

THE
JAY & ROSE PHILLIPS
FAMILY FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA



A MOVE TOWARD
**COMMUNITY-LED
GRANTMAKING**

In 2015, staff members of The Jay & Rose Phillips Foundation of Minnesota walked into what they thought would be a run-of-the-mill board meeting to finalize a strategic plan they had worked closely with board members to complete. What they heard instead would change the trajectory of everything about the Foundation. The Board of Trustees weren't satisfied with the impact of the Foundation's funding; instead, they wanted the staff to pursue projects that met three key criteria: be bold, be focused, and produce measurable impact. In an unexpected move, the Trustees also directed the staff to narrow the geographic focus of the Foundation's funding from the entire Twin Cities region to North Minneapolis.

But what did those directives really mean? And how would the Foundation meet the Board's new expectations? What ensued—and is ongoing—was an iterative process designed to understand community needs and desires, develop functional on-the-ground relationships, and advance a new way of thinking that could deliver the kind of innovation that both the community and the Board desired. Along the way, staff and the Board of Trustees had to examine their own roles and identities, including how those factors influenced the way they did the work.

This case study ends where some of the Foundation's roots began: in North Minneapolis, which was once the hub of the Jewish community. Today the Northside is a predominantly Black community, with a thriving arts and culture scene, but also with longstanding challenges brought on by decades of disinvestment. North Minneapolis was once home to Rose Phillips, and where Jay and Rose met. Later, they married, started a family, rose in national prominence in business, and laid down the roots that would help establish The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota.

Today, the Phillips Foundation is coming full circle as it looks to open its new North Minneapolis based office in 2021. With a legacy spanning 75 years of growth and four generations of philanthropic leadership, the Board of Trustees directive for bolder, focused and impactful work set the stage for its most recent iterative shift, towards a community-led grantmaking framework.

This case study documents the process that led the Foundation to this point. It is a story about the tensions between an honored past and an emerging future.

A journey to bridge the needs of the present moment with the patience required to turn our common visions into shared realities.



A History of Family Philanthropy

North Minneapolis has always maintained a special place in the history of the Phillips Family. At the turn of the 20th century, it was home to a thriving Jewish community. It is where Rose grew up and graduated from North High School. Rose's father, Isaac Ebin, owned a feed store

at 709 Plymouth Ave., a two-storied building, with the shop on the first floor, and the family living on the second. At the same time, Jay Phillips began building what became the Ed Phillips & Sons Company, a distributor of liquor and spirits, with his father and brothers in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. After marrying in 1917, Jay and Rose eventually moved back to Minneapolis in 1935.

On the heels of Phillips & Sons' incredible success, the family created what was then called the Phillips Family Foundation in 1944. Trustee Dean Phillips, one of Jay and Rose's grandchildren, recalled that Jay and Rose had a certain energy in common; both were very kind but very

astute. He remembered a moment that for him encompassed both of these qualities when he was a young intern at Phillips & Sons in the early '80s.

"I was at a stoplight on my way to work. Behind me, through the rear-view mirror, I saw my great-grandpa in his Cadillac. I tried to wave at him," said Phillips. "He noticed that the light had turned green. He just had a smile on his face but was honking his horn for me to go. And that was the perfect combination, smiling, but honking his horn."

Jay and Rose focused a lot of their efforts on the Jewish community in the Twin Cities, especially in the Foundation's early years. Dean Phillips explained that Rose became a philanthropic leader in the Jewish community.

"There were a number of Jewish women's organizations in which she was not just active, but very much a leader, and a consolidator, and a solicitor," he continued, "And she was very much engaged in the decision-making, and proud of it."

Soon, the Foundation began to fund causes beyond Jewish organizations in the realms of healthcare, anti-discrimination, public transportation, workforce development, interfaith collaboration, medical research, substance abuse recovery, early childhood development, support for people with disabilities, and more. Since Jay's passing in 1992 and Rose's in 2002, the couple's children and grandchildren have driven the Foundation's work as members of the Board of Trustees.

The Board, along with the Foundation's staff, have worked diligently

to keep Jay's and Rose's principles in both heart and mind. Over time, the Phillips family grew, and in some ways grew apart, spreading across three states. As a result, in 2011, the Phillips Family Foundation split into three distinctive, independent entities. One is based in Colorado, another California, while the third became The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota. Each of the foundations has gone on to address issues unique to their respective geographies.

At The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota, President Patrick Troska recalled this split as a move away from a "reactive grant-making strategy" to a set of more

proactive strategies. "The directive from Trustees was to get out from behind our desks, really get to know the community, and bring the best ideas to us," he said. At that time, the Foundation honed in on what it wanted to fund: education, employment, housing and transportation projects.

"Shifting our approach required the use of a different set of muscles that we hadn't exercised much at that point," Troska said. After five years, training those muscles ultimately prepared the staff for what came in 2015.



A Bold Way Forward

In 2015, the Foundation was in the midst of a strategic planning process that was driving towards somewhat modest changes to its work.

“We wanted to tweak around the edges, thinking we were in the right set of spaces,” Troska said.

But the Board of Trustees had more than small tweaks in mind. Feeling the process still wasn’t getting the Foundation to a more focused, impactful set of priorities, in August, the Board called staff into what seemed like just another meeting. Instead, they wanted to discuss how the Foundation could be bolder and have bigger impact.

“They were like, ‘Nope, this is not going to do, we’re just not focused enough,’” said Grants and Operations Manager Tracy Lamparty. “We were totally surprised, taken off guard.”

From that conversation and others that happened over the fall of 2015, three new directives emerged: To be bold, to get focused, and to have measurable impact. As one Board member put it, “If we put all our eggs in one basket, that would be wonderfully fulfilling as an organization if it is successful.” Although surprising at the time, this meeting started a series of rich conversations around the meaning of the Trustees’ philanthropic values and goals for the first time since the 2011 restructuring.

As the staff and Board continued to engage with one another about

how these directives would be understood internally and expressed in practice, the Board made another important decision. They determined that a geographic focus in North Minneapolis made the most sense. North Minneapolis once had been the most prominent Jewish community in Minneapolis, but Jewish residents largely left the Northside after racial tension resulted in a riot on Plymouth Avenue in 1967. Since then, the Northside has evolved over the years to become one of the most racially diverse and economically challenged communities in the city.

The Foundation felt they had a degree of understanding about the disparities, issues, and opportunities on the Northside from years of funding various projects there. The Trustees also held onto the nostalgic memory of the Phillips family and its place in the history of North Minneapolis.

Although the staff saw promise in this strategic shift, they also had concerns. The relatively affluent, all-white staff of four did not match the demographics of the North Minneapolis community; 70 percent of residents were people of color as of the 2010 Census, with the majority being African American. In addition, 36 percent of North Minneapolis residents lived in poverty compared to 21 percent of the greater Minneapolis population.

