

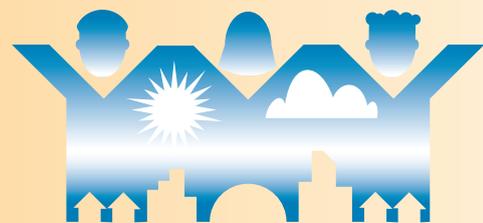


National League of Cities

Creating a Youth Master Plan

Issue #10

Action Kit for Municipal Leaders



Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

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Dear Municipal Leader:

This kit was created not just for you, but for the children, youth, and families in your community. It is based on the latest research and best practices from across the nation and offers a wide-ranging menu of opportunities for municipal leadership to make children, youth, and family issues a community-wide priority. Whether you are ready to launch a major initiative or are just getting started, the ideas in this kit will help you move forward.

NLC's ongoing series of action kits for municipal leaders, published by the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, addresses each of the Institute's five core program areas: education and afterschool; youth development; early childhood success; the safety of children and youth; and family economic success. The goal is to give you and other municipal leaders throughout the country the ideas and the tools you need to take action on these all-important issues for the future of our cities and towns.

Mayors and city councilmembers across America know that our communities' success depends on the health and well-being of the nation's children, youth, and families. Now is the time to act on this knowledge. As a municipal leader, you have the ability to focus the attention of your community on the needs of children, youth, and families. Working with your colleagues in local government, you can strengthen municipal policies, support effective programs, and bring diverse partners to the table in order to make things happen.

NLC and its Institute for Youth, Education, and Families are eager to assist you in these vital efforts. We encourage you to use this action kit to get started, and we hope you will contact us whenever we might be of assistance. Institute staff are readily available to provide additional information about the strategies highlighted in each of the action kits and to help you identify steps that make sense for your community.

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About the National League of Cities:

The National League of Cities is the nation's oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for more than 1,600 member cities and the 49 state municipal leagues, representing more than 218 million Americans.

About NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families:

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, a special entity within the National League of Cities, helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. NLC launched the Institute in January 2000 in recognition of the unique and influential roles that mayors, city councilmembers, and other local leaders can play in strengthening families and improving outcomes for children and youth.

As a national resource to cities and towns across America, the Institute provides guidance and assistance to municipal officials, compiles and disseminates information on promising strategies and best practices, builds networks of local officials working on similar issues and concerns, and conducts research on the key challenges facing municipalities. NLC's Council on Youth, Education, and Families guides and oversees the Institute's work.



What is a Youth Master Plan?

In every city and town, many stakeholders share responsibility for the safety, well-being, and healthy development of young people. School districts typically take the lead on education. City parks and recreation departments and nonprofit organizations provide afterschool opportunities. Police, fire, and health departments play roles in keeping youth healthy and safe. State and county agencies often are in charge of juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Finally, a host of nonprofit and other community groups – from local United Ways and faith communities to business, civic, and neighborhood associations and youth-serving organizations – all respond in important ways to the needs of children and youth.

This long list of potential stakeholders can reflect, at its best, a rich network of community supports for young people. However, without a shared vision or a collaborative structure to guide and assess local efforts, city and school leaders as well as their community partners risk wasting scarce resources or falling short of their goals by overlooking critical needs. The process of creating a youth master plan facilitates the development of sustained and coordinated strategies that yield large and lasting dividends and ensures that opportunities to improve outcomes for children and youth are not squandered.

The concept of a master plan – as both a product and a process – is a familiar one to city leaders, who frequently use such plans to guide and inform land use decisions and infrastructure investments across their communities.

As a product, youth master plans carry many different labels (including a children and youth agenda, city blueprint, or children's bill of rights), but they almost always offer a vision for the future, an assessment of current resources and needs, and a roadmap for moving forward that seeks to ensure accountability and sustainability over time. As a process, the development of a youth master plan advances a strategy in which municipal leaders – working together with school officials, and with input from young people as well as community organizations, parents, and other residents and stakeholders – craft a comprehensive and effective agenda for children and youth.

This action kit, based on the diverse experiences of cities that have created such plans, contains advice, ideas, and city examples to help municipal and school leaders tackle this important challenge.

In creating a youth master plan, communities seek to effectively coordinate the services, supports, and opportunities that youth need to thrive and develop a shared framework that ensures their healthy development. Achieving these objectives reduces fragmentation among individual agencies and organizations that are addressing specific issues, helps cities and schools make choices in allocating resources among competing priorities, and establishes a sustainable long-term strategy for improving outcomes for children and youth.

The development of a youth master plan can also transform how the community perceives – and how cities and schools work with and for – young people. By involving youth in the local decision-making processes that affect their lives, they come to be seen more clearly as valuable assets and partners working to improve the quality of life in their schools and neighborhoods. Their involvement helps city and school officials learn more about the real concerns, hopes, and struggles that are part of young people’s daily lives. Youth engagement leads to more effective policies and programs while also building and strengthening the community’s next generation of leaders.

Inviting school officials, parents, community organizations, and other partners into the youth master planning process further strengthens the ability of municipal leaders to understand local needs, set priorities, and develop strategies that drive future progress. Stronger partnerships and enhanced communication lead not only to broader civic engagement, but also to an alignment of resources that cuts duplication, identifies and eliminates barriers to services and opportunities, generates cost savings, and increases the return on investment for local programs.

The benefits of a youth master plan are greatest when cities, schools, young people, and other key stakeholders work together to lay the foundation of success not only for children and youth, but for the community as a whole. Young people who grow up with the requisite skills and social attributes for success in school, work, and life form the backbone of communities that strive for an educated, high-wage workforce, a vibrant local economy, safe and stable neighborhoods, and strong, healthy families. By charting a path to this goal, a youth master plan can yield lasting benefits not only for young people but also for municipal governments, schools, and the communities they serve.

Many cities across the United States have chosen to develop youth master plans. The following suggestions, drawn from their experiences, can help municipal leaders get started with this effective and cutting-edge strategy:

Commit to a comprehensive planning process.

Youth master plans take many forms, but the process for creating effective plans for children and youth is rooted in five key elements: engaging all stakeholders; forging a common vision; developing comprehensive strategies; sharing accountability; and coordinating initiatives. These components, which are also reflected in the Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21™ initiative and other strategic planning efforts, help cities and schools move beyond the knee-jerk response of creating a new program for every new problem and help them see the big picture into which all the pieces fit.

Work collaboratively with school leaders.

City leaders often find that collaborations with school districts are one of the most important and fruitful parts of the youth master planning process, particularly as the partnership deepens and joint efