

TOWARD AN ANTI-RACIST PARADIGM  
IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Core Characteristics of  
the Sector



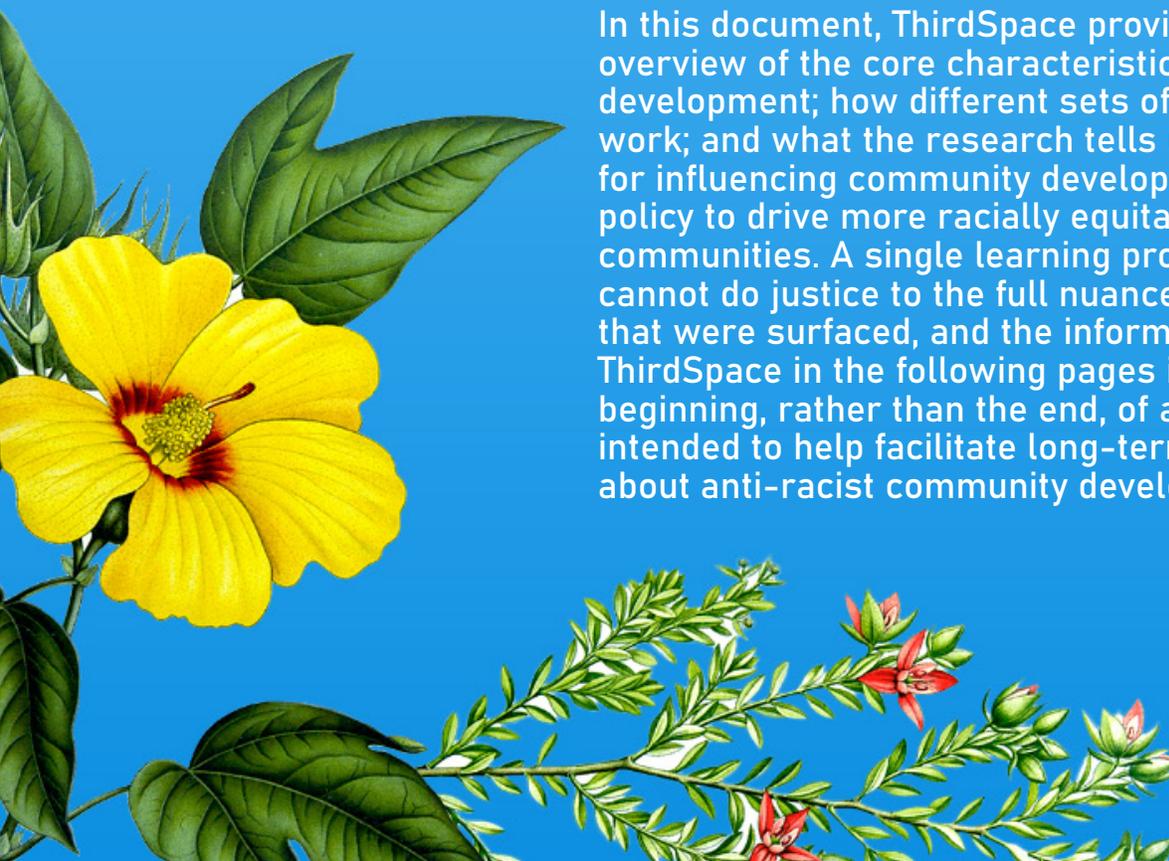


## ABOUT THIS PROJECT

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) contracted ThirdSpace Action Lab to lead a research project to increase understanding of how structural racism shows up in the community development sector and to begin to identify specific ways to increase the sector's embrace of explicitly anti-racist approaches in order to achieve health equity.

The project is grounded in a large-scale literature review and a set of interviews with a broad range of community development practitioners. The present publication captures key findings from ThirdSpace's research, drawing from the extensive analyses surfaced in the literature review and interviews. RWJF is grateful for the wisdom and insights that were offered.

In this document, ThirdSpace provides a high-level overview of the core characteristics of community development; how different sets of actors support this work; and what the research tells us about pathways for influencing community development practice and policy to drive more racially equitable outcomes for communities. A single learning product on its own cannot do justice to the full nuance of all the findings that were surfaced, and the information shared by ThirdSpace in the following pages is intended as the beginning, rather than the end, of a series of materials intended to help facilitate long-term conversations about anti-racist community development.