“Statistics cannot give us...the full story—they can show the result, but cannot hold the complexity of human experience as it comes face to face with those systems,” says Program Officer Elizabeth Coco. So many of those systems have been

and continue to work against the health, wealth, and sustainability of Black and Brown communities—such as discriminatory home financing practices (from redlining to predatory lending), excessive exposure to airborne industrial pollution, and inequitable school funding.

Staff had mostly surface-level relationships with nonprofits and community leaders from previous funding in the community and across the city, but lacked the deep connections they thought were essential if they were to shift the full weight of

their operations over North. If they approached these new directives without clear intent, they feared they could cause irreparable harm to their Northside relationships.

“We were pretty uncomfortable with the notion of shifting to work principally on the Northside when we didn’t have particularly deep relational ties there,” Program Director Joel Luedtke recalled. “The racial socioeconomic disconnect between us as a staff and an institution and the Northside as a collection of communities was stark.”

Staff knew they needed a mechanism to address and enact the Board’s new directives, reshape the Foundation’s approach and values, and establish new grantmaking processes. First, they would have to consider who they were in that process and what their role in the work should be.



GETTING TO FOCUS

The Phillips Foundation had funded Northside work in the past, but committing solely to funding in North Minneapolis required them to be deliberate about both how the organization's identity would shift and how the staff and Board engaged in relatively unfamiliar territory. The Board had made its concern with focus, measurability and impact clear, but staff needed to determine what that meant before a pathway could take shape.

"How do we as white folks, who have lived in a certain privileged existence, go into that space, have honest conversations, and be contributors rather than extractors?" Troska asked. "Because I think that's been the tradition over generations, that white people go in and extract information, resources, amenities out of that community."

The staff hoped that by directly confronting some of those realities, they would be in a better position to move in the direction the Trustees wanted. To that end, staff members started by engaging in conversations with the Trustees to hone in on what they really meant by bold, focused and impactful. What characteristics came to mind when they thought of bold action? Did they prefer to fund new ideas or to bring existing work to scale? How did they feel about funding systems and policy work?

"How do we as white folks, who have lived in a certain privileged existence, go into that space, have honest conversations, and be contributors rather than extractors?"

What carried through from these conversations was a rich set of values—that were in some ways aspirational—that helped staff define their future course and gave a structure to the new operating culture they would have to develop. **And the Trustees encouraged staff to be courageously outspoken in support of the Foundation's new direction, even if speaking out drew allies or critics.** Furthermore, they outlined that the impact of the work funded by the Foundation should be measured by its durability, scalability, replicability, and sustainability.

After three months, the staff and Board emerged from these conversations with more clarity about the focus of the work they wanted to fund. They decided to narrow the Foundation's issue areas to community wealth building, which they called creative ownership, and K-12 education.

Committing To Human Centered Design

Human Centered Design, or HCD, has emerged in the social sector as a new problem-solving toolkit. According to IDEO.org, an international nonprofit dedicated to using HCD, the process is **rooted in the idea that understanding and designing from the perspective of community members leads to surprising answers, feeding ideas that will grow into the right solutions.**

Staff had learned about HCD at sessions at the Minnesota Council on Foundation's annual meeting earlier that year and believed it could forge a pathway to explore the Foundation's new intentions.

Amy Batiste and her company, Creative Catalysts, had run those sessions. The Phillips Foundation followed up with her afterwards, wondering how the process could be used to facilitate community conversations about the Foundation's future role in North Minneapolis. Based on her formidable experience using creative meeting design, skilled facilitation and visual communications design, the Foundation hired Batiste to lead them forward through this process.

While they engaged in the HCD process, the Foundation made exit grants to its existing grantees that would not be a fit with the new funding priorities and paused new grantmaking for almost a year, a level of commitment Batiste had never seen before.

"They invited us to say, 'bring us your best thinking on how we could do this work,'" said Batiste, "'We're going to completely rethink our grantmaking and we want to involve the community.' That was the design opportunity that was presented to us."



The HCD definition Creative Catalysts formulated and worked on with Phillips was based on two beliefs:

Community problems are best solved by the people who are most impacted.

Problem-solving should be inherently optimistic.

HCD uses a three-phase sequence that can be adapted to many different processes or sectors:

Inspiration

This phase is about working with the end user, in this case North Minneapolis residents, to define the problem or opportunity ahead of them. In doing so, all preconceived notions and outcomes about the end users must be dropped.

Ideation

The ideation phase is about generating ideas for solutions. In this phase, facilitators encourage a judgement-free zone where all possible ways forward can be brainstormed and discussed.

Implementation

After a group hones in on a prototype or pilot in the ideation phase, implementation is where that idea is tested, often with a small sample size. This testing phase is the key to producing innovative on-the-ground results.

This three-act structure provides space for iterative group learning, testing, and feedback integration. The process can be repeated, ad infinitum, both prior to and after an idea has been implemented. As such, HCD offers a means of nimble adaptation as each effort meets new challenges.

Luedkte said the community-focused approach of HCD appealed to the staff. "It really clicked with me how this process of deep engagement with

community members would be our way of figuring out how to be useful in North Minneapolis," Luedkte said. "We were so uncomfortable with just dictating a new set of strategies to the community."

Moving into HCD and beyond would mean showing up in settings that

were atypical for the Foundation, with community members who didn't know them. Staff would need to do their own work to understand what mindset they were going to bring into that space.

*LEADERSHIP

*HOPE

*OPPORTUNITY

*EMPATHY

*NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN

*GREATER IMPACT



By the works of Emory Douglas, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense began working in June of 1966 of Phyllis and Muhammad Ali. At the mural we see the legacy of Dr. Paul and Alton Sinking in the Luther Jones low rise for Dr. King Jones, and a few days...

Back we see the Sun, in the Black historical figure that grew in the symbols of the community in the Black Madonna in front of an...
...the form of Ernie, to represent...

Examining The Foundation's Identity

The Foundation formally brought Creative Catalysts into the mix in early 2016. Batiste would take point in brokering community listening and ideation sessions that included group and one-on-one meetings with Northside leaders, educators and students, business owners, grantmakers, and other community members that would be the foundation of the Human Centered Design process. Creative Catalysts created a tailor-made engagement solution designed to embrace the process of HCD for greater impact and embed the community's ideas into the Foundation's ways of working.

"The work is more than a workshop. It's really a mindset, it's a skillset, it's a practice and Phillips [worked towards] embracing that," Batiste said.

Batiste launched the HCD process by working with staff to establish a baseline of the Foundation's self-identity and cultural competence. To this end, Batiste reached out to Beth Zemsky, an intercultural organizational development practitioner.

