It may paraphrase my fellow co-founder here at The Democracy Collaborative, the political economist and historian Gar Alperovitz, that we are living in the prehistory of a period of fundamental change: the next American revolution. As our foundation’s tenth anniversary looms, we find ourselves at the moment of seemingly sudden transformation—such as the New Deal or the Civil Rights movement—where the proverbial ‘light bulb’ moment has occurred for people who prepared the foundation for this transformation. Those people quietly creating the next step—helping people see themselves in new ways, giving meaning and a feeling of purpose to their work—can be found in nearly every city. What they were building was, quite simply, the fabric of a new commons.

I come to you today to share a few highlights of the Collaborative over the past year. Our growing staff has been reaching more and more people in communities, getting the message that we need a new framework, aiming to help our nation better understand how to confront the undeniably deep challenges—economic, ecological, and political—facing our cities. With the launch of our major new initiative on “the next system,” we’re emerging a new paradigm for inclusive economic development in more than 30 cities. We’ve uncovered key levers to build grassroots power, and traced the rise of an emerging common sense—the tools of community wealth building. We’ve been deepening our analysis—with a research agenda that’s uncovering key levers to build grassroots power, and toward the rise of an emerging common sense. We’re building a new framework, helping to give our nation better understand how to confront the deep challenges—economics, ecological, and political—of building our commons.

I encourage you, with the help and tolerance we’ve prepared here, to look back with us on the impact we have had in the past year, and help us envision what we can do with your support—on the road to change in the years to come.

Ted Howard
President and Co-Founder
The Democracy Collaborative

democracycollaborative.org
community-wealth.org
thenextsystem.org

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