

Introduction

OUR URBAN CENTERS ARE STRUGGLING. Increasingly burdened by rising unemployment, crime, poverty, falling literacy rates, overflowing prisons and homelessness, social challenges weigh heavy, while race relations remain ever-strained. Government cutbacks, meanwhile, are at an all-time high, and the charitable sector — society’s other go-to place in times of need — is burdened by the harsh realities of a slow economy and limited funds.

We see the effects everywhere. Detroit declared bankruptcy; New York’s homeless rate is surging; New Orleans is still pulling itself out from under years after devastating calamities; and cities like Chicago and Los Angeles are experiencing significantly high rates of incarceration and recidivism. Whether a result of failing industries, embattled economies, bad policy or policing, political mismanagement or a combination of all the above, cities are looking for answers.

And the “same old” simply won’t do.

Enter social entrepreneurs, innovative men and women who focus their creative energy and business-minded skillset and savvy toward social change. Finding new and empowering ways to tackle social problems, they’re turning conventional models on their heads. Whether promoting job creation, affordable housing, education, human rights, food security, social justice or the influence of political will, these entrepreneurs are impacting communities in incredibly diverse ways.

Pursuing a different way of doing business — one that melds profit with purpose — social entrepreneurs are demonstrating that everyone has the capacity to effect change and that business can have impact unparalleled on the way we live, work and engage with our communities. Most significantly, they’re proving that profit and mission are not mutually exclusive: you *can* do well by doing good.

Visiting cities like Detroit, Chicago, San Francisco, New York, New Orleans, Baltimore and Dallas, *In the Business of Change* profiles social entrepreneurs who, weary of waste, suffering and injustice, are taking steps to revitalize their communities. Examining diverse sectors, from education to health and the arts, agri-business, the environment and employment, this book will highlight changemakers making a substantive, measurable difference in the lives of many.

Each chapter — focused on lessons learned in one common area of practice in social entrepreneurship — gives readers a behind-the-scenes look at folks hard at work, facing struggles, celebrating achievements and offering practical advice for others. Along the way, we'll explore some valuable questions: What challenges do these entrepreneurs face and how are they working to overcome them? What can we learn about creating replicable models of change? What is the value in support systems? How important are partnerships and cross-sectoral collaborations?

And, of course, we'll look closely at who these passionate individuals are and what inspired their dive into social entrepreneurial waters. In truth, there are as many variations of changemakers as there are innovative ideas that fuel them. There are the non-profit leaders, grown tired of relying on grants and other handouts, who are finding more empowered, self-sufficient ways to support their work. There are the advocates working at the grassroots level, many without much fanfare. There are the folks looking for more meaningful ways to spend their second (or third) careers.

But a majority profiled in this book represent a growing contingent of young, socially conscious graduates who yearn for more in life than the corner office and company car. They want to take their skills and knowledge and use them to make a difference. Less enamored with the charitable sector, however, as are their older cohorts, these trailblazers are embracing the power of profitability to effect change.

Considering the increasing number of people searching for a sense of purpose in their work, many toying with the idea of social entrepreneurship themselves, this book can serve as a pragmatic tool offering valuable information and motivation along with tips and advice to guide them forward. With the abundance of gloomy headlines, it can also meet the basic human need for an uplifting narrative. Filled with inspirational stories of people making a fundamental difference in the world, *In the*

Business of Change is a vicarious adventure into doing well by doing good.

A comment on approach

To provide a diversity of voices, I've included a range of social enterprises in this book, some that have been around for years, others that are newer to the sector. But all share common challenges. Still, the stories are focused primarily in the US to allow for a deep dive into common issues that urban populations face in this part of the world — including high rates of poverty, recidivism, unemployment, crime and food security. But I've interspersed the stories with examples from beyond the US too — places like London; Haiti; Vancouver, Canada; and Gaza — to provide a larger perspective and illuminate both our shared challenges and humanity.