Zemsky administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to staff. The IDI is used to evaluate where individuals and collectives actually are, versus where they perceive themselves to be, in terms of understanding and navigating cultural differences. In the language of the IDI, these qualities fall along

a continuum between monocultural and intercultural mindsets (see graph below).

"How are you going to integrate [insights the IDI provides] into the project?" Zemsky wondered. "Part of that was really thinking about how they were going to show up in these community listening sessions that they were doing."

The Foundation scores revealed that the organization was in high minimization, a common outcome for most foundations and nonprofits, according to Zemsky. **Minimizers try to find common ground between people, sometimes mistaking connections across differences as a common preference for ideas held by the dominant culture.** "The Foundation was almost at acceptance," Zemsky said. In acceptance, people recognize both differences and similarities, and are able to identify cultural patterns of behaviors.

The Foundation's staff perceived themselves to be at the beginning of adaptation. In adaptation, people are able to authentically bridge cultural differences, and to appropriately navigate both similarities and differences among people. The IDI revealed that there was a significant gap between the staff's actual and perceived intercultural development at the outset of its new body of work in North Minneapolis.

With the Foundation being in minimization, part of Zemsky's work was to help staff develop a learning plan—which included several group and individual sessions—to become more self-aware around the role of their identities in shaping their perception. In other words, staff

INTERCULTURAL
MINDSET

ADAPTATION bridges across
difference

ACCEPTANCE deeply comprehends
difference

MINIMIZATION de-emphasizes
difference

POLARIZATION judges
difference

DENIAL misses
difference

MONOCULTURAL
MINDSET

INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM Primary Orientations

Modified from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), M. Bennett, 1986

needed to explore how they could train themselves to see Northsiders in their own contexts, rather than through the staff's eyes.

The strength of minimization is the capacity to find the humanity in the core of each person, allowing them to successfully form relationships, said Zemsky. To do so, however, those in minimization may also downplay differences that truly, deeply impact people's lived experiences. Zemsky described this as, "The place of All Lives Matter. We're all human. We all bleed red. I don't see color." For dominant culture people, minimization sometimes shows up as good intent, but is often full of subtle microaggress-

sions. This perspective often leads those in minimization to overemphasize the appearance of harmony and avoid conflict. Foundation staff would need to acknowledge and learn to overcome those tendencies as they approached their new work on the Northside.

"We were really explicit about that because it's like, 'Okay, you're the foundation,'" Zemsky told them, and asked them to consider what interactions with community partners had been like before this. "What are all those ways foundations have power and grantees and community are shifting into your paradigm? What are you going to do to shift, and what are the limits of that?"

Staff would need to hold multiple perspectives and really see and hear what the community was saying in their learning sessions, rather than listening through their white dominant culture lens. Along with that, it was important for the Foundation to consider what it meant to have "confidence with humility" in these interactions. As dominant culture folks, Zemsky said, there should be no shame in the mistakes the Foundation might make, as long as they had a process to learn from those mistakes while staying engaged and vulnerable to build substantive relationships.

CENTERING COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

It was now time for staff to listen to community members, learn about their priorities, and begin to shape the direction for the Foundation's 2016 grantmaking and beyond. Returning to the Human Centered Design challenge, Troska said Batiste was instrumental in coaching staff to have a set of conversations and experiences that they would not have even understood were necessary. She also curated, networked and invited people into the HCD process on the Foundation's behalf, whom Program Officer Elizabeth Coco described as, "very much centering Northside voices throughout the process."



"As funders we talk about learning... but it's all so surface and this felt so deep," she said. "I felt it was...important in making sure that we were integrating that behavior going forward."

The staff knew many of the people engaged in this process from previous iterations of the Foundation's work. At the same time, Batiste also brought in people that hadn't previously been in relationship with the Foundation—people who lived and worked on the Northside but weren't necessarily connected to the field of nonprofit work. Luedtke said that those conversations were often a lot richer.

"And because they weren't in the nonprofit world, it was also just more about their lives," Luedtke said. "It wasn't about, you know, organizations and systems and all the things nonprofits talk about."

The core HCD work took place through a series of inspiration-idea-implementation cycles for the Foundation's two program areas: creative ownership and education. On the education side, staff spoke to current and former public school administrators, education advocates, individuals who lead education-focused nonprofits, a school leader, and a foundation program officer. More importantly, staff spent an evening with young adults engaged in participatory research in North Minneapolis, and an afternoon with neighborhood parents. While these limited interactions were not enough to fully understand the complexity of the systems the Foundation wanted to impact, these meetings provided a basis for

understanding and relationships to start to build on.

Among the standout themes in these conversations was the importance of student voice and relevant curricula. The roles of school leadership and parent organizing followed close behind. People shared honestly about student experiences, trust issues within the Northside schools, and the sense of disbelief that adults and institutions actually cared about students.

"These weren't the issues that education funders were talking about," Luedtke said. "Education funders were talking about test scores, reading by the third grade, student readiness."

On the creative ownership side, staff learned that Northsiders defined wealth in many different ways. Community members described a holistic approach to wealth-building that encompassed housing, education, jobs, and income. They also noted tension between developing businesses that served Northsiders and those that attracted visitors from beyond the community. Many felt that outside businesses would likely funnel profits out of the Northside, and therefore wouldn't contribute to community wealth.

For Coco, these conversations came down to a desire to shift our economic systems away from extractive practices. "I heard folks express the belief that it's possible to build economies where we can own our own labor and the resulting wealth it produces," she said. "People believe that it's possible to shift our relationship to land and housing from a profit-driven system, to a values and human rights system."

Leading Through Tension

After these community conversations, Batiste made sure staff always came back and processed together in what Coco described as a “reflective learning process,” through which staff could discuss any tensions bubbling over in conversation with community. In those moments,

Batiste played the critical role of a moderator, holding and honoring the tension, the candid emotion or the conviction being expressed.

One moment of tension that stood out happened during a larger ideation session. “We had a full room... as well as all staff,” Batiste said, setting the scene. “We had elected officials. It was a pretty big deal.”

During that meeting, community leaders, deeply passionate about the Northside, openly challenged the Foundation for its presence there and wondered why they

were worth spending time on. “A cross section of people directly challenged us. If you’re just coming here to extract your information and go cook up a strategy for us, no thanks,” Troska said.

Clearly, the Foundation’s mere presence had opened up a wound for some community members. For Batiste, it was a revealing moment. “There are certain dynamics in communities when they are invited in to provide their intellect, their expertise, their data,” explained Batiste, and “anytime you ask people

[to participate] in focus groups, that kind of thing, there can be some real issues around that.” Batiste now understood that the process the Foundation was in the midst of demanded more than inviting people to the table. It was about how that table was set—and there was still a power differential in that room.

At that moment, Batiste decided to twist the process. She recognized that the Foundation needed to slow down and take as much time as needed to hear people out. She abandoned her original meeting de-

sign and instead created a fishbowl dialogue so that, “rather than being at individual work tables, we created a circle process and talked specifically about how philanthropy shows up in North Minneapolis.”