## **ABOUT THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION (RWJF)**

RWJF is committed to improving health and health equity in the United States. In partnership with others, we are working to develop a Culture of Health rooted in equity that provides every individual with a fair and just opportunity to thrive, no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have. One way the Foundation advances this mission is through targeted investments in community development policy, practice, and systems. By directing resources to communities that historically have experienced a lack of investment, RWJF is able to support improvements in health equity and increase attention to conditions of place.

## **ABOUT THIRDSPEACE ACTION LAB**

ThirdSpace Action Lab was created to disrupt the vicious cycle of disinvestment + displacement that negatively impacts the vitality of communities of color with low incomes. ThirdSpace is a grassroots solutions studio dedicated to prototyping creative, place-based solutions to complex socio-economic problems. The organization works as institutional + community organizers, turning multi-disciplinary research into evidence-based strategies and activating “third places” to co-create more liberated spaces for people of color.

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## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development plays a critical role in advancing opportunities for community self-determination, particularly (but not exclusively) at a neighborhood level. It does so through multi-sector approaches, financial investment, interconnected programs + services, and development of longer-term capacities + structures to create the conditions that enable communities to thrive.

At its best, community development can:

- Facilitate change in place that is driven by, and responsive to, residents;
- Center both the needs + the wisdom of those who are most oppressed or excluded, particularly residents of color + residents living with low incomes;
- Acknowledge that structural problems extend beyond neighborhood borders while still lifting up + building from neighborhood-specific assets + resources;
- Develop social infrastructure + shared governance that supports substantive, long-term collective action;
- Incentivize + drive capital investment in communities that have faced structural disinvestment + market exclusion, while safeguarding against the unintended consequences of that investment; and, ultimately,
- Improve health, quality of life, and economic, environmental, and social well-being.

One of the unique characteristics of community development is that it focuses on large-scale systemic challenges but attempts to address these issues with consideration of the context of place. As a sector, community development has attempted to develop interventions that are scalable + replicable but that can also adapt to a community's unique culture, history, assets, market strength, and the priorities + solutions proposed by resident leaders + other stakeholders. This highly contextualized approach means that community development approaches can look very different across the sector, particularly given its scale; the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations estimates that there are more than 6,500 community-based development organizations across the United States. As community development has grown + formalized over the past 60 years, it has also extended its efforts beyond the neighborhood level to include municipal, county, state, and federal enabling environments. The result is that today's community development sector is inclusive of organizations doing both community-based development work (i.e. those that primarily focus on support of residents + other intended beneficiaries of community development) and those developing support infrastructure (i.e. those that primarily focus on support of community development practitioners).

In the following sections, we outline the roles different actors play within the sector, as well as key information from our stakeholder interviews around what an explicitly anti-racist paradigm might look like for different segments of the field.

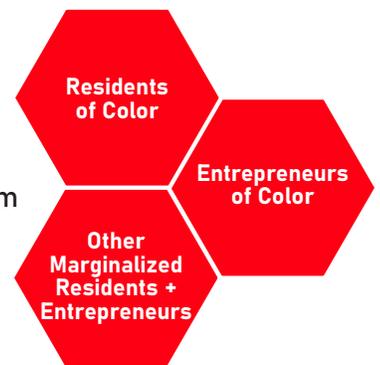


## INTENDED BENEFICIARIES

Community development work can occur virtually anywhere, but historically, it has been most robust in communities of color, low-income communities, and communities with disproportionately large populations of other marginalized residents + entrepreneurs. This is perhaps not surprising, as many attribute the origin of the sector to the Civil Rights + Black Power Movements. Community development networks + services tend to be most extensive in urban communities, but there is also community development infrastructure in rural + tribal communities, and more recently, in suburban communities.

To varying degrees, community development intends to serve residents + entrepreneurs by addressing their direct material needs like access to affordable space and wealth-building, while also engaging in longer-term work to make sure that they are shaping priorities + solutions for community investment. Despite these goals, intended beneficiaries are all too often excluded from decision-making or are only engaged in a perfunctory way, and bureaucratic processes can both fail to connect them to needed resources and can be dehumanizing in the process. A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve intended beneficiaries by:

- Ensuring that residents + entrepreneurs of color and other intended beneficiaries have more than just a seat at a table – that they have extensive agency in development processes in their own communities and that investments are made with them, rather than for them.
- Pursuing growth strategies based on community assets, rather than relying on external investors far removed from the day-to-day experience of community life (or more often, the withholding of investment altogether, paired with the extraction of community resources for others' gain).
- Developing processes, policies, and practices that are culturally relevant + locally contextualized, particularly those that adequately take into account community healing + community repair.
- Increasing access to + quality of public services akin to those found in whiter + more affluent communities.
- Investing in intended beneficiaries' baseline needs for money, technical skill + language, and time to engage meaningfully in community development work.



## COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Community-based development organizations are those actors who work most directly with intended beneficiaries. Community development corporations are perhaps the most prominent kind of community-based development organization in the sector, although housing developers + providers, public housing authorities, financial literacy + counseling organizations, and other community-based organizations often also take on a number of such service roles.

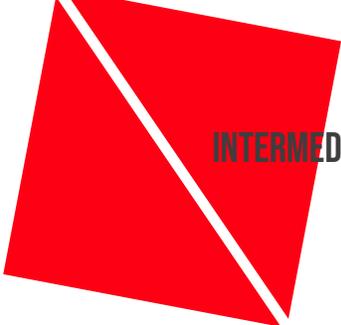
While community-based development organizations' programs + services can look very different from community to community and organization to organization, they often involve some combination of real estate development + management; community planning; community organizing; resident services (like assisting in applications for public funding programs or offering job referrals + training); and/or small business development + wealth-building.

Community-based development organizations attempt to address a wide variety of community needs, often in communities already most impacted by systemic racism + systemic poverty. Despite this considerable work, these organizations are notoriously under-resourced and heavily regulated. Resources tend to flow disproportionately to the largest community-based development organizations (more often than not, those with white leadership), and these organizations in turn rely disproportionately on larger white-led vendors. A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve community-based development practitioners by:



- Better resourcing BIPOC leadership development + support for emerging, mid-career and senior leadership;
- Increasing targeted investments in communities that have borne the brunt of racist policies like redlining and urban renewal, rather than distributing resources broadly without attention to historic context or need;
- Affording greater freedom for organizations to model + prototype programs, policies, and practices that speak to specific community context + priorities of intended beneficiaries, rather than pressuring organizations to pursue industry standard approaches;
- Valuing + resourcing more comprehensive + holistic approaches to service delivery, rather than overly rigid + siloed standards;
- Providing greater resourcing of community-based development organizations' organizing + advocacy work that serves longer-term development of leadership by intended beneficiaries and has the potential to inform + influence local + regional policies.

It is worth noting that while intended beneficiaries + community-based development organizations tend to focus their time + energy close to the ground, they can also play a direct (and sometimes transformational) role in broader systems work around communications + narrative, financing + funding, leadership development, policy, and research – just as the organizations below can also engage in direct service provision to intended beneficiaries, even if it is not their primary focus.



## INTERMEDIARIES + NETWORKS

As the community development sector has expanded + formalized over the past 60 years, so has the infrastructure to support it, including an ecosystem of intermediaries + networks that aim to connect + serve practitioners operating on the ground. They can be thought of as “wraparound service” organizations for community-based development organizations + for community development practitioners – coordinating policy agendas + sector research; capacity building, leadership development, and continuous education programs; conferences + convenings; communication platforms; and provision of direct funding + regrants from philanthropic partners. Which specific supports an intermediary or network offers is at least partially shaped by their focus.

Such organizations can operate at a local, regional, state, or national level. They can focus on a specific theme (e.g. integration of health attention + approaches in community development) or a specific identity (e.g. supporting community-based development organizations working in AAPI communities). Some allow stakeholders to self-select into their offerings, while others serve specific memberships. Particularly among national networks + intermediaries, they may have additional infrastructure to address needs within specific geographies (e.g. through local + regional offices). Over the past few years, there has also been an increase in national movement organizations increasing outreach to + support of community-based development organizations.

While networks + intermediaries have undoubtedly increased connectivity + coordination across the community development sector, they have also been critiqued for a lack of attention to equity practices. They can be relatively removed from the issues they are charged with addressing + the communities that they serve. Meanwhile, they can be perceived as being more responsive to the directives + priorities of foundations + government agencies than to those of community-based development organizations or practitioners. A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve networks + intermediaries by:

- Increasing leadership of people with lived experience of the issues they are charged with addressing;
- Encouraging stronger race analysis that will increase their effectiveness in systems change;
- Creating mechanisms for more frequent + more meaningful input from the organizations they serve;
- Enabling more innovation in what programs + services are offered and how they are delivered; and
- Increasing opportunities for staff to have meaningful experiences with community development practice on the ground.



## FINANCING + FUNDING

It would be difficult to carry out the breadth or depth of interconnected community development programs + services that exist in the United States were it not for a robust community development financing + funding system. While many community-based development organizations do generate earned income (particularly from real estate-related work), it is rarely sufficient to cover the sector's expenses in all but the most affluent communities.

Banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions have long played such a role in addressing community investment needs, although they have historically been notoriously risk averse to investing in communities of color – in some cases, codified in institutional policy + public policy, such as through redlining. Beginning in 1994 with the passage of the Riegle Community Development + Regulatory Improvement Act, the federal government has worked to support private investment in communities of low incomes through the recognition of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) – banks, credit unions, loan funds, microloan funds, and venture capital funds who are mission-driven + certified by the federal government. Today, approximately 1,000 such entities provide needed capital resources to community-based development organizations, and in some cases, directly to individual residents + small businesses. The Community Reinvestment Act of 1977 also established a system of banking regulation to encourage private financial institutions, regardless of their level of mission intent, to meet the credit needs of low- and moderate-income communities.

Not all community development work lends itself to market return, even mission-driven market return, and this is particularly true in communities of low income. Financing + investing is supplemented with substantial grantmaking – both private grantmaking by foundations, and public grantmaking at local, county, state, tribal, and federal levels (as well as by quasi-governmental organizations). Federal departments + agencies – particularly but not exclusively the Departments of Housing + Urban Development, Agriculture, Commerce, Transportation, and Treasury – play substantial roles in the sector's funding mix. Considerable portions of local, county, state, and tribal grantmaking are actually pass-through funding, both through competitive grant programs + through formula grants (grants allocated nationwide based on populations and indicators of community need).

CDFIs, other financial institutions, and private + public grantmaking have unquestionably contributed to decades of work carried out in communities not well-served by the banking sector – work that likely would not have occurred were it not for these investments. Despite this, community development financing + funding has not been without critiques by community development practitioners, researchers, or activists. Overall financing + funding has failed to keep pace with community need, partially due to long-term decline in federal community development funding beginning in the 1980s. Despite financiers' + grantmakers' stated intentions to serve communities of low income, considerable access barriers to capital remain, including particular risk aversion to investment in Black communities + limited financial infrastructure in rural + tribal communities. Overall, community development funding + financing has oriented itself to where market returns are likely to be the strongest, which has led to strong orientation to real estate development at the expense of investment in other community needs, and in some communities, has triggered or exacerbated displacement. A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve those focused on community development financing + funding by:

- Advancing more innovative financial mechanisms that allow for more interconnected, holistic approaches to funding community development projects in new ways, with greater potential for collective ownership + community wealth-building (e.g. integrating different professional + lived experiences into what + how things get financed, etc.);
- Increasing representation within financing + funding of those who have been most directly impacted by structural racism;
- Affording more targeted capital flows to historically marginalized communities, and where capital flows are more dispersed, allowing for more explicit attention to the needs of residents of color + residents with lower incomes;
- Increasing the capital absorption capacity of under-resourced communities, particularly but not exclusively in rural + tribal communities; and
- Advancing metrics + accountability for considering social elements of a project (such as degree of community engagement, self-governance, and transparency/accountability to community) that would allow for greater consideration of factors beyond financial return.



## POLICY

Community development funding + financing is shaped tremendously by public policy, but government and quasi-governmental organizations play substantial roles in the sector beyond just dollars + cents. From zoning to permitting to real estate disposition to standards around public processes, governments set the terms not just for what gets funded but also where + under what conditions community development work can occur, who can do it, and what happens if that work doesn't meet certain minimum standards. Community development is shaped by:

- **Planning + Design of Policy.** Government sets the standards for how community development is planned + designed – at regional, municipal, district, neighborhood, and even project levels. This includes the degree to which community members are engaged in sharing their priorities + solutions – how large a volume of residents, when in development of a plan, how much latitude or constraint they have to shape the final plan, and when + where they are able to engage.
- **Implementation of Policy.** Government sets the standards for how community development is carried out. This includes systems of formal processes in which government approval is required, such as when a business opens or when a special event occurs, as well as standards for how the work itself is carried out, such as minimum standards for employment of local vendors or how quickly a project needs to come to completion.
- **Enforcement of Policy.** Government determines how diligently those who violate planning + design or implementation policy are pursued and what penalties are attached to these violations. Enforcement policy covers a wide range of activities – whether housing development meets occupancy standards, whether restaurants + other businesses are meeting health + safety obligations, and whether a certain activity can occur in a residentially zoned property.