A comment on definitions

There is some debate on the definition of social entrepreneurship. To ensure that we're all on the same page, in this book (as well as my online magazine, *SEE Change*), I define the term very broadly: social entrepreneurship is a non-profit or for-profit venture that uses business savvy, models and skills to solve a social and/or environmental problem.

As such, though perhaps well-regarded and impactful, social programs that are run as ancillary to a business would not fall under this rubric. The distinction is simple: the venture or company running the program must have as its primary purpose the fulfillment of a social objective or mission, regardless of its structure.

To clarify further, I refer to the definitions used by two leading organizations in this sector: Ashoka defines social entrepreneurs as “individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems.... Rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leap.” The Skoll Foundation, meanwhile, defines them as “society’s change agents, creators of innovations that disrupt the status quo and transform our world for the better.”

But my aim is not to get bogged down in definitions. My focus is on sharing stories of these visionaries, innovators transforming lives and

offering tips and inspiration for others. In truth, many in the field are tired of the definitional debate, calling it a distraction from the more important discourse around helping social entrepreneurship reach its potential for social impact. Personally, I agree with them.



Chapter 1

Sustain This: The Rise of Social Entrepreneurship

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP is no longer the obscure term it was years ago. The movement has come a long way since its origins in the United Kingdom, with examples sprouting up in every corner of the globe today. I remember almost a decade ago reading *How to Change the World*, the quintessential bible of social enterprise by David Bornstein, a book that inspired a growing interest in the field, including my own. At the time, many hadn't heard of the concept, much less understood how it worked.

But in 2017, the idea of using business skill, models and savvy to effect change is more commonly embraced among those looking for answers to significant challenges. For the progressive, business-minded entrepreneur, social enterprise is simply a more conscious, purposeful way of doing business, one that they believe will increasingly become accepted practice.

For veteran changemakers, social enterprise is an alternative to traditional philanthropy models, which have lost their sheen of late. Considered unreliable, with the potential to foster a counterproductive culture of dependency, philanthropy is seldom seen as the answer to long-term change. An approach that promotes self-reliance and empowerment is a breath of fresh air for many.

Along the way, social enterprise has become a powerful tool of sustenance. Certainly no panacea — with its own set of challenges, as we'll see — social entrepreneurship is supporting livelihoods and communities and instilling hope for a better future. Take Zita Cobb, an entrepreneur we'll get to know well, who returned to her hometown of Fogo Island, Canada, to help it revitalize after the demise of the cod industry — on which the community had depended for hundreds of years — left many struggling.

She established the Shorefast Foundation to provide jobs and tourism opportunities, effectively opening the small island up to the world.

From a local business fund to an art residency and the Fogo Island Inn — a magnificent world-class destination for geotourists and anyone interested in visiting the beauty of this seemingly isolated corner of the world — every initiative Cobb launches comes down to promoting community resiliency.

For others, the quest for resilience means tackling a persistent problem that is undermining the sustainability of the state or nation, one growing seemingly out of control. Chris Redlitz never anticipated becoming a social entrepreneur. But that was before the venture capitalist (managing partner of Transmedia Capital) visited San Quentin Prison — and before he learned about the realities of the prison system in the US.

The US houses 25 percent of the world's prison population, and 10 percent of that 25 percent is in California. According to reports, the country also spends \$80 billion a year on incarceration, meaning each American resident is paying around \$260 annually (up from \$77 in 1980) to maintain the prison system. In California alone, \$9 billion is spent a year on incarceration — five times the amount spent on education — while the recidivism rate sits at 60 percent, often due to lack of opportunities for employment upon re-entry.

Contrast that statistic with the prediction that by 2020 there will be a shortfall of one million software engineering jobs and Redlitz knew he had the answer to the question, Can we do something better with those tax dollars while breaking the cycle of incarceration?

It all started when Redlitz was invited to San Quentin to speak to a group of prisoners about entrepreneurship and became impressed with their grasp of business and thirst for education. “That one evening really changed my whole perspective of what was possible because I saw and spoke to these guys at length, and they hit me just like the founders we invest in. It was the same kind of look, a lot of the same enthusiasm,” says Redlitz, who had no earlier exposure to prisons — or projects of social impact, for that matter. “If all these guys weren't dressed in blue, I would have assumed I was in some Silicon Valley event. That's what really struck me.”