Coco was amazed by the facilitation skill she saw Batiste flex in moments like this. She said, “I don’t know how Amy handled that situation so well, and held the tension, and honored those voices while moving the process forward.”

For Troska, the tension was part of what made the experience memora-

ble. It reminded him that the Foundation had no inherent right to be in any of these community spaces, and was not entitled to trust or cooperation. That would take time and patience.

“We have to earn our way into everything that we do,” he said. “You have to do the work to get to the trust. We quickly learned the adage: change happens at the speed of trust.”

It reminded him that the Foundation had **no inherent right to be in any of these community spaces, and was not entitled to trust or cooperation. That would take time and patience.**



Narrowing In On Funding Priorities

Foundation staff came out of the HCD process deeply committed to each other, to community members, and to the work. Those months of work included some very real moments, opportunities to reflect and to build strategic momentum. Now, in order to begin putting all of that into practice, the staff needed to redesign the funding RFP that would summarize all of this shared work for potential community partners.

The Foundation pulled together a group of predominantly Northside stakeholders with lived experience and knowledge in education and creative ownership to participate in the grantmaking process. This group provided early feedback on the concepts that had been developed throughout the multiple community sessions from the HCD process and would now be embedded in the RFP. For Luedtke, the quality of the conversation and feedback that happened

at this table brought everything together. He saw that his role had changed.

“My job isn’t to understand everything, it’s really to find the people who understand it better than me and bring them together and let them guide the work,” he said. “That was when that light bulb fully went on in my brain. You can trust the process and get to a better result.”



In the education program area, the call went out for innovative ideas that would create opportunities for students to shape their educational experience, build the power of North Minneapolis parents to influence educational policy and practices, and/or support Northside school leaders. On the wealth-building side, the Foundation sought out creative ownership models anchored in cultural identities, and local assets to advance economic power and resilience by and for North Minneapolis residents. Applicants could seek funding to expand or improve work that was already being implemented, to implement a new idea or project, or to plan a project that was currently only in the conceptual stage.

While the RFP was out, the Foundation staff also held several community information sessions on the Northside. Despite the good work done to formulate and circulate these ideas, staff doubted their decision to issue an RFP in the first place.

“I think we...as a staff, struggle with the whole RFP approach because it still felt very philanthropic as opposed to really doing something different,” Troska said. “But we couldn’t quite figure out what would get us to that place.”

In the end, the staff ended up issuing a traditional RFP, but allowed for applicants to submit their applications in untraditional ways, such as through video.

After soliciting grant proposals, the Foundation incorporated a community-led decision-making process, inspired by the operating principles of the Headwaters Foundation for Justice. Building this step into the process was uncharted territory, but it was time to translate theory into practice.

To evaluate the proposals that would come in, the Foundation recruited a community review panel for each funding area, made up of people in their networks and people who participated in the HCD process. The Foundation received a total of 80 proposals, which the staff cut down to 40 for feasibility. After reviewing proposals and participating in site visits, the community reviewers made funding recommendations. These recommendations were then brought to the Board of Trustees for final approval; board members would still make the final decision..

The new connections staff had made in community fostered a hard-won, if delicate, element of trust. Likewise, community members saw mechanisms they had co-created alongside Foundation staff reflected in the content of the RFPs issued in August 2016, and ready for implementation once proposals came in.

In the moment, there was no reason for staff to think that this work, done with the Board’s consent, would become a point of tension between them.

GETTING TO BOLD

It had been almost a year since the Trustees issued their directives and the staff had initiated the HCD process. The community review panels had now made funding recommendations staff presented to the Board of Trustees. Suddenly, the momentous run skipped like a jolted record. Despite the staff's efforts to keep everyone on the same page, many of the projects recommended by the community reviewers did not match the Trustees' expectations; some of them were viewed as too small, some too bold, and some too run-of-the-mill.

Education Recommendations Fall Short

On the education side, it seemed that schools were requesting funds for status quo projects, in the form of what Luedtke describes as, "a list of minor things...kind of like a buffet strategy." The Trustees felt that these proposals fell short around the bold and impactful directives. Though five schools did ultimately receive grant approval, the community review panel had also recommended funding for community organizations, which the Board declined.

"That was a whole difficult conversation with the Board," said Luedtke. They saw, "this broad range of things and said, 'we're not doing all this stuff. We told you to focus.' When you ask schools what they need, they give you the answers that we already got. It's tangible, kind of just nuts and bolts needs."

Foundation staff didn't disagree with the Board, but they also knew that public schools, in particular, struggled to think boldly. The work of "doing school" can be overwhelming. Perhaps a boldness of imagination was lacking because teachers and administrators were constrained by the circumstances they functioned in, as they tried to stay afloat day-to-day.

Creative Ownership Recommendations Are "Too Bold"

On the creative ownership side, the Board had the reverse problem. Trustees felt that, conceptually, the RFP drew proposals that were too broad and too bold. The Board raised tough questions. While there were still three grant approvals, it was clear that the projects put forth did not meet the Trustees' expectations. One project, in particular, caused tension between the Board, staff and community: a Black-led credit union, now known as Village Financial Cooperative.

The Village Financial proposal came out of Blexit, a grassroots collective focused on addressing racial and economic disparities through economic activism. Village Financial aimed to manifest some of Blexit's highest ambitions and values: to form a locally-owned financial institution, increase fair lending and catalyze greater investment in Black-owned businesses and ideas. Though the fit seemed perfect, the Board's perspective was that Blexit's members were too inexperienced to launch a financial institution. It seemed, to them, too daunting for these leaders to build a credit union from the ground up. The meeting in which staff and Trustees discussed the credit union was a difficult one.

Trustees wanted to explore Blexit's credit union concept, but they suggested that perhaps a different group should be in the lead—one comprised of people with more professional experience in the area of finance, and with a less potentially polarizing image than Blexit's. At that point in the review process, the Foundation staff had to decide how far they would go in advocating for the values, learnings, and relationships with Northsiders developed from the HCD process.

"I think we got clear ourselves about what our role is and how we do this authentically in the community," said Troska. "We knew this was the right group. They were coming to us as a voice from the larger community. They had done their work to find out what the community wanted in this space."

Luedtke considered how things might have proceeded prior to the HCD process. He could imagine a



scenario in which the Foundation would've just said, "Okay, well we're gonna make a meeting for you to meet with, you know, 'XYZ Credit Union,'" said Luedtke, offering up a fictitious example. "Then the big boys will take your ideas and they will make it happen 'the right way.'"

Staff knew that after all the work put into building relationships and bringing the community into this process, that this scenario could never play out in such a manner. Instead, staff worked with Trustees and the core Blexit group, across multiple meetings over three months. Ultimately, Blexit, staff and Trustees established working relationships that advanced the interests of all concerned parties.

