



September 2019  
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## CO4F METRICS

AS OF JUNE 2019

**\$8,300,000**  
Total Capitalization

**\$2,991,307**  
Funds Available

**\$5,308,693**  
Total Funded and Committed

## Jovial Concepts Improves Food Access in Denver

For the last decade, Jovial Concepts has been an integral community resource for west Denver and the surrounding region. A primary focus of the nonprofit organization's is to improve food access and overall health in underserved areas.



**"...we learned that in Colorado, one in five working families did not know where their next meal was coming from..."**

"Since its inception in 2009, Jovial Concepts has served as a tool to create stronger nonprofits and communities through service-learning projects. In 2010, we started a lawn-to-edible garden project to educate about sustainability and increase food access to our most vulnerable neighbors. In 2014, we learned that in Colorado, one in five working families did not know where their next meal was coming from and by 2016, we had shifted the gardens to the focal point of our programming," said Kristina Welch, Jovial Concepts Executive Director. "Jovial Concepts hosts 67 gardens in Denver, Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson

*Colorado Fresh Food Financing Fund (CO4F) improves access to healthy food in underserved Colorado communities by financing grocery stores and other forms of healthy food retail.*

## PARTNERS



**THE PITON  
FOUNDATION**  
at Gary Community  
Investments



counties, and donates over 5,000 pounds of food annually to food banks and elementary schools. This program has won national and international recognition, a Congressional Honor, and a water innovation award."

With the success of the garden program came new opportunities for Jovial Concepts to take its initiatives further. Welch described not only outgrowing space to operate the organization, but the need to teach participants how to cook and preserve what they grew in their gardens.

Jovial Concepts learned about CO4F when the opportunity came to purchase a building in Denver's Barnum neighborhood. CO4F supported Jovial Concepts in purchasing the building and getting it ready for operation by providing \$450,000 in financing and \$30,000 in grant funding. It now operates as a retail food co-op and community center.

### "CO4F gave us the momentum to transform..."

"The CO4F investment in Jovial made our dream of taking food education and access to the next level. Thanks to these funds, we were able to purchase a space at 1st Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard called The Co-op at 1st! CO4F gave us the momentum to transform the space into a health and wellness-focused community center that supports equity among the low-income and underserved families in Barnum," said Welch.

The Co-op at 1st serves a significant need for healthy food access, with the closest full-service grocery store 1.5 miles away, and residents enduring health challenges. According to Welch, in 2016, a free clinic serving Barnum residents found that out of its 307 patients, 128 were suffering from diabetes and hypertension and over 22 percent were suffering from other diet-related illness.

"With the CO4F's funds we have been able to create opportunities to make healthy food accessible through our local market and create educational classes in our new kitchen with the aim of normalizing healthy food in our community. We run a monthly donation-based clinic that includes a community meal, offer fresh food products from over 20 neighbors in our market, and offer many classes including those that teach how to cook on a budget and read nutritional labels," said Welch.

Since the opening of The Co-op at 1st, Jovial Concepts has grown not only its programs, but its volunteers and overall impact.

"We serve 85 entrepreneurs in our space who share our healthy food and healthy communities vision, grew from an annual base of 400 volunteers to 1,400, and instead of impacting just 60 families, are now reaching closer to 600," said Welch. "We are grateful for the CO4F funds and continue to look forward to new opportunities for our kitchen and market to benefit the Barnum community."

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## Partner Spotlight: Bree Davies

Bree Davies is one of the newest staff members at Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), an organization focused on economic development and planning in Colorado communities, and a long-standing CO4F partner.



Davies serves as P.U.M.A.'s Equitable Communities Strategist, playing a key role in creating opportunities for all Coloradans.

**In your role at P.U.M.A., how does your work align with CO4F's mission to improve fresh food access throughout Colorado?**

*At P.U.M.A., a big part of my role is to question the "traditional" approaches used in planning and economic and community development.*

*When we perform community outreach for planning projects, how are we ensuring we reach the most people? How do we connect with vulnerable or marginalized voices, especially when working on large-scale projects that will have profound impacts on how communities live, work and get around?*

*I use these same skills in my approach to our work with CO4F - how are we ensuring we're connecting with the right people who are doing the most impactful work in a community around food access? How do we look at the past, present, and future of a community and support the right model or method of food access that has the greatest chance of surviving and thriving within the difficult and nuanced landscape of food access? How do we make sure we are listening to-and not assuming-the needs of a community and their perfect picture of nourishment? CO4F is, by nature, built to support this process of questioning and analysis, and I really like that we can approach improving fresh food access through the lens of equity.*

**What experiences led you to your current position with P.U.M.A.?**

*It has been a wild, winding road to P.U.M.A. My background is in media, working as both a print journalist for various local and national publications, an on-air personality and producer for CPT12 Colorado Public Television, and through my own work as a live podcast host. What began as a combined love for writing and documenting the art and music in my city brought me to music journalism, music and arts festival planning and organizing, becoming a touring musician myself, and eventually, a dedication to advocacy for artists in the realms of affordable housing, fair pay, and general agency for artists in the public sphere.*

*Brad Segal (President and Founder of P.U.M.A.) and I met as board members for All In Denver, a nonprofit organization that advocates for housing, economic, and social equity for all Denverites. We are a diverse collection of planners, artists, political strategists, public policy experts, educators, and affordable housing developers who have supported and positively influenced big decisions in Denver over the last few years. It was in this space that I came to learn more about urban planning and was simultaneously thinking about a career change. Brad welcomed me into planning as an artist; my experience in community organizing and arts advocacy is utilized every day on various P.U.M.A. projects. I wrote a weekly column for five years for Denver's alt-weekly, Westword, which in part focused on gentrification, displacement and the general loss of Denver's rooted culture and was able to take that*



knowledge and experience with me to P.U.M.A, where I get to work directly on these issues every day.

### What project(s) are you most excited about?

*We have two projects in the works right now that are tackling food access from different angles. One project will bring affordable, fresh food to communities in Denver through a neighborhood-market approach. The markets also act as a pipeline for sustainable job opportunities for young people in the community, a place to receive training, and the needed support for employment longevity. The other project will capitalize on food delivery services and eliminating the barriers many community members have to accessing "one click away" grocery services that are often only available to higher income demographics and in specific neighborhoods.*

*We're also working on a grocery store feasibility study for a Colorado tribe-learning about how tribal communities and their government structures operate adds a whole new layer to food access issues. I'm excited that CO4F is flexible and can help support this kind of work, while educating those of us working on food access about the cultural nuances within our communities.*

### From your perspective, how does fresh food access create equitable, cohesive communities?

*Everyone has to eat-therefore, everyone has the right to fresh, affordable, accessible, culturally relevant nourishment regardless of where they live, what body they inhabit, or what their economic status is. Food has long been a point of community connection; when we eat together, we get to know each other. CO4F is tackling a major component of nourishing communities and that is through access.*

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