The experience triggered a passion he couldn't ignore. It led him to launch The Last Mile (TLM) in 2010 with his wife and business partner, Beverly Parenti, to combat the incarceration realities on the ground. “It was an unplanned, serendipitous involvement,” he says of his new role as

social entrepreneur. Perhaps so, but what began as a six-month entrepreneurship program has grown into a powerful tool of change, providing employment and potential for the post-incarcerated — and a non-partisan voice to tackle the ever-growing issue of mass incarceration.

They approached the new initiative like any startup, Redlitz explains. “We looked at this as a nugget of an idea; we did due diligence around the market and the opportunity and the asset [the inmate]. Not to be too academic about it, but that’s how we approached it.” Of course, there was an emotional component too. “I just thought these guys in some ways deserve a chance. But when you put everything together, it really made sense. If we can make an impact on recidivism and we have all the tools, why not?” Redlitz explains.

TLM began with the simple idea of teaching business skills and know-how. “Starting a business is hard; starting business with those other obstacles is even harder,” Redlitz shares. Like any entrepreneurship accelerator, students learned business and social media basics, came up with business ideas, developed business plans and learned to pitch them.

As TLM’s founders got to know the students more, the deep talent pool and the inequities of the criminal justice system became even sharper. Then in 2014, in partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and CalPIA, TLM launched the first computer coding curriculum in a United States prison. With no internet access in prison, TLM found a way around that challenge by creating a proprietary programming platform that simulates live coding. In 2016, it started TLMWorks, a web development studio inside San Quentin that provides graduates of TLM with jobs as software engineers.

“We just kept pushing the envelope,” Redlitz says of TLM’s evolution. “The idea that we’d have this technology incubator and be doing this crazy coding stuff, that was not even part of the concept initially,” he says, adding that being outside of the bureaucratic system allowed them to ask a lot of questions and launch activities that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise. Activities like having their groups engage in social media (using work-arounds as they did with coding) and tell their personal histories. “That was counterintuitive to what they’re used to,” he says of the environment in prison that doesn’t typically have a positive regard for vulnerability.

Today, the program is 80 percent focused on coding and 20 percent on life skills and entrepreneurship. It's all about making the students hireable. So far, 240 people have gone through the program, and 35 are currently out of prison, while many others await release dates. "Governor Brown has a mandate to reduce the prison population, so we've been a strong recipient of that," Redlitz says, explaining that many who have gone in front of the parole board are getting released, partly because of the TLM program, which incorporates post-release plans.

So far, those 35 graduates have done remarkably well in the marketplace, and their recidivism rates sits at zero, says Redlitz. "That may not be a big number, but the downstream impact of those are extraordinary. It's about quality, not quantity, at this point." He's hopeful that future graduates will return to the community equally well positioned for employment, cutting down the incidents of recidivism and the surging costs (financial and otherwise) of reoffending.

The social enterprise has been an education for everyone involved. "We didn't try to save the world in one swipe; it was very much an incremental growth thing," shares Redlitz, adding that patience is not a typical asset in his line of work. "When you're an investor you can have patience to a degree, but you want to grow very quickly, and here it's really not about growing fast; it's about growing effectively and having those who graduate really resonate in the marketplace. That's the important thing."

Over the next five years and beyond, they plan to bring their TLM-branded program to any interested facility and via remote broadcasts from their San Francisco-based studio. "We're set up to scale very cost effectively, where they have software, the modules and instruction available," he says, adding they've already brought their program to remote

*Prisoners learning to code
at San Quentin State
Prison, California.*

CREDIT: THE LAST MILE



places in California, and they've had a lot of interest inside and outside the country.

The plan is also to get to a point of self-sufficiency, to ensure that TLM proceeds are funding the organization and that they're no longer reliant on grants or other subsidies. Working closely with the Department of Corrections in California has helped their growth and potential for impact, to be sure. "They said, 'Here are the obstacles; figure it out,' and we did. And they gave us permission to do things, and we kept having success and working with them closer; and now we're truly in partnership with them," Redlitz explains.

"It's important that we show that public-private partnerships actually work and that you can create a self-sustaining non-profit," he says. "Those overarching goals are really important for us, and we're tracking well to that right now."

In another chapter, we'll explore more deeply the value of partnerships, a running theme among many social entrepreneurs today. It stems from the simple idea that more can be done when done together. For those who began their social entrepreneurial journey in the non-profit sector — where working in silos is often the norm — partnerships are seen as a more effective alternative. What's more, many have come to value the assets that each sector brings to the table when tackling a challenge; the potential for impact is made all the more possible. It's not always an easy relationship to navigate, however, and we'll take a look at some who've had success and how they've made it work for them.

Redlitz is one of many social entrepreneurs in this book focused on tackling the broken prison system, with the realization that it poses numerous debilitating effects on society — from the increasingly high costs to taxpayers, to poverty and homelessness that the formerly incarcerated and their families face when they return to society looking for work (often unsuccessfully) and to the growing recidivism rates, with many falling back into old habits. Never mind the effects of broken and single-parent families on children and their communities.

Social entrepreneurs like Redlitz have come to acknowledge the domino effect of social challenges, how one problem can impact another and then another and another. And that sometimes you need to look deeper than just one issue if you're going to create long-term change and the sustainability of one community — or many.

Similarly, another common theme we'll explore in the book is the power of employment to lift people up and help them and their cities reach their potential. Giving someone a job can have an immense spiraling effect, influencing how they look at themselves and their world and so much more. A job brings economic stability, which influences self-sufficiency, which promotes self-confidence, which impacts education, health and food choices, which encourages hope and possibilities, which empowers everyone around you. And on and on it goes.

When Bernie Glassman, a pioneer in the American Zen Movement, started Greyston Bakery in a seminary housed in a beautiful mansion in the Bronx, New York, it was 1982, long before anyone had heard of the term social enterprise. Recognizing employment as the gateway out of poverty, Greyston was the Zen master's way of providing the hard-to-employ with hope for their future.

The initial intention was to provide work for his seminary students. As the bakery grew, others in the community — especially those struggling with issues like addiction and homelessness — were hired too. Not everyone in their Bronx community appreciated having that population in their midst. So in 1987 Glassman relocated to Yonkers, New York, which at the time was leading the country in homelessness, per capita. If there ever was an ideal place to have impact, Yonkers seemed a good bet.

But the bakery wasn't enough for Glassman's vision. Low-income apartments were then built to house workers and their families. A childcare center was created to alleviate yet another barrier for workers. Housing for people living with AIDS came next. "He was an incredible visionary and fundraiser and able to generate energy around problem solving," says Greyston's current CEO, Mike Brady.

All these initiatives helped Greyston establish its street cred in Yonkers, which today also includes ten community gardens and a workforce development program created in 2009, designed to provide both hard-skill and soft-skill training to hard-to-employ individuals. But Greyston's social enterprise bakery — New York State's first benefit corporation that employs 100 staff — is the crown jewel of the organization and what makes it a known entity outside of the city.

The bakery recently added Whole Foods to its roster, but one retail partnership has proven the most fruitful for the enterprise and that's their 25-year relationship with Ben & Jerry's, the purveyor of America's

favorite ice cream. Greyston brownies are currently found in two of their top five flavors (the first and most popular, half-baked).

“Our growth relies on theirs; we wouldn’t be the size that we are without that relationship,” affirms Brady, who advises social entrepreneurs to align their mission, whenever possible, with a major player that believes in what you’re trying to do. He also cautions against trying to reinvent the wheel. Brownies aren’t new, after all. “You don’t need to necessarily come up with the newest idea but with a more socially just or environmentally sound way of creating existing products,” Brady offers.