"I don't think those kinds of conversations could have happened prior to us going through the Human Centered Design process," Troska recalls. "The process is never A leads to B leads to C leads to D. You're constantly one step forward, two steps back or two steps forward, one step back."

The Trustees' rejection of some of the community advisory committee's recommendations came as a surprise to Foundation staff. The staff provided updates to the Board throughout this process, which were met with few questions from the Trustees. Now, staff wondered if they had mistaken the meaning of that silence.

"We moved faster than I think we understood," reflects Coco. "We mistook silence for agreement and approval throughout the process."

To maintain trust in the new relationships they had developed, staff

members had to let community reviewers and rejected applicants know what happened when proposals reached the Board, and work on a plan to move forward Northsiders' interests. "We were as transparent as we felt we could be. That openness and vulnerability was key to maintaining and deepening those relationships," said Coco.

With the Board's decisions made, staff joined the grantees—which the staff defines as community partners—in building out the means to achieve their shared goals. Keeping in mind the Trustees' concerns, staff embedded more deeply in Northside communities, working to support approved projects.

What had been a cascade of setbacks only strengthened Northside ties to the Foundation. The Human Centered Design processes that carried staff to this crossroads opened and built relationships, born out of ideation and iteration. Seeds had been sown, the harvest envisioned, and there was work to be done.



EDUCATION ROOTED IN STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The need for bolder approaches had been articulated in the values and mission that led the Foundation to make the Northside the focal point of its work. These factors were aptly summed by bell hooks, who believed that systems of oppression colonize the imagination, hindering creativity until, as Coco adds, "We're stuck with what we think is politically possible and we don't think about what we might truly wish to manifest."

To help staff regroup alongside the five funded schools to truly imagine what student-centered learning could mean for them, Program Director Joel Luedtke—point person for the Foundation's education strategy—pulled together an education advisory committee. The committee was made up of 70 percent people of color and Northside residents with a wide range of experiences in education systems—teachers, administrators, community and institutional leaders, parents, and students. Several members of the advisory committee participated in the RFP process in late 2016.

Focusing in to get to bold, the committee narrowed the concept areas from the previous RFP down to student voice, the standout theme from the HCD process. The committee was in search of ideas that would prioritize applied learning opportunities tied to student interests, open space for students' personal identities and community passions in the classroom.

"We were looking for ideas that started with changing the way students experience school. From that more positive connection to school, we believed you can then build towards higher academic achievement and more positive transformation of students academically, personally, and relationally," explained Luedtke.

Because the initial proposals that were funded were generally limited in scope, the committee felt the opportunity to build capacity around them was also limited. If the common goal was to embolden schools to center student experience, catalyzing that shift needed to be an evolutionary process.

In 2017, the Foundation, with direction from the education advisory committee, put out a new RFP for planning grants to all the schools that had been previously funded. Planning grants were meant to be a means for previously funded schools to build capacity, to give them a certain runway to get to transformative change.

“We were looking for ideas that started with changing the way students experience school. From that more positive connection to school, we believed you can then build towards higher academic achievement and more positive transformation of students academically, personally, and relationally”

“We said, ‘If you’re willing to go on this journey with us, we’ll pay for it...You commit the staff time. We’re going to create some high value learning experiences,’” Luedtke said of the framing he shared with grant recipients. “At the end of this, we’ll fund one or two of them.”

After receiving proposals, the Foundation took representatives from each of the schools that applied on a learning trip to Boston to observe how schools there were transforming student experience in the classroom. After the trip, schools that applied to the planning grant RFP

were asked to rewrite their proposals based on the insights they gathered.

In 2018, the schools submitted their big ideas for the education advisory committee to review. Olson Middle and Patrick Henry High Schools had succeeded in refining ideas that met the bold, measurable, and focused criteria. Their respective programs were funded for three years and launched in the fall of 2018.

Patrick Henry High School

Patrick Henry High School came to the Foundation with the idea to launch a project-based learning academy. Later named the Community Connected Academy (CCA), the project intended to facilitate student learning both in school and in the community. Project-based learning would provide an innovative, culturally relevant curriculum option to students who would benefit from real world experiential learning.

Henry already had “a school within a school” for credit-deficient students. Patrick Henry’s principal, Yusuf Abullah, wanted to see some of those same insulated qualities come through in what became the Community Connected Academy.

At the same time, Patrick Henry students were conducting a campaign to change the name of the school, which currently honors a Revolutionary War-era slaveholder. That campaign began with then-junior Semaj Rankin, and sparked community and schoolwide conversations around social justice themes. And so the Community Connected Academy was also conceived to provide students passionate about social justice a space to make that a consistent throughline of their high school career.

“We started to think about project-based learning in a way that is happening in other parts of the country,” said Abullah. “We were doing a lot of social justice work

at Henry High School, so [it made sense] to use project-based learning as a way to engage students and social justice to provide purpose and a sense of motivation.”

In its first year, students enrolled in the Community Connected Academy spent part of their day taking courses from the main high school course catalog and the other part working on social justice-themed projects determined by students. Additionally, one day a week, students would spend their morning working on real-world job skills and their afternoon in the community at an internship aligned with their interests and career aspirations.

Starting with a 50-student cohort of high school juniors, the first year was a struggle because of the newness of the program and because Henry staff lacked the personnel to execute precisely what they had envisioned. It took a lot of work to get students out of the building to get those internship experiences. Bringing community partners into the building also required a lot of coordination and outreach. But students loved it and they came back. “In its inaugural year, CCA students were much more likely to remain enrolled at Henry for all four quarters—96 percent of them remained at the school compared to 82 percent of other students,” said Luedtke.

For the 2019-2020 school year, 115 juniors and seniors joined the Community Connected Academy. The school also recruited four teachers and a program coordinator. Staff devoted time to establishing community relationships to ensure that the project-based and internship elements of the Academy pro-

ceed smoothly. As of the 2019-2020 school year, the Community Connected Academy is now a fully-insulated program, like a school within a school.

“Henry used the concept of a nest, a safe place within a big comprehensive school for students who just kind of had been ghosting it through high school to get the care and nurturing they need to come out of their shell and become self-actualized learners,” Luedtke said.

“We were doing a lot of social justice work at Henry High School, so [it made sense] to use project-based learning as a way to engage students and social justice to provide purpose and a sense of motivation.”



Olson Middle School

Olson Middle School approached the Foundation to fund a program designed to bring students' life stories into the school to drive how teaching happens. Through the planning process, they worked on finding a method to best capture those stories, deciding on a school-wide journaling process.

The journaling is built around a series of prompts, thoughtfully sequenced by grade level and time in the school year, giving students the chance to grow accustomed to the journaling practice. Students start by talking about where they come from, and then, who they are, their values, their aspirations, their interests. Ideally, by eighth grade they're really focused on who they want to become. To help teachers determine how to best utilize the insights journaling provides, students also needed advocates. This came in the form of two additional full-time counselors who joined Olson's staff in 2018.

These Foundation-funded positions enable Olson, a school of about 400 students, to offer a full-time counselor for each grade level. Luedtke said this ratio of students to counselors is much lower than what is typical in other Minneapolis middle schools.

The counselors do traditional counseling work that has led to literally thousands of one-on-one sessions a year with Olson students. They also lead the journaling analysis, creat-

ing a process for identifying themes and bringing those insights to teachers while maintaining student confidentiality. All of this data is pushing teachers to figure out how to incorporate what students are saying and journaling about into classes. Luedtke sees this as the critical process.

"It's definitely a work in progress because teachers are still trying to figure out exactly what this is requiring of them," he said. "Let's say there's lots of conversations about grief or loss, so how do you make a place for that in science or social studies?"

To help teachers figure that out, the Foundation also supports Olson's professional development process to explore the theories to cultivate a more consistent approach in their work. The idea here is to get everyone in step on how to build rapport with students, deal with behavior issues, repair and deepen trust, and more. In the end, relationship-building is the key component.

"It's a bit of a slow motion transformation to be honest," Luedtke said. "The principal is very methodical about how he's moving this forward, but I think it's also very ambitious because it's school-wide."

Promising Developments

Because stakeholders' objectives focus on different measures of success, it was important for the Foundation to find ways to assess the work schools are doing. The district approved the Foundation as an external evaluator, which allows the Foundation team to have access to pertinent student data.

To date, Community Connected Academy students have a higher passing rate than those in Henry's "mainstream" classes. There are other minor differences, including slightly higher attendance rates and GPAs for CCA students, relative to the general student population. The strongest positive indicator so far is how CCA students feel about school. Focus groups and student surveys show CCA students enjoy school far more than the general student population, feel a stronger sense of belonging, and have stronger relationships with their teachers. Luedtke said, "We'll still be watching all of that and refining the program based on what we're learning."

Meanwhile, Olson Middle School has shown improvements at the staff and student levels. Evaluation data gathered to date shows that teachers are staying at the school: annual staff attrition has dropped from 40 percent to less than 10 percent. Teachers also feel better about the quality of the school. Prior to the work done to support the journaling project, only 9 percent of teachers reported that Olson was the kind of

school they would send their own children. In the fall of 2018, 43 percent of Olson teachers said they would send their kids to the school. There have also been improvements in how much teachers say they trust one another and trust the administration.

"Numbers have gone off the charts," said Luedtke. The biggest impact for students has been a halving of their course failure rate. Also, discipline incidents were down about 30 percent in 2018-19 compared to the previous year.

This data lends momentum to the pacing, patience, and planning critical to sustain work at Olson and Henry. Still, the connection to improved academic results has not been firmly established yet.

"You can watch attendance and student surveys about school climate and give them your own surveys and all this stuff," Luedtke said, "But, then, how do we go from that to academic results? Because that's not exactly a logical progression."

"It's going to take us a while to figure out how you even move something like an ACT score by starting with things that make students happy to come to school."

A NORTHSIDE ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEM

In addressing the broad, complex topic of wealth in North Minneapolis, the Foundation established the language of “creative ownership” to describe its body of economic development work. Yet, the creative ownership banner as it was being talked about at the Foundation felt limiting. It wasn’t addressing the community feedback from the HCD process around topics like predatory practices of payday lenders rampant in North Minneapolis, or the ways structural and institutional racism create disproportionate disparities and barriers for Northsiders.

Without addressing these systemic barriers, Coco and Troska said, the individual and collective efforts to generate and retain community wealth would, at best, have a limited impact.

Inspired in part by local artist-organizer Ricardo Levins-Morales, who has used the term “ecosystem” to characterize other social systems, Coco brought the term “economic ecosystem” into the Foundation’s framing of the work to explore strategies that would provide Northsiders with greater access to capital, technical assistance, and space while being inclusive of strategies like small business development and entrepreneurship.

Conceptually, an economic ecosystem is a different way of understanding how capital moves through a com-

munity. It is not about one group of stakeholders or a single individual’s profit. It is about a community network where members have greater decision-making power and resources to brainstorm, enact, and partner to develop and maintain all components of that ecosystem. Ideally, then, more wealth could be retained within communities, instead of merely extracted.

For Coco and Troska, it made sense to work with Northsiders to create a self-reliant ecosystem more deeply connected and beneficial to the local economy. Staff began convening its 2016 community partners, including Association of Black Economic Power, New Rules, Appetite for Change, City of Lakes Community Land Trust, Social Impact Strategies Group, and Nexus Community Partners.

“We couldn’t work out this ecosystem approach individually. We had to do it together. It needed to be interactive,” said Troska. “So it made sense to bring folks together to understand where everyone fits in, how things are working, where the missing pieces are, where the opportunities might be and so forth.”

Among the Foundation’s community partners, two especially bold ideas stood out as strategies that might be anchoring points for this economic ecosystem. One was a call for support in forming a Black-led credit union, to help address access to capital. The other, for a commercial land trust, could secure more affordable space for local businesses.

Village Financial Cooperative

In July of 2016, a group of community members conceived of Blexit after a police officer from the Village of St. Anthony killed Phillando Castile, a Black man. Blexit, coined by co-founder Me’Lea Connelly, was a response to the extractive and discriminatory nature of many traditional financial institutions, formed “to seek the rejuvenation of Black, Indigenous, and low-income neighborhoods through cooperative economics.” Blexit participants involved early on made Black banking a high priority through the goal of establishing a “financial institution that supports Black existence and financial health and well-being.”

“It’s about starting to build a system that can support us and be a healing institution for this country,” Jonathan Banks, Blexit co-founder, told Insight News.

Blexit worked alongside the Foundation to establish the Association of Black Economic Power (ABEP) to plan out and implement the credit union process. Separating Blexit from ABEP would allow the organization to keep up its community organizing and radical change work and would position ABEP as the organization solely responsible for establishing the credit union. With ABEP’s consent, and at the recommendation of the Phillips Foundation’s Trustees, Troska became a member of ABEP’s board. Because

of his connections to other grant-makers, Troska worked with ABEP leadership to raise funds. They combined forces to tell the story of what brought the credit union concept to light, its intent, and ultimate strategy.

As of the end of 2018, ABEP had made significant progress toward establishing the credit union, now called Village Financial Cooperative. ABEP had raised nearly \$1.5 million in public and private support, including \$500,000 from the Foundation, for the credit union. The Foundation has pledged additional support in 2019 and beyond. Village Financial has also secured a key partnership with San Francisco-based technology company, Square, Inc. Square will donate financial education programming for small business owners in North Minneapolis as well as point-of-sale hardware needed to take credit card payments.