This work occurs at every level of government, with federal government playing a particularly large role in overall sector funding + data collection + transparency requirements; state government playing a particularly large role in shaping minimum standards for real estate development + the degree to which local governments can tailor policies to grassroots context (or preempting their ability to do so); and local government creating the norms + standards for how projects + programming moves forward. It is worth noting that many critical policy decisions that impact community development (and the residents that community development seeks to serve) occurs in lower visibility appointed bodies + quasi-governmental organizations like Design + Planning Commissions, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Port Authorities, Public Housing Authorities, and Redevelopment Authorities.



Community development is a highly regulated sector + receives substantial public funding support. As such, the vast majority of its work would not be possible without substantial engagement of elected + appointed officials + other government workers, nor without those decision-makers' attention to policies + processes. Despite that key role of policymakers both historically + currently, community development policy continues to challenge equitable community development strategy. Over the past 40 years, public funding support of community development has waned, contributing to a scarcity mindset among practitioners + targeting of funding to those with greatest capacity + scale, rather than those with the greatest demonstrated need. Policy-related decision-making remains relatively hierarchical + removed from conditions "on the ground" and tends to favor the policy priorities of the most affluent + well-connected residents. Where broader policy engagement does occur, such as in some real estate development projects + the development of neighborhood plans, it all too often occurs late in process + is often perfunctory. Processes for things like permitting + zoning variances have ostensibly been designed to safeguard residents against community nuisances + predatory business practices, but in practice, they can be rigid + labyrinthine, creating participation + access barriers for residents themselves.

A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve those focused on community development policy by:

- Right-sizing public funding support to community need, encouraging a more collaborative, abundance-based mindset and allowing for targeting of funding to those with demonstrable need + proven equity practices.
- Creating more opportunities for shared + distributed power (e.g. policies that allow for more decentralized authority, processes that provide sufficient time + resources for collaborative decision-making, etc.).
- Positioning stronger engagement of residents in substantive policymaking + greater attention to policy priorities of those most historically marginalized from public decision-making.
- Streamlining + "de-jargonizing" public processes, allowing for healthier resident participation + decreasing barriers between government + residents.

## LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS + ADVANCEMENT

In its early days, the community development sector was overwhelmingly led informally, often by unpaid residents focused on collective advocacy for policy reforms + greater financial investment within their communities. Over time, the sector has increasingly formalized, with greater expectation that practitioners will hold advanced degrees + greater emphasis on the development of technical skills, particularly in real estate financing + development. This has resulted in specialized degree programs in community development + aligned fields (e.g. urban policy, rural policy, urban planning, etc.), advanced certificates, continued education offerings, and field emphasis on capacity building. Arguably, these education offerings have expanded capacity for community development organizations to lead complex projects + to absorb + sustain direct capital investments, resulting in greater scaling of real estate production in communities of color + communities of low incomes.

This scale + capacity, however, is not without significant costs. The racial wealth gap + a lack of supports for higher education access + success have created large-scale career barriers for people of color across a broad range of employment opportunities, including within community development, contributing to chronic underrepresentation of leaders of color in a sector that had service to communities of color as a core part of its founding purpose. Emphasis on technical skill leads many community development organizations to recruit talent from outside of the communities they serve, leading to further distance from lived experience of racism + poverty.

For those who do hold advanced degrees, entering + staying in the community development sector often requires financial sacrifice, as community development salaries + wages lag other employment opportunities in both the public sector + in private sectors like financing + development. Despite a plethora of training programs + professional associations, practitioners also point to a general lack of career supports for mid-career + emerging practitioners and a general underemphasis on leadership supports around policy, community empowerment, and systems change. The sector has also increasingly relied on highly technical language + complex, standardized processes + instruments without any real onboarding support; those new to the community development sector are often left to learn how the sector works through “trial by fire” work on programs, services, and projects.

