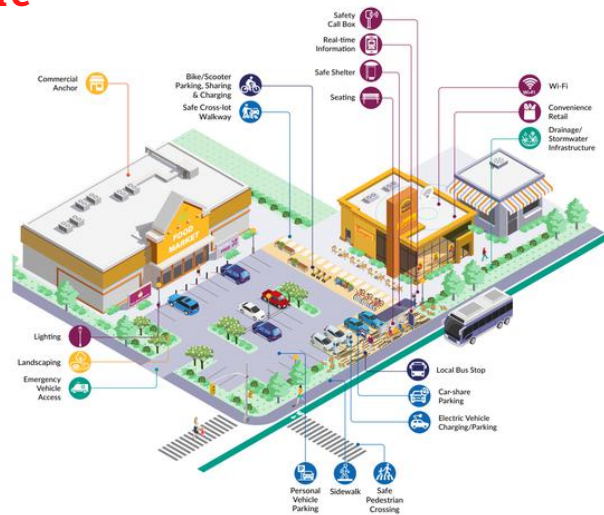


Photo Courtesy: [City of Brooklyn Park's Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan](#)



What the City's Own Environmental Justice Data Shows

EPA Environmental Justice (EJ) data for the census tracts covering the Brooklyn Boulevard corridor gives the City an additional, independent reason to treat the

Dragon Star and Tii Cup business cluster as a priority, not an afterthought. The two tracts that make up the corridor tell different stories, and both point toward the same conclusion: this is a community that has carried disproportionate burden and deserves to see that reflected in how the plan treats its existing businesses.

The tract closer to West Broadway and the Station Area (Census Tract 27053026807) is 40% people of color and 6% Asian, with a demographic index in roughly the upper-fifth of tracts statewide. The adjacent tract just north along Brooklyn Boulevard (Census Tract 27053026818) is a markedly different - and more compelling - picture: 73% people of color, 21% Asian residents (nearly one in five, consistent with the AAPI business cluster AMA has pointed to since 2024), 32% low-income, and a per-capita income of just \$21,084. Among the corridor's limited-English-speaking households, Asian-Pacific Island languages are the single largest language group, at 47% - larger than Spanish and every other non-English language combined. This same tract also carries a disproportionate cumulative environmental burden relative to the rest of the state: its EPA Demographic Index sits at the 93rd percentile statewide and 77th percentile nationally. It ranks in the 82nd percentile statewide for traffic proximity - consistent with the corridor plan's own findings that Brooklyn Boulevard is on Hennepin County's high-injury network - and in the 85th to 90th percentile statewide for proximity to hazardous waste and RMP (risk management plan) facilities.

Put together, this is precisely the argument the corridor plan already makes for itself in its Background section: that Brooklyn Boulevard is an area *"home to predominantly people of color today"* where reinvestment is an opportunity to *"advance racial equity and healing."* The EJ data shows why that argument should translate into concrete design decisions at the Station Area - naming Dragon Star, Tii Cup, and the corridor's other Asian-owned restaurants as the businesses the plan's equity commitments are meant to serve, not simply context for the numbers.

SMALL BUSINESS SUPPORT & ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

BUSINESS SUPPORT

There is a strong business community in the Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor which includes a unique mix of BIPOC- and immigrant-owned small retail businesses, culturally-specific grocery stores, auto-body shops, and national chains such as Target and Aldi. The affordability of business spaces in the corridor makes the study area a unique incubator for new and small businesses. Business closures following the COVID-19 pandemic gained citywide interest and concern. A market study for the Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor (see Appendix D) found that:

- Corridor businesses primarily serve local customers rather than a regional market.
- Existing housing largely supports current business activity.
- Additional housing is needed in the Corridor and citywide to support new commercial growth. Retail development is best suited along parcels fronting Brooklyn Boulevard.
- New retail construction is expected to remain limited through 2031 due to market challenges. National retailers are most likely to locate in the Station Area.
- Local and small businesses may find opportunities in both the Village and Station Areas.

ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

Development on the EDA-owned properties, infill development, especially at the Station Area, and public infrastructure projects such as the light rail, provide numerous benefits including new services and jobs, additional housing choices, improved transportation options, enhanced public safety, and increased tax revenue. These projects can also put small businesses at risk of displacement. Using the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) Report as a starting point the City of Brooklyn Park has explored anti-displacement programs and policies to support existing residents and businesses, such as a Facade Improvement Program and financial assistance programs to support businesses during BLE construction. These are not comprehensive and have not been approved for implementation as of 2026:

- Preserve commercial spaces that provide affordable rent and ownership opportunities.
- Support business startups through programs such as the Brooklyn Park Small Business Center.
- Invest in trails, bike lanes, parks, street trees, and public gathering spaces.
- Encourage additional housing and density to expand the local customer base.
- Develop a strong corridor identity and branding strategy to attract regional customers.



Photo Courtesy: [City of Brooklyn Park's Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan](#)

The Capital Gap AMA Has Already Named

Recognition on paper is not the same as financing. In a July 2024 policy statement, AMA has detailed what AAPI-led development in this region has achieved with pooled community capital - Asia Mall, the Burnsville and Blaine malls, two Hmong Marketplaces, the acquisition of Maplewood Mall and Brooklyn Center Plaza, and where that approach hits a ceiling. Their explicit ask to federal policymakers was for larger capital infusion beyond “mom-and-pop operation” scale, different underwriting for entrepreneurs with limited collateral, and venture capital-style equity financing to diversify who owns larger development projects, which they described as “overwhelmingly dominated by white males.” We also highlighted that many Pan Asian and Pan African business owners are wary of conventional debt and need trust built into any capital relationship before using outside money at all - a factor the corridor plan's own financing scenarios have not addressed.

FUNDING TOOL	PRIMARY PROJECT	PRIMARY PURPOSE (KEY CRITERIA)
Public-Private Partnership (P3)	District infrastructure, innovation facilities, mixed-use development (City/EDA with private partner)	Allocate risk and capital efficiently for complex projects where public and private objectives can be contractually aligned
Land Value Capture / Ground Lease Revenue	Long-term mixed-use, industrial, or institutional development on publicly controlled land (City/EDA as landowner)	Monetize publicly controlled land to support infrastructure and reinvestment while retaining long-term public ownership
New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC)	Catalytic mixed-use, innovation, workforce, or community-serving facilities (Private developer with CDE allocation; City as sponsor)	Close significant financing gaps for eligible projects located in qualified census tracts with strong community impact
Special Service District (SSD)/Business Improvement District (BID)	District operations, maintenance, placemaking, and programming (Property owners; City enables)	Create a self-funded, recurring revenue source for enhanced district services when property owners support assessments
Local Option Sales Tax (Special Legislation)	Major district infrastructure and public amenities (City; legislative and voter approval)	Generate dedicated capital funding for transformational projects that exceed local fiscal capacity
State-Authorized Value Capture District (Beyond Traditional TIF)	District-scale infrastructure and public facilities (City; enable legislation required)	Capture incremental state-level tax growth to finance large-scale public infrastructure and district investment
Metropolitan Council - Livable Communities / TOD/TBRA	Mixed-use development, public infrastructure, brownfield cleanup (City/development partners)	Close financing gaps for transit-oriented mixed-use, or contaminated sites aligned with regional policy priorities
Hennepin County TOD & Environmental Response Fund (ERF)	Transit-oriented development and environment remediation (City / County partnership)	Reduce site risk and enable redevelopment where environmental or access constraints limit feasibility
Historic Tax Credits (Federal & State)	Adaptive reuse of historic structure (Private developer)	Monetize eligible historic assets through tax credit equity when preservation and rescue criteria are met
Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)	Affordable and mixed-income housing (Private developer; state allocation)	Enable housing delivery that supports workforce access and district vitality when affordability thresholds apply
Opportunity Zone (OZ) Equity not an option for this area	Larger-scale private real estate development (Private equity investors)	Attract patient private capital through federal tax incentives when qualifying OZ geography applies
EB-5 Immigrant Investor Capital	Larger catalytic real estate or innovation facilities (Private developer)	Fill mezzanine-level financing gaps when job-creation and TEA eligibility thresholds are met
Federal Tech Hub/Innovation Cluster Programs (EDA, NSF, CHIPS Act)	Innovation facilities, workforce centers, applied R&D (Regional consortium)	Secure transformational federal investment when BPBID anchors a regional innovation ecosystem
IJA/IRA Infrastructure & Energy Programs	Transportation, energy systems, broadband, resilience (City, Utilities, developers)	Reduce infrastructure and operating costs through federal climate and infrastructure incentives
Philanthropic & Institutional Capital	Workforce programs, entrepreneurship, community activation (Foundations, anchors)	Support early activation, equity initiatives, and ecosystem-building where public capital is not well-suited
Innovation District Operating Revenues	District management, programming, shared services (District entity)	Lower cost or capital for eligible private industrial investment