In late 2018, the Minnesota Department of Commerce provided a contingent approval of Village’s charter, allowing it to move to the next big step: approval of deposit insurance from the National Credit Union Administration. As the process to establish Village Financial moved forward, ABEP and the Foundation would encounter additional milestones but also bumps along the way.

In 2019, while working towards finalizing infrastructure, products and services, Village Financial experienced a setback when leadership was terminated due to mismanagement of the credit union process and organizational funds. While they may have chosen to step away



from the project in the past, Foundation staff resolved to lean in and support ABEP in ensuring the credit union would still open.

“Because of the strength of the relationships and trust built in community, obstacles we’ve experienced in the process provided an opportunity to create stronger work,” explains Troska.

Northsiders and other community stakeholders have bought into the vision and the rationale for the credit union and want to see it succeed. Troska, along with representatives from the city of Minneapolis and the Minnesota Credit Union Network, worked diligently with ABEP staff to right the course and develop a realistic plan for establishing the credit union. The goal is now to open in 2021.

Commercial Land Trust

The Commercial Land Trust Initiative, proposed by the City of Lakes Community Land Trust (CLCLT), fit with a very fundamental desire Northsiders expressed for more space for small businesses. As a community-based initiative, housed under CLCLT, the goal of the Commercial Land Trust Initiative is to provide perpetually affordable commercial ownership opportunities through community-driven ownership of land. To do this, the CLCLT acquires land from the speculative commercial real estate market and holds that land “in trust” indefinitely for the benefit of the com-

munity. The Commercial Land Trust Initiative provides a 99-year renewable ground lease to the business owner.

“Essentially, the Commercial Land Trust Initiative retains ownership of land and the business owner, entrepreneur, or co-op members purchase the building that sits on top of the land,” Coco explained.

Under a deal like this, businesses do not answer to a landlord. On the other hand, they are responsible for any lease improvements they choose to do. These leases include a resale formula to determine the building’s sale price and the business owner’s share of the building’s increased value at the time of sale. This allows the value of the initial subsidy investments to remain with the land, thus maintaining affordability for subsequent buyers.

For more than 15 years, the CLCLT has offered perpetually accessible and affordable residential ownership opportunities in Minneapolis. CLCLT acknowledges that, “racialized capitalism has created barriers in accessing the right kind of capital, accessing well connected networks, accessing markets—all necessary to jump start new ventures or expand existing businesses, leaving many aspiring entrepreneurs falling through the cracks.”

Already a long-term community partner of the Foundation, CLCLT recognized that the lack of affordable commercial space was a clear barrier to the retention and expansion of locally-owned businesses in the Twin Cities region. The Commercial Land Trust Initiative was conceived to support Black, Indigenous

and other people of color (BIPOC) in their efforts to build cooperative economies, start businesses and secure themselves in the geographies their communities currently occupy.

“I think what we’re doing is bringing more intentionality than I’ve ever seen or heard about with any of these other commercial land trusts that now exist,” said Jeff Washburne, CLCLT executive director. “Often, they are a reaction to a development deal.”

Coco acknowledged that there are people who wonder exactly how the Commercial Land Trust will work in practice. To address this, as well as other concerns that arose, the CLCLT convened a short-term advisory committee with the sole purpose to create recommendations around the mechanics of a Commercial Land Trust in fall of 2018. “We felt it was important to draw on the wisdom of the collective to answer big questions about the model,” Coco said. “This committee would wrestle with a number of scenarios and considerations for how the Commercial Land Trust Initiative would operate. From business selection criteria and process to a ground lease to added support for tenant improvements.”

The committee included local businesses, cooperatives, community development organizations, funders, nonprofits and government representatives. Together, they created the business concept for the Commercial Land Trust Initiative as a program of CLCLT, with the future intention of separating into its own entity. In February 2019, the Commercial Land Trust Initiative was

approved by the CLCLT Board. CLCLT then moved to create a standing advisory board to operationalize the recently-approved recommendations, and support the mission, vision and goals of the Commercial Land Trust Initiative.

“I think spinning off is necessary, because the Commercial Land Trust Initiative needs to create its own identity, its own value system, and its own way to practice the work,”

Coco said, “I wouldn’t want it to happen too soon because there is a need to build up capacity and expertise around the model—the 17-year organizational infrastructure of the CLCLT can support this necessary growth until the Commercial Land Trust Initiative is ready to take off on its own.”

Village Financial Cooperative and

the Commercial Land Trust Initiative represent clear attempts to embrace and facilitate wealth-building solutions rooted in much of what came up over the course of the Foundation’s HCD process, but they are not the only efforts.

The Foundation is supporting additional work to ensure all aspects of



“racialized capitalism has created barriers in accessing the right kind of capital, accessing well connected networks, accessing markets—all necessary to jump start new ventures or expand existing businesses, leaving many aspiring entrepreneurs falling through the cracks.”

the economic ecosystem are strong and accessible. Identifying these efforts and opportunities will continue to happen alongside community, as needs change and success stories emerge. There remains a healthy tension and conversation about displacement, as community partners ideate projects that primarily benefit Northside residents alongside those that might be more

likely to attract visitors from outside the community. This is a balancing act that will be in a constant state of flux, and is just one more reason that community-led grant-making is essential.

Many of these other initiatives take place in smaller ways that need more capacity to grow and maximize effort, but not everything needs to be built from scratch.



GETTING TO IMPACT

The Phillips Foundation remains dedicated to its journey toward impact and outcomes with its Northside community partners. Repeatedly, and with a healthy skepticism, those partners have extolled the level of commitment staff have demonstrated in the forms of transparency, advocacy, and accountability. Many have described the terms of engagement as refreshing.

The work that the Foundation has begun is for the long term, so consistency and patience are important aspects of its commitment. To waver in that commitment, either by moving too quickly or bowing out, would go against the kind of relationships staff sought to build and hope to sustain. Foundation staff see themselves adapting within and through the relationships HCD's co-creative processes required. Staff members saw themselves as funders prior to 2016. But that self-perception has moved.

“I’ve shifted my own thinking from being a funder to being a facilitator,” said Troska. “Even though at the end of the day, choices are made and funds are dispersed...our involvement is so much deeper than that.”

Troska says that the deep relationships staff members have with community members have even affected what kinds of proposals they solicit from partner organizations. “The proposals we get are not like the proposals most foundations get...We still get a proposal but it comes long after the relationship and the conversations have happened,” said Troska. “They’re not just a blind, ‘Send us your proposal, we’ll read it, figure out if we like you or not.’”

Instead, through open-ended and ongoing engagement, the proposals staff receive now feel “more like formalities.” Staff already have an intimate understanding of who the applicants are, how they work, and what they aim to achieve.