The Ben & Jerry’s collaboration has an entire factory room floor dedicated to producing 35,000 pounds of brownies each day. In fact, 24 of the Greyston staff are on the Ben & Jerry’s line full-time. Take Mark, who’s been at the bakery for three years now and considers it a life-changing experience. “I learned to take pride in everything I do,” he says of Greyston’s impact. CeeCee, meanwhile, has been at Greyston for 16 years and is grateful for the work it provided and the childcare it helped her afford. “Greyston did a lot of lifting up of the community and I love it, that’s why I’m still here,” she says. Using the skills gained at Greyston, CeeCee hopes to one day open a restaurant in the local community, where she says she’s known affectionately as “the brownie lady.”

Though Glassman is no longer at Greyston, his mission in creating one of America’s first social enterprises still resonates. “Bernie’s vision continues; it’s more relevant today than it was 35 years ago,” shares Brady on my recent visit to their headquarters in Yonkers. “The problems from 35 years ago are just as prominent around inequality, homelessness and lack of opportunity for people with barriers.”

That may explain why Greyston’s vision today is so large, at the heart of which lies its open hiring model. Promoting inclusion and diversity, the organization’s hiring process doesn’t focus on résumés, references or background checks. Applicants put their names on a list and are called when an opening exists. In this way, no one can be turned away due to their past. It’s a defining differentiator for the social enterprise — and upon which the future of Greyston is focused.

“For thirty-four years, we were focused on Yonkers; our future is beyond Yonkers,” shares Brady, who explains that they’re looking to expand their unique model to communities who share their challenges. To that end, they’ve launched the Center for Open Hiring to encourage

businesses to approach hiring along their same lines of nonjudgement. With Gresyton's leadership, the hope is to help businesses overcome hiring obstacles and emerge a more inclusive workplace — inspiring a more inclusive economy in the process.

“Our mission now is to create thriving communities through the practice and promotion of open hiring,” affirms Brady, adding that the goal is to encourage the hiring of three percent of the workforce along those practices over the next five years. With pilots already ongoing, the center will fully launch in early 2018. “We have to be a lot more deliberate than we have been in previous thirty-four years 'cause now we're thinking about impacting other communities, not just our own.”

When it comes to the multiplier effect of job creation and its impact on the sustainability of our cities, newer social enterprises like Chicago's Bright Endeavors are carving strong footholds as leaders too. Based in West Garfield Park, a neighborhood on the west side of Chicago, Bright Endeavors hires young mothers aged 18 to 24 to make soy candles that are sold in a variety of stores. The enterprise also runs a votive candle rental business for event venues — one of the few businesses to offer these single-burn options. Tackling the problem of waste and inconvenience, the rental candles are a growing line of the enterprise.

Originally launched in 2007 as an independent business, in 2010 Bright Endeavors was brought under the umbrella of a non-profit organization called New Moms, with a mission of interrupting the generational cycle of poverty. Keep in mind that 40 to 60 percent of residents in the south and west sides of Chicago live below the poverty line, while the number of pregnant and/or parenting female youth in Illinois has more than doubled in the past 20 years, rising from 33 percent to 68 percent. Nearly half of the mothers who come to New Moms are homeless, and the community of West Garfield Park is one of severe disinvestment.

Since its inception, Bright Endeavors has served over 300 young mothers and created a thriving business that today sells its candles through its website, via wholesale orders and in stores such as Crate & Barrel and Whole Foods in the Midwest region.

But the bigger picture is about building women up, helping them become more self-confident and better able to establish a positive, healthy direction forward. The 12-week program at Bright Endeavors delivers hands-on training to prepare young mothers for success in the

workforce. Aside from learning soft and hard skills, including teamwork, quality control and leadership, the program provides job readiness training, offers financial literacy coaching and helps the women establish secondary education goals.

In line with the mission of promoting self-reliance and empowerment, pity is not part of the narrative at Bright Endeavors — for the women or the business. Determined to compete on equal footing with similar entry-level luxury good products, Bright Endeavors produces candles of top quality and priced similarly. “We’re small but mighty,” says CEO Laura Zumdahl, of the eight to ten workers in her revolving team.