Where EB-5 Fits That Ask

The corridor plan's real estate feasibility analysis shows funding gaps of roughly \$3.2 million to \$15.1 million across its EDA-owned sites, largest at the highest-density scenarios near the future Blue Line stop. EB-5 Immigrant Investor capital is one tool matched to the gap AMA has already named: it is equity-like investment, not conventional debt, sidestepping the collateral and credit-score barriers AMA's own data cites. Foreign investors can obtain conditional permanent residency by funding a new commercial enterprise that creates at least 10 full-time jobs; the minimum investment drops from \$1,050,000 to \$800,000 in a Targeted Employment Area (TEA). This corridor's mean household income of \$76,000–\$86,000, well below the citywide \$108,000–\$116,000, supports a TEA case - and the EJ per-capita income

figure of \$21,084 in the tract just north of the Station Area underscores how far below citywide norms this stretch of the corridor falls. A developer sponsoring an EB-5 offering on a larger anchor project at Northwinds could close a meaningful share of that gap while delivering exactly the larger-scale, diversified-ownership capital AMA asked for.

Future in a Glance

City of Brooklyn Park should invite Dragon Star Supermarket, Tii Cup, and other Asian-owned restaurants and small businesses clustered around Brooklyn Boulevard and West Broadway to serve as design and planning partners for the proposed “*Market Street*” concept - not simply as existing businesses that a new corridor design must route around. Census tract data indicate that this cluster is located within a community experiencing disproportionate economic and environmental burdens, making the meaningful inclusion of these businesses a matter of equity and community justice, not merely a design preference.

The City could also consider commissioning a TEA (Targeted Employment Area) eligibility determination early in the planning process, allowing EB-5 investment to be explored alongside traditional financing tools such as TIF. An AAPI Cultural Corridor concept could easily provide a welcoming platform for Asian and international investors and create opportunities to bring AAPI-led capital, entrepreneurs, and business networks into the redevelopment conversation. Their experience assembling AAPI-focused capital and supporting immigrant-owned businesses in the region could help expand the investment pool while keeping community businesses at the center of the corridor’s future.

Finally, we encourage more community members, business owners, and stakeholders to share their perspectives on the Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan through the City’s survey: [Brooklyn Boulevard Corridor Plan Survey](#).

The goal should be a truly democratic and equitable “*Market Street*”- one shaped with the community, not a redevelopment process that leads to displacement.