“It’s easy to build the case and the rationale to the Trustees,” Troska said, “because you’re not trying to understand something. You’ve already understood it.”

Coco noted that it’s important to recognize that the Foundation is still in a power imbalance with community members. In the end, she said, it’s important to assume the role of “practitioner with” instead of “funder of,” and



to ponder how that shift changes the dynamics in professional relationships. Coco has also seen herself becoming more strategic, methodical and intentional about what the long game is in her work.

In thinking about who is facilitating this work at the Foundation, Coco has a lot of questions about what her exit plan at the Foundation looks like, **“because every white person in every institution should have an exit plan to make way for fresh faces, especially from those impacted by the work.”**

As the Foundation worked to open space for community-driven elements in their grantmaking, Luedtke also recognized that facilitation had become an aspect of his job beyond formal grantmaking processes. The process of facilitation, he said, is becoming “more challenging as we spend more time in learning mode with our advisors, and less time in decision-making mode.” Facilitating learning, he is finding, is even more difficult than facilitating decisions.

Ultimately, the biggest tangible gain from the entire HCD journey has been the embedding of community-led decision-making processes, such as with the community advisory committees, into the Foundation’s grantmaking processes. Including a broader spectrum of stakeholders at all levels has dramatically increased the likelihood that the desired and actual outcomes reflect the aspirations of North Minneapolis stakeholders.

The staff’s early push to clarify the values and vision behind the Trustees’ request for bold, measurable, focused work enabled them to

seek out and enter the human centered design process with clear intentions. The directives shared by the Trustees opened a conversation that reframed and reasserted many of the Foundations traditional values alongside a new vision and approach. The freedom Trustees gave staff enabled staff to devote their full time, attention, and focus towards building something new.

“And as we have reshaped and incorporated those values into our daily practice, we must constantly revisit, renegotiate and recommit to those same values at all levels of the organization as we move forward and the work evolves,” Coco said.

The various roles community members have played—and continue to play—in the Foundation’s new operating principles provide a range of perspectives that offer more holistic overviews of the real experiences of people living, working, going to school and starting new enterprises in North Minneapolis.

“I’ve shifted my own thinking from being a funder to being a facilitator,” said Troska. “Even though at the end of the day, choices are made and funds are dispersed...our involvement is so much deeper than that.”

927 W Broadway

Weaving these community-driven elements into the Foundation’s cultural DNA has prompted the organization to establish offices on the Northside, at the 927 building on West Broadway. The century-old, three-story building has been vacant for more than 30 years. Through a separate LLC, the Foundation and its partners will purchase the building from the City of Minneapolis and renovate it for their own use and for use by more entities serving the North Minneapolis community.

The Foundation was well aware that too much North Minneapolis land and property was already owned and occupied by outside entities. **In light of the Foundation’s recent work, moving to the Northside was really important, and how the Foundation moved to the Northside was even more important.** To that end, the Foundation has engaged two Black-owned, Northside small businesses as partners in the LLC, to be both owners and developers: TRI-Construction, who will handle general contracting to rehab the site, and New Rules, who will be the project manager and oversee retail, work space, and an event site at street level. Floors two and three will be office space for all three partners, including co-working space.

Troska had heard from others in the community that TRI had been looking to redevelop 927 for years. Troska connected with TRI co-

founder Calvin Littlejohn over a simple phone call that began the construction company’s relationship with the Foundation. Littlejohn was intrigued by the fact that the Foundation reached out to people in the neighborhood to propose co-ownership versus the pattern of unilateral development he has observed from outside entities in the past.

“We’ve been on the Broadway Corridor for maybe pushing 10 years now. If I think back 10 years ago when no one wanted to come to North Minneapolis, no one wanted to do business on Broadway,” said Littlejohn. “I just watch how my neighborhood is changing, it started off as a majority African American. We’ve got a huge mixture now. But as we...take a look at the business corridor of buildings being bought, fixed up—

there is this feeling that things are going to start happening in North Minneapolis without the African American community being included.”

Later on, Chris Webley and his company New Rules came into the picture in much the same way. New Rules, currently located on Lowry Avenue, is a collective built on the idea of developing ecosystems and solutions for Black and Brown communities. In time, New Rules received a capital investment grant from the Foundation to enhance the services and tools they are able to offer their members.

Once all parties had connected, they ultimately decided to build a three-

way relationship in re-developing and owning the 927 building. For Littlejohn, Troska has been the Foundation’s ambassador, making it clear that the Foundation cares about expanding Northside ownership opportunities. Upon completion of the project and over the next 10 years, TRI-Construction and New Rules will be given the option to buy out the Foundation’s equity interest in the 927 building.

The transfer of that interest would make TRI-Construction and New Rules the sole owners of the property, and help anchor future community-centered development along the West Broadway corridor. **A successful lifecycle for the 927 partnership could provide a model that helps to insulate local economies against displacement.**



'Be Disrupters In This Whole Philanthropy Space'

Webley had some encouraging words for his partners at the Foundation: "Continue to be disrupters in this whole philanthropy space," he said. "There's this philosophy of we can fix what's broken and tweak it or we can scrap it and start something new." For him, this new beginning with the Foundation will endure so long as staff maintain close ties with community, in real time.

To nimbly ride this new wave, the Foundation will continue supporting the work of new and innovative Northside organizations. These are the kinds of approaches that define the legacy of The Jay & Rose Phillips Family Foundation of Minnesota. "This work is about more than the outcomes," said Troska.

"It's more about a shift in process and approach that has a life beyond my time," Troska explained. "It's ultimately about what it takes to build trusting relationships where community members know way more about what they need than philanthropy does. **Our job is to listen, provide resources and get out of the way.**"

Committing fully to its Northside partners, through the highs and lows, perhaps their example will ripple across the philanthropic landscape, shifting the ways foundations, government agencies, and private businesses interact with communities. **That realm of possibilities is open to those willing to listen humbly, to center imagination, and to display their commitment to the people who have the insight, expertise, and lived experience about what bold, focused and measurable really mean.**



**THE JAY & ROSE PHILLIPS
FAMILY FOUNDATION
OF MINNESOTA STAFF**

Patrick Troska
President

Joel Luedtke
Program Director

Tracy Lamparty
Grants and Operations Manager

Elizabeth Coco
Program Officer

Zander
Foundation Mascot

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Jeanne Phillips
Co-Chair

Dean Phillips
Co-Chair

Hutton Phillips

Tyler Phillips

Walter Harris

This case study was produced by
TWIN CITIES MEDIA ALLIANCE

Adaobi Okolue

Tracy Babler

Senah Yeboah-Sampong

Justin Sengly

Images are courtesy of **NORTH NEWS**,
a premiere print community news
source in North Minneapolis
founded in 1991.