In fact, the business has grown by 20 percent over the past few years, thanks, in large part, to the diversification and growth of its product line and a more aggressive positioning of its business vis-à-vis their competitors. With revenues topping \$300,000, Zumdahl sees no reason why it can’t be a million-dollar company soon and is hopeful it will reach half a million by 2020.

But Bright Endeavors faces similar challenges to many in this space, as we’ll see more closely in the ensuing chapters. Financial support, for



Program trainee, Jasmine, making candles for their Crate & Barrel division.

CREDIT: ELISA BIRNBAUM

one, particularly due to a diminished state budget. Running a product-based (versus service) business offers a unique set of issues (and opportunities), for another. And then there's the tension between mission and revenue, between profit and purpose. "It's a balance growing the business while growing the job-training program," says Zumdahl, who explains that, by design, the social enterprise has a 600 percent turnover rate to ensure that there's a constant stream of new cohorts every few months who can gain from the short-term training program.

In short, inefficiency is built into the mission, putting an additional strain on the capacity to be self-sustaining. But it's a necessary strain and why Bright Endeavors exists, after all, says Zumdahl. The mission — intimately connected as it is to employment — is also what makes them so determined to keep much of their production handmade, despite the fact that machines help achieve efficiency. "It's messy, but that's the beauty of social enterprise," says Zumdahl, adding that, so long as intergenerational poverty is being addressed, they're meeting their goals.

That issue — one with debilitating effects on our urban centers — has been on Mark Edwards's radar too. He's the co-founder of Upstream, based in Oakland, California, but with growing impact across the US. While specifically focused on creating a stronger, more sustainable healthcare system, Upstream is the culmination of Edwards's long-standing interest in the issues of economic opportunity and intergenerational poverty.

Earlier, he was the founder and executive director of Opportunity Nation, a national bipartisan campaign of over 300 anti-poverty organizations working to close the opportunity gap in the US through federal policy reform. Through that work, Edwards heard the concerns of young people between 15 and 30 years old. What struck him and his co-founder was how often unplanned pregnancy was the starting point for their challenges, resulting in them dropping out of school, quitting their jobs and making other problematic decisions. "We came to believe that unplanned pregnancy is the biggest driver of intergenerational poverty in this county," he says.

To be sure, the scale of the problem is huge. With half of pregnancies in the US being unintentional, there are 1.5 million unplanned children born in the US every year. Most of those women are using contraceptives, but the methods fail them. It's not a surprising fact considering

that the method of choice, the pill, is not very effective unless a woman is really good at taking it, which many aren't, says Edwards. But there are new methods, such as IUDs and implants, that are 20 times more effective than the pill and require lower doses of hormones. Problem is they're hard to come by, especially in places where low-income women receive their healthcare. That reality is typically a "systems," not a cost, issue — and that's what Upstream is trying to change.

They do that through health center interventions, essentially transforming the way care is provided. Upstream teams ensure that women have full access to all healthcare, are made aware of their choices and are provided with counseling so they can select their contraception method fully informed. (When given the choice, Edwards says, women tend to gravitate toward the more effective methods and stay with them longer.) Offering quality improvement and technical assistance means that, instead of it taking four visits to get an IUD implant, it takes one.

The benefits of those informed choices are many. "We can help women achieve their goals by becoming pregnant when they want to. When you do that, lots of good things happen," explains Edwards, who adds that any initiative designed to promote economic opportunity is limited without pregnancy planning. Upstream programs not only impact unplanned pregnancies, they reduce the number of abortions, improve birth outcomes and save states' money. And then there are the downstream outcomes. "Women can complete their education, choose the partner they want to be with — all those good things happen, and it's better for kids as well," says Edwards.

