

**THRIVE**  
EAST OF THE RIVER



**For Immediate Release**

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**Washington, D.C. (June 10, 2020)** – The “THRIVE East of the River” partnership addresses the immediate economic calamity posed by COVID-19 to Washington DC’s Ward 8 residents and increases long-term stability and mobility. Through a unique partnership between four District based non-profits: Bread for the City; 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park (a project of Building Bridges Across the River); Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative; and Martha’s Table, this collaboration provides weekly groceries, dry goods and \$1,100 direct monthly financial assistance for up to 500 families in Ward 8. Participating families will work with navigators helping them access unemployment insurance, tax credits, and other available benefits.

THRIVE East of the River will produce a model for rapid response and resilience for communities across the nation. To that end, this project is working with a cross-disciplinary team of senior researchers from the Urban Institute. Findings will be disseminated as an adaptable template for how local non-profits can rapidly deploy resources to residents in need during times of crisis.

This crisis-alleviation strategy will ensure that Ward 8 residents have the support needed to weather this economic storm. The families served often do not have robust savings, jobs, and social networks that those from more privileged backgrounds might have access to in order to get them through until the economy comes back online. These partner NGOs recognize that federal and local government aid won’t come soon enough to prevent irreversible damage unless we act NOW.

The partnership has raised over \$700,000 to date from foundations, individuals, and corporations. This includes funds from Lex & Chrissie Sant, the Diane & Norman Bernstein Foundation, the Naomi & Nehemiah Cohen Foundation, the Greater Washington Community Foundation, Bobby and Janie Lipnick, and others. The total project fundraising goal is nearly \$4M.

**What:** Five months of support including weekly groceries, dry goods, and \$1,100 monthly financial assistance along with assigned navigators helping families access unemployment insurance, tax credits, and other safety net benefits

**When:** Partnership kicks off with first 100 families on June 15, 2020

**Who:** 500 Ward 8 families

**Where:** Ward 8, Washington, DC

**For more information:** [bridgepark.org/thrive](http://bridgepark.org/thrive)

## Why These Families?

The health and economic crisis wrought by COVID-19 has brought the underlying problems of economic inequality, racial inequity, and the reality of our tattered safety net into bold relief. Besides older adults living in long-term care, no group has been hit harder by COVID-19 than communities of color. Nearly half of the District's total black population now reside in the primarily African American neighborhoods located to the east of the Anacostia River where the four community-based nonprofits in this collaboration are based. Disparities brought on by long term systemic discrimination and disinvestment abound: 72% of the housing units in Ward 8 are occupied by renters with roughly half spending 30% or more of their income on housing. These neighborhoods face some of the highest child poverty rates in the city, hovering around 50%. Adults in Ward 8 are especially vulnerable to COVID-19 due to health disparities brought on by social determinants of health, such as high rates of obesity (43%), diabetes (16%), asthma (21%), and heart attack (12%). These statistics are correlated directly to disinvestments in essential services, for example Ward 8 has one grocery store (ratio of 1: 78,686) compared to 10 in Ward 6 (ratio of 1: 8,209).

Five months is the amount of time estimated for these families to secure more public resources or get back to jobs that were affected by the pandemic. The goal for cash assistance is based on a review of the resources needed to meet basic needs in Ward 8 and a review of available research. For instance, \$1,100 per month is enough to cover rent on a modestly sized apartment in Ward 8 ([Zillow](#), accessed April 2020) or enough to cover food and other essential costs (not including transportation, child care, and medical costs) for a single parent household with two children ([MIT Living Wage Calculator for DC](#), accessed April, 2020). Although these cash allotments won't cover all the financial gaps the families we serve will face over the coming months, we know that [even modest amounts of cash can help buffer families against COVID-19's harshest economic impacts](#).

### **About Partner Non-Profits**

**Bread for the City:** Founded in 1974, Bread for the City is a community-based, anti-poverty organization that provides direct services and advocacy for residents in DC living on low-incomes. Our mission is to help Washington, DC residents living develop the power to determine the future of their own communities. We do that by providing food, clothing, medical care, social services support, and legal representation. That's the traditional "human services" part of our work. But we are also a social justice organization, and we recognize that our clients are struggling against a system that is deliberately complex and difficult to navigate at best and steeped in racism and inequity at worst.

Bread for the City is an advocate for change. We acknowledge and shine light on the impact of racism on the lives of our clients and staff. We invest significant resources – funding, staff time, and political capital – on advocating for changes in our community that will ease the path for our clients. But, more importantly, we equip our clients with the skills to be their own advocates and to address issues in their neighborhoods that they care about.

**11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park:** The 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Park, a project of Ward 8-based nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River, will be Washington, D.C.'s first elevated public park. Located on the piers of the old 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge spanning the Anacostia River, the Bridge Park will be a new venue for healthy recreation, environmental education and the arts. After a seven-month design competition, the design team of OMA+OLIN was selected in October 2014. The Bridge Park draws on an extensive community outreach and consultative process, anchored by more than 1,000 stakeholder meetings for design, development and impact. Pre-construction began in 2016 and the Park is expected to open by 2023. Beyond supporting the community's physical and environmental health, the Bridge Park also seeks to become an anchor for equitable development in our nation's capital. Visit [BridgePark.org/equity](#) to learn more about the Bridge Park's local community investment.

**Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative:** For over 20 years has helped thousands of families and transformed the civic, cultural, and economic life of our Ward 8 community. The mission of Far Southeast Family Strengthening Collaborative is to act as a catalyst to develop, nurture and sustain partnerships of residents, agencies, and institutions in the Southeast community and to create a healthy socioeconomic environment through which every child and family has an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential and to lead a productive life. To learn more about our work please visit: [www.fsfsc.org](http://www.fsfsc.org)

**Martha's Table:** Martha's Table is a local nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., with a mission to support strong children, strong families, and strong communities. Martha's Table exists because every child, regardless of zip code, should have the opportunity to thrive. For 40 years, the organization has been working to increase access to quality education, health and wellness resources, and family supports. For more information and to get involved, please visit: [www.marthastable.org](http://www.marthastable.org)