PROJECT SUPPORT EVENTS

July 25 & 26

FROM THE ASHES OF WAR

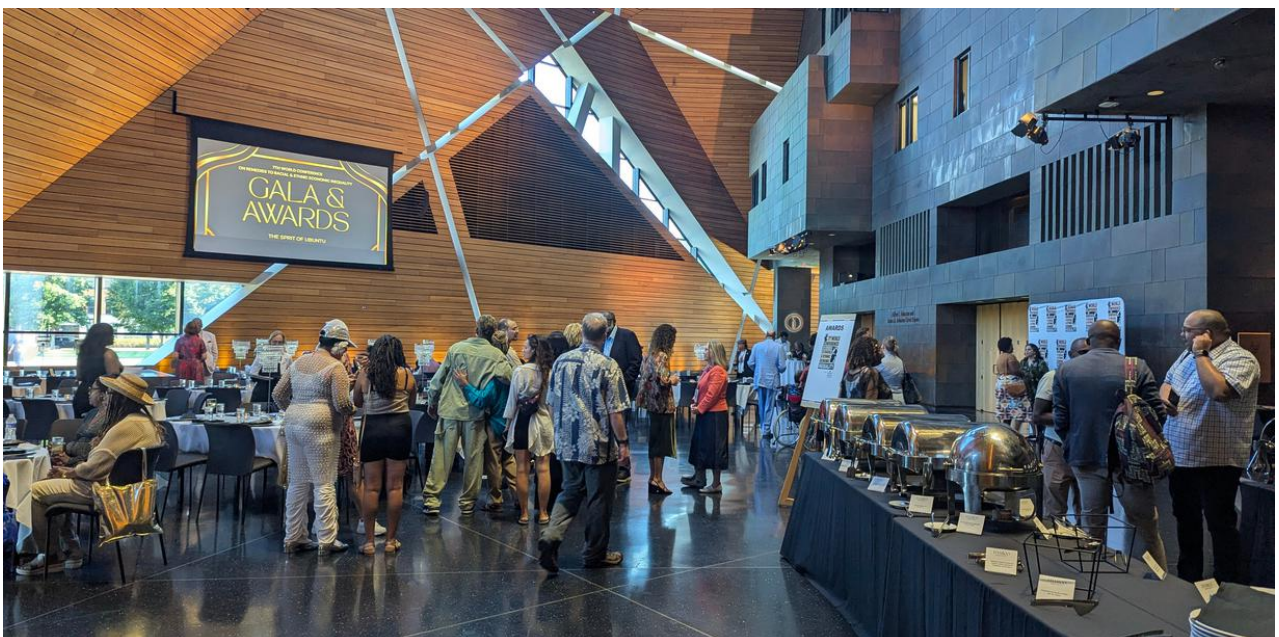
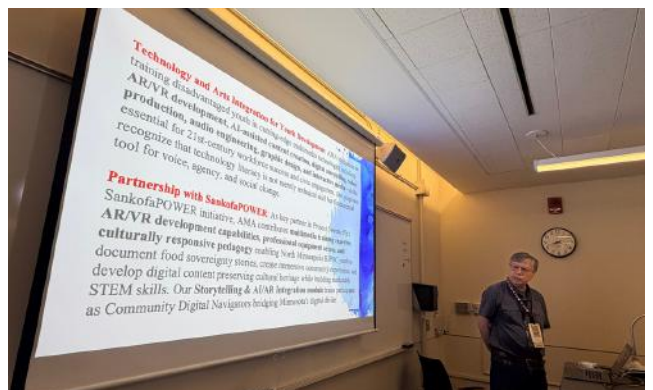
Vietnamese Community of Minnesota, Asian Media Access, and 3D Wellness Endowment co-hosted a screening of From the Ashes of War (Từ Tro Tàn Chiến Tranh) at St. Paul downtown, close to the Sears Redevelopment site. In addition to showcasing the film, AMA uses the opportunity to share updates on the Sears Redevelopment with Vietnamese American community members and gather their feedback on potential housing and retail business opportunities.



August 03

7TH WORLD CONFERENCE

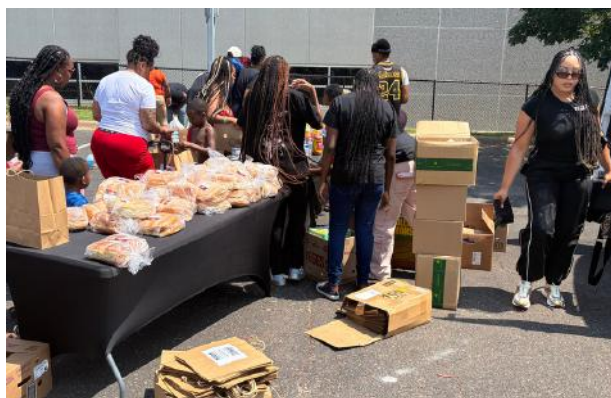
Asian Media Access (AMA) participated in the 7th World Conference, which brought together professionals from around the world to explore remedies for racial and ethnic economic inequality. AMA used this opportunity to lead three workshops aligned with our Bicultural Healthy Living Initiative, sharing culturally responsive nutrition and physical activity resources while engaging participants in discussions on community-based strategies to advance health equity and promote healthy living through a bicultural lens.



August 04

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT: COMMUNITY DAY OUTREACH EVENT

Asian Media Access(AMA) joined the HPMD Youth Department for National Night Out Community Day, bringing families, neighbors, and community members together for an evening of connection and celebration. AMA shared multilingual community resources and exchanged translated educational materials, including information about the Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program in English and Hmong. The event fostered social connectedness among North Minneapolis' families by creating opportunities to increase awareness of community health and nutrition resources in a culturally affirming setting.



August 06

TWIN CITIES R!SE COMMUNITY CARNIVAL OUTREACH EVENT

Asian Media Access joined the Twin Cities R!SE Community Carnival, bringing families and community members together for an evening of games, music, food, and connection. AMA shared multilingual community resources and educational materials, including information about the Fruit and Vegetable Voucher Program in English and Hmong, helping connect families with health and nutrition resources in a welcoming community setting.



UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 INDIAFEST THEME: WEAVES AND TRADITIONAL FABRICS OF INDIA

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

PLACE: Minnesota State 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



MATERNAL & FAMILY HEALTH EQUITY COLLABORATIVE

DATE/TIME: Saturday, August 15, 2026, 2:00pm-6:00pm

PLACE: Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Parkway North, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55104, [register here](#)

Connecting communities, strengthening families, advancing health equity.

Bringing together families, doulas, healthcare providers, health systems, insurers, community organizations, foundations, and policymakers to advance.

TAIWAN FILM FESTIVAL

DATE/TIME: Saturday, August 29,
2026, 1:00pm-4:30pm

PLACE: Hopkins Center for the Arts,
1111 Mainstreet, Hopkins, MN 55343,
[tickets](#)

Beyond the incredible films on screen,
we are bringing the vibrant spirit,
history, and beauty of Taiwan right to
you through our interactive festival
booths! Join us for an unforgettable
day of film, community, and culture.
We can't wait to see you there!



OPEN STREETS WEST BROADWAY

DATE/TIME: Saturday, September 12, 2026, 11:00am-5:00pm

PLACE: West Broadway Ave

Free, family-friendly event that offers a variety of activities such as biking, walking,
playing, eating, dancing, and singing.

MINNESOTHA: THAI STREET FOOD FESTIVAL



DATE/TIME: Saturday, September 19, 2026, 11:00am-8:00pm and Sunday, September 20, 2026, 11:00am-6:00pm

PLACE: Wat Promwachirayan, 2544 Highway 100 South, 2544 MN-100, St Louis Park, MN 55416

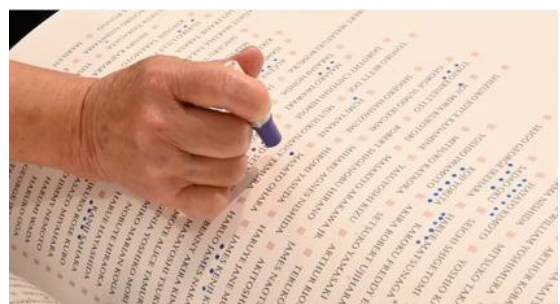
Wat Promwachirayan is pleased to present the MinnesoThai Street Food Festival. MinnesoThai is a celebration of the Thai and SE Asian communities that have chosen to make Minnesota their home. This free, two-day event will showcase authentic Thai street food and feature cultural performances, live music, art and souvenirs, a papaya eating contest, a drag show, fire dancing, and more! This event is family-friendly and there is ample free parking. Food is available to-go.

IREICHŌ - THE BOOK OF NAMES

DATE/TIME: October 9, 10, 11, 2026

PLACE: Historic Fort Snelling - Plank Museum and Visitor Center, 17 Tower Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55417, [register here](#)

Named after the Japanese term for “consoling the spirits,” the Ireichō monument honors both those who have gone before us as well as those who carry on the memories and legacies of forced removal, unjust incarceration, and family separation. Every visitor to the monument is invited to contribute to the creation of the monument by marking one or more names in the Ireichō with a blue hanko stamp. For many camp survivors and descendants, leaving this mark has been a way to honor the personhood of a family member who suffered the indignities and losses of the wartime incarceration.





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