So far, Upstream teams have provided intervention training in individual health centers across six states, serving 175,000 women. At the request of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Upstream conducted training in Puerto Rico during the Zika crisis. And they're leading a one-of-a-kind state-wide project in Delaware (chosen because, at 57 percent, the state has one of the highest rates of unplanned pregnancies in the country), training the entire healthcare system — hospitals, public and private centers, etc. It's an exciting initiative and one that Edwards is looking forward to replicating.

"Women across Delaware can get any method of birth control through great counseling and with one visit. And we're taking that methodology and approach and expanding now into four other states."

With each intervention, another city, another community finds greater resilience, thanks to Upstream's ability to stem the domino effect resulting from unplanned pregnancies. But the goal for Upstream is even bigger. For Edwards and his team, the focus has always been national. "If we can really do this at scale, in 15 or 20 years we think unplanned pregnancy can be cut significantly," he says. "It's a chance to have one of the greatest public health wins over the last 50 years."

The win that J.J. Reidy is looking for is focused on public health too, except it's one that enables a strong, sustainable ecosystem. Reidy is the co-founder of Urban Pastoral, a Baltimore-based company that believes food has tremendous power as a community connector and economic driver. "And from a developer's perspective, it's the best sustainable placemaker on the planet, bar none," says Reidy, who sees his company as next-generation real estate developers, always mindful of their responsibility to public health.

Ultimately, he believes that where people live and how those places are designed have far-reaching consequences. "The environment in which you live and your zip code are key factors of your life span." With that in mind, Reidy and his co-founder wanted to create vertically integrated ecosystems — having an impact on food, housing, public health, development and employment — that closed the gap between production and consumption.

It started with a focus on agriculture and the hypothesis that demand for local produce far exceeds supply. They built a hydroponic farm in East Baltimore, an area 60 percent abandoned, thinking they'd sell hydroponic produce wholesale and then expand. It soon occurred to Reidy, however, that if he really wanted to make the project economically sustainable, he needed to add value to the products beyond the commodity level.

"I want to eliminate packaging, I want to eliminate distribution distance, and ultimately I want to sell to my own ecosystem entirely," he says. "I will only build enough agricultural infrastructure to support my front-end ecosystem to get out of a distribution model, 'cause I don't want to sell a commodity."

That's what brought Urban Pastoral to hospitality and the development of a vegetarian-vegan restaurant that sources many ingredients from its farm and biodynamic farms across Maryland. Housed in a

shared space for ten other food ventures in the fringe industrial neighborhood of Remington, west Baltimore, the eatery will soon be joined by Reidy's second restaurant, this one selling pizza.

The initiatives were helped along after a serendipitous introduction to a socially conscious real estate developer with a desire to help community. "You don't meet a lot of those," says Reidy. The developer doubled down on Remington, offering tons of incentives for new home buyers to build community out of industrial wasteland by building homes, apartments and, yes, restaurants. The communal opportunity allowed Reidy to open his hospitality concept for a quarter of the price of doing it on his own. It also de-risked the model by allowing him to open in a market with ten other concepts simultaneously, quickly establishing itself as a destination, not an island.

Of course, integral to building an ecosystem is job creation for those who need it most. Before you can tackle food access, you need to look at economic mobility, Reidy says. As such, Urban Pastoral hires local people, often those with barriers to employment, for each of its projects. Two employees work at the hydroponic farm and 15 in the restaurant; most have never worked with fresh produce before.

The next phase of the project is acquiring a 14,000-square-foot building and developing everything from ground up, incorporating it all into one development. "We're getting at social capital — what moves people forward in society — and the common tool is food," says Reidy, who adds that he needs to wear a variety of hats to build a vertically integrated system — farmer, restaurateur, real estate developer. But it all comes down to being a social entrepreneur.

It's also about challenging society's definition of a farm and who is a farmer. Reidy and his co-founder call their business a model for urban generation. It's part of a vision that began when, after a lot of international development work, they both came to realize that Baltimore's problems are the same as, or worse than, those of many developing-world countries. Frustrated with all the talk about impact with little done to achieve it, the duo realized that if they could build a successful model they could scale it and eventually work with governments across the world.