A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve those focused on community development leadership supports + advancement by:

- Offering greater valuing, career support, and compensation for different forms of expertise that, in turn, would support more well-rounded + comprehensive approaches to advancing systemic change;
- Increasing cultivation of talent from within communities, increasing financial opportunities among the residents that community development organizations serve;
- Creating better pipeline supports for advancing promising anti-racist leadership into the most senior community development positions with the greatest opportunity to shape policy + funding, while also investing in promising mid-career practitioners, ensuring that grassroots community development organizations have fewer leadership succession challenges; and
- Reorienting leadership supports + career advancement opportunities from a focus on technical outputs to a more mission-aligned focus on demonstrated racially equitable outcomes + systems change.



## RESEARCH

As the community development sector has formalized over the past 40 years, so has the research infrastructure to support this work. A broad range of federal data sets enable the sector to track progress across hundreds of metrics, often down to a Census Tract or Block Group level (sometimes with the ability to disaggregate by race), and reporting requirements for federal community development funding have ensured that community development organizations across the country are tracking their own outputs + outcomes. This data has helped to support both academic + non-academic research of the sector and has been supplemented through additional quantitative + qualitative research engaging practitioners (and in some cases, residents) in surveying, interviewing, and participatory research processes.



Community development research has supported sophisticated visualizations that help to inform community development practice, from creation of detailed food desert heat maps to use of time lapse photography to better understand how people use a particular building or road. Researchers, networks, and intermediaries have also produced a large volume of toolkits + “how-to” guides oriented around best community development practices. Collectively, this contributes to broad field knowledge around past + current state of communities, as well as dissemination of promising approaches to advancing community outcomes in the future.

Despite these advantages, community development research is not without its critique. Long reports filled with research + community development jargon do not lend themselves to easy access by time-strapped community development practitioners, let alone by unpaid resident leaders. Data sets can often lag current outcomes by long periods of time, sometimes as much as a decade, limiting the applicability for practitioners trying to understand community conditions changing in real time, particularly in both fast-growth communities + shrinking communities. The sector has also increasingly relied on “hard” metrics, particularly related to property, not only for knowledge about community context but also as metrics of success. This potentially skews focus toward advancing change in physical property + in the overall economy, rather than in individual + household outcomes, and it often can be used as blunt signals of progress without nuance about what the data actually means (e.g. not acknowledging that rapid changes in homeownership may or may not be a good thing for long-term residents). These hard metrics can also sometimes be used to discount residents’ nuanced lived experiences within a community, such as around sense of safety or sense of displacement pressure. This can be particularly troubling in the context of research’s historic record when it comes to race, including research carried out by white people about communities of color, and research that inadvertently (and sometimes purposefully) contributes to ongoing deficit narratives about people of color + communities of color.

A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve those focused on community development research by:

- Increasing practitioner + resident engagement in research design – what is being researched, how it is being measured, and how results are being shared – leading to a more relevant + accessible knowledge base;
- Valuing + resourcing research + data sets beyond hard property metrics, particularly with greater emphasis on data sets that capture resident experience + resident priorities;
- Expanding supports for grassroots research, including opportunities for resident-led research + for substantive participatory action research; and
- Increasing knowledge through race-explicit research, including greater qualitative research that engages both practitioners + residents.

## COMMUNICATIONS + NARRATIVE

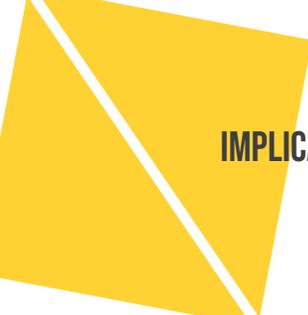
Relative to the breadth of other core elements of the community development sector, the volume of organizations focused explicitly on community development communications + narrative remains relatively sparse. A small number of media outlets focus on community development practitioners (and adjacent practitioners, like planning professionals) as a core audience, producing news stories, op-eds, webinars, and podcasts around issues of import to the sector + generally with focuses on practical implementation strategies. Over the past several years, such media outlets have collectively increased their explicit emphasis on equity practices – both in the issues they cover + in their internal processes for generating content (e.g. diversifying who they commission to write stories, who is being cited as sources + as experts, how much compensation they provide, etc.). A number of academic journals + think tanks also contribute to discourse in the community development sector, albeit generally oriented more toward research + to broader analysis of the sector. In the absence of a more robust community development media ecosystem, national community development networks + intermediaries play a large role in sector communications – through convenings, learning communities, issue-specific landing sites, newsletters, how-to kits, special publications, and a range of other communication vehicles. National networks + intermediaries have also contributed at least to some degree to advancing community development narrative work, particularly around housing narrative.

Coverage of community development in mass media publications, meanwhile, remains diluted. Few publications attempt to explain community development, let alone racially equitable community development, to a lay audience, despite the sector's origination by informal resident leadership. That is not, however, to say that mass media does not play a role in shaping concepts of the sector indirectly. Mass media + pop culture have arguably played large-scale roles in perpetuating stereotypes + damaging narratives about communities of color, including in areas of sector import like entrepreneurship, housing, health, and crime + violence prevention. Such narratives can reinforce implicit (and sometimes explicit) biases that reduce much-needed leadership, financing, and policy supports within such communities.

A more affirmatively anti-racist approach to community development might better serve those focused on community development communications + narrative by:

- Diversifying the constellation of organizations focusing on the learning + exchange needs of practitioners, particularly practitioners of color, leading to a healthier knowledge base + to less centralized agenda setting within the sector.
- Expanding attention to demystifying + raising awareness of the community development sector with lay audiences, which could contribute to greater community leadership + support within the field.
- Increasing investment in resident-led journalism, contributing to grassroots economic supports + expanding information access within communities increasingly seeing declines in media access more broadly.
- Bringing more attention + resources toward the dismantling of dominant narratives that challenge the work of community development practitioners nationwide but that are difficult to challenge within community-based organizations facing other mandates + pressing community needs.





## IMPLICATIONS FOR ANTI-RACIST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORK

As evidenced in the previous sections, the community development sector is complex. It is relatively dispersed, and its success relies on leadership at every different geographic level, working within considerably different entities, contributing different kinds of knowledge + functions. It can be overwhelming to consider how to advance systemic change within + around such a decentralized + interconnected sector.

Fortunately, it is also a sector where a set of narrow, discrete interventions can still make a large-scale difference. Federal policy has historically played a prominent role in how community development is funded, what activities are funding-eligible, and where investment occurs; this remains true, despite a long-term slow decline in federal community development funding. Meanwhile, a relatively small number of networks, intermediaries, and think tanks play prominent roles in setting the sectoral agenda on everything from leadership supports to research to communications + narrative. Networks + intermediaries whose founding purposes are around advancing racial equity broadly (and racially equitable community development specifically) are beginning to scale.

That presents an opportunity for funders + financial institutions to focus resources in systemic ways that cut across entity type + function role within the sector. Such investments, particularly ones made over a longer arc of time, are likely to begin to shift attention, practices, and resources in more equitable ways.

This matters in advancing anti-racist community development, but its impacts likely will spill over into the broader cross-sector movement for racial equity. Our research – both stakeholder interviews + contemporary literature review – point to a number of ways that investments in community development can strengthen racial equity more broadly.

- Historic (and contemporary) racist community development + planning policies have played a primary role in concentrating the impacts of structural racism + poverty within narrow geographies. An emphasis on anti-racist community development policy can begin to chip away at that circumstance.
- While structural racism + poverty manifest broadly across the United States, experiences of both may be experienced very differently given different community contexts, even down to a block-by-block level. The community development sector is particularly well situated to scaling promising anti-racist practices that still allow for that on-the-ground context + nuance.
- Doing meaningful racial equity work requires relationship-building, trust-building + nuanced shared understanding. The smaller geographic scope of community development lends itself to this kind of intimate, long-term work.
- Particularly (but not exclusively) for residents + practitioners who have less direct lived experience of structural racism + poverty, community development can be an important platform for increasing awareness of, and appreciation for, both existing inequities and more equitable solutions. Such proximity to the impacts of racism + poverty can expand the coalition of people dedicated to doing racial equity work more broadly + ensure that the solutions they bring forward are grounded in practical experience.



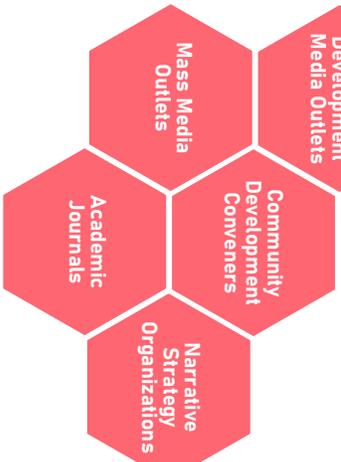
**COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS**



**LEADERSHIP SUPPORTS + ADVANCEMENT**



**COMMUNICATIONS + NARRATIVE**



**RESEARCH**



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