

The Kresge Foundation


2009 Annual Report





Can fresh food change
the outcome of a
whole neighborhood,
bite by bite?



A woman with dark skin is captured in a dynamic, mid-air pose, wearing a bright yellow, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress that flows around her. She is barefoot and has her arms raised, with her head tilted back and eyes closed, suggesting a moment of intense expression or joy. The background is a solid, deep blue.

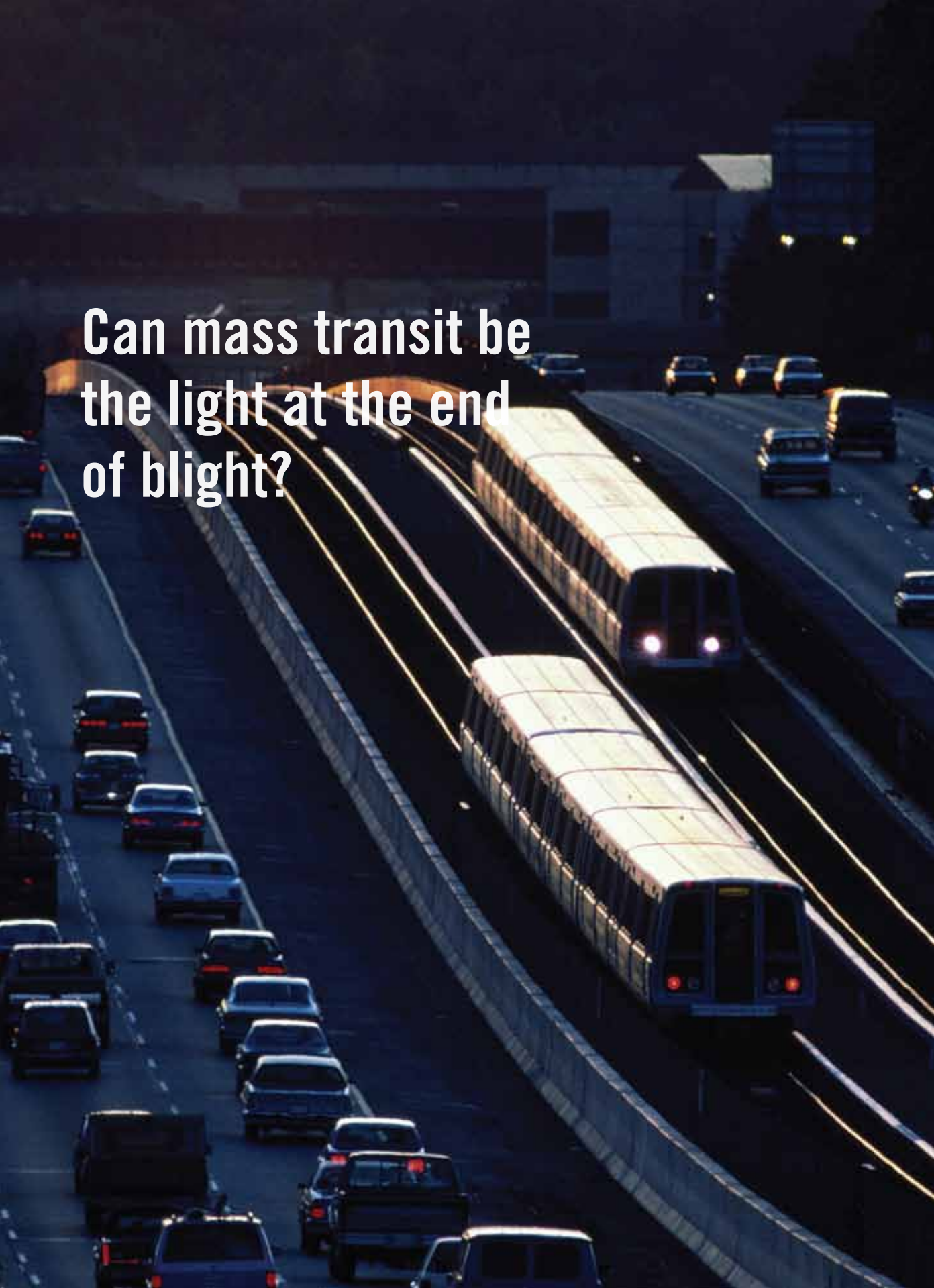
Can art become a
battery that jump-starts
city renewal?

An aerial photograph showing a vast expanse of water covered with numerous ice floes of various sizes. The ice appears as light gray and white patches against the darker blue water. The pattern of the ice floes is irregular and fragmented, creating a complex, mosaic-like texture across the entire frame.

Can a hotter earth be
solved by cooler heads?

A close-up photograph of a person's hand wearing a clear plastic glove, using a metal ladle to pour a thick, yellowish soup with visible orange carrot pieces and green herbs into a white bowl. Several other similar bowls are arranged on a blue tray in the background.

Can vulnerable
organizations
adequately serve
vulnerable populations?