But that's for later. For now they're focused on Baltimore and the challenges it shares in common with other rustbelt cities, such as

Buffalo, Cleveland and Detroit. The common narrative among these post-industrial cities is the demise of manufacturing and the resulting intense unemployment, abandoned neighborhoods, poverty and crime. Big companies and investors don't typically care about these cities, he says.

But a combination of low rent, affordability, cultural diversity, a preponderance of artists and millennials, as well as a spirit of collaboration among those who remain, makes these cities attractive to entrepreneurs. As a result, many rustbelt cities are going through an entrepreneurial renaissance. "It is our dream to go to different countries, but there's a lot of work to do still here before we move elsewhere. We want to see this model through in this city," says Reidy.

Urban Pastoral exemplifies a common approach of many successful social entrepreneurs hard at work on their own city's renaissance. Their focus starts local. They turn their attention nationally and beyond only once they've established successful models with capacity to scale, if at all. One step at a time.

What Reidy also demonstrates is the rising interest among many in this field to look deeper. Not only to the domino effects of social challenges that we mentioned above but to the impact beneath the surface. For consumers and social entrepreneurs alike, a growing interest in supply chains is transforming the landscape of business and social ethics.

The mission of these forward-thinking entrepreneurs is to explore how things are made from the bottom up, determining whether and how they can be infused with a greater sense of ethical responsibility. It comes down to the idea that, if the supply chain is healthier from a social and environmental perspective, it will have its own domino effect, positively impacting how products are made, who are hired to make them and how those people are treated.

We'll explore this topic further when we profile social entrepreneurs like Nicole Rycroft, founder of Canopy, who's greening the publishing and fashion industries through an in-depth exploration and transformation of its supply chains. We'll also take a look at a company called Bureo, which makes skateboards and other products from recycled fishing nets, keeping the nylon plastic material out of the oceans.

And we'll meet Tal Dehtiar, whose shoe company, Oliberté, dives deep into its fair-trade mission, ensuring that everything — from how the shoes

are designed to where the leather is sourced and who he hires — can all be traced back to sustainability and an ethical approach to business. Dehtiar even built his factory in Addis Ababa, providing jobs to the local community, with the belief that only by creating self-reliance can we enable sustainable, long-term impact on the ground.

Of course, a discussion on long-term impact in this field would not be complete without mention of the growing number of social entrepreneurs who are adding policy change to their to-do lists. For example, frustrated by the diminished opportunities facing the formerly incarcerated, many are advocating for “Ban the Box,” a campaign aimed at persuading employers to remove the question about criminal records from their hiring applications.

There are numerous social entrepreneurs and organizations who, like Greyston, support policies that promote more inclusive workforces. And then there’s José Quiñonez, founder of Mission Asset Fund (MAF) — a San Francisco-based non-profit that helps low-income people improve their credit score through “lending circles” and other programs. Quiñonez played a significant role in getting Governor Jerry Brown to sign a bill making California the first state to regulate and recognize the importance of lending opportunities for people without credit histories. And the stories go on and on.

To be sure, we’re witnessing a new breed of entrepreneurs who are going beyond, tackling issues on a deeper level — even that of systems change. We’ll meet Rosanne Haggerty of Community Solutions in the next chapter, for example, who’s addressing homelessness by bringing together a diversity of sectors and players and examining their interplay for collaborative impact. The idea behind systems change is that, to truly solve social problems, we need to get to their root cause, which requires a look at a range of systems, sectors and their interrelationships.

To address a health issue, for example, means looking at access to health and the interplay between that access and the sociopolitical and cultural context within which it exists. It requires looking at all the sectors, all the stakeholders who impact the issue and the steps needed for real change to occur.

Whether working on a single issue at a time or adopting a larger, far-reaching lens of advocacy, policy and systems change, these entrepreneurs are establishing ventures with a comprehensive approach to

social impact, transforming their cities and the world in big ways. Their far-reaching influence may just prove to be the future of social entrepreneurship and business itself.