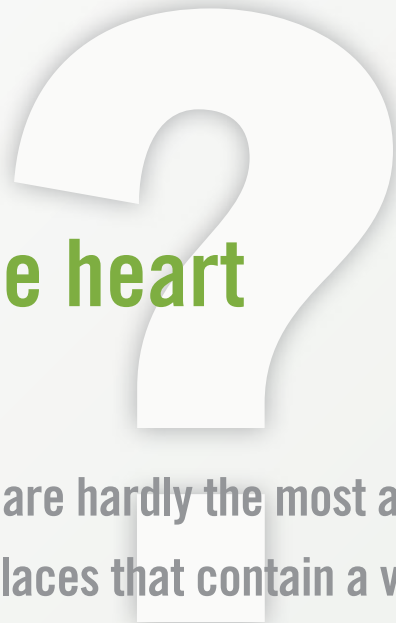
A photograph of a light rail train traveling on a multi-lane highway at night. The train is illuminated by its own lights, and the surrounding area is dark. Other vehicles, including cars and trucks, are visible on the highway in the background.

Can mass transit be
the light at the end
of blight?

A person is shown from the side, holding several sheets of paper. They are wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and a watch. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and a building. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Can community colleges
be the key to a vastly more
competitive country?

Life moves in cycles. Good places tend to create better places that create better places. Or, as we see so clearly today, a run of rogue events could keep knocking the pillars out from under all of us, one after another after another. These cycles that occur over years and sometimes decades are what we work to understand at The Kresge Foundation. We're particularly interested in encouraging new cycles and fostering ideas that disrupt a downward chain of events and bend it upward. **These are ideas that begin with big questions.**



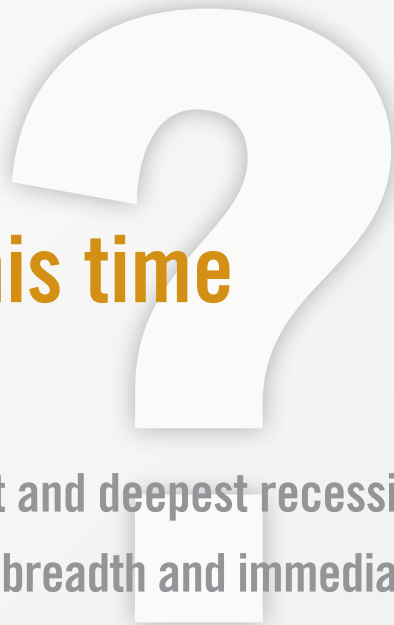
What is at the heart of “here”

The best places to live are hardly the most affluent. We are talking about the places that contain a vibrancy larger than their physical footprint with an energy that is real and renowned. It happens that these sweet spots of life bloom where there are things like grocery stores, dentists and a music scene—and are exceptional places to learn and raise a family. Kresge is investing in underserved communities for this reason. What if twenty-seven kids in a class of thirty go to college? What if an entire block has healthy houses that are not only well insulated but free from mold and lead? What if that vacant lot becomes a neighborhood park? What if we can answer these kinds of questions a thousand times over, across the country? We start to create more places where we all want to live.

For decades, our work has been to help nonprofits succeed. We continue to do it in inventive ways for one reason: to create communities that work and keep working. **We help begin upward cycles, where well-imagined ideas have the power to strengthen the fabric of our entire country.**



How is this time different



With the longest and deepest recession since the Great Depression, the breadth and immediacy of the needs compel us to play an active role in supporting front-line services. Food shelves now feed one in eight people, up 46 percent from four years ago. But seeing our country's cupboards laid bare and having to prop up already buckling human services with private and public money, we renew our commitment: we will lay a long-term foundation today that positively, permanently changes the course of tomorrow. Part of how we do this is by building upon our deep knowledge of capital and helping nonprofits leverage new capital in creative ways—ways that help organizations live out their missions and reach their visions more effectively. How can we best bolster

the community colleges that support first-generation college students? What if we train artists to be more entrepreneurial? Can farm technologies help deflect the impact of a changing climate? We also are looking to teach and be taught, both with and by the nonprofits we serve and the foundations on this long journey with us. We are seeking out the individuals and organizations who are exploring innovative ideas and need dependable funding to get traction and build their capacity for success. By doing these things, we hope to maximize the full capacity of “now.” **This limited resource of *today* has never been as valuable as it is in this difficult time. We know that using it well will make a difference for generations.**



How do multiple lenses create a singular focus

We approach our work in defined program areas: Arts and Culture, Community Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Human Services. The criteria for our work is that the nonprofits we fund are a fit with these fields of interest, align with our values, and are interested in the kind of innovative capital Kresge provides. (Read more in the gatefold which begins on page 20.) But as varied as these fields look on paper, for practical purposes they are indivisible. They share a nucleus—to create exceptional communities, particularly for those on the margins.

Consider poverty. This burden is not simply driven by lack of jobs, but often a lack of transportation, healthcare, fresh food, education, and even art and culture. Access to these things helps strengthen neighborhoods just as their

absence can multiply hardship. Or look at a young child's trajectory through life. A girl who is absent from school because of asthma may chart a difficult course through adulthood simply because the condition and age of her home fostered chronic breathing difficulties. Health and environment affect education and community in very direct ways over lifetimes. The truth is, the large issues we read about daily—the health of our nation, the steady rise of our planet's temperature, budget cuts at schools—are not solved by a single discipline but many. This overlap is where we set our sights. It's also in the overlap that the bigger questions have the best chance of knocking the negative cycles out of their worn grooves. Can cleaner diesel help raise test scores at the school down the street? Can a theater that stays in a neighborhood help rewrite the future narrative of the neighbors? Can Detroit become, once again, a place where travelers go out of their way to visit? **The nonprofits in this book are proof positive that these questions—and powerful new cycles that accompany them—are being answered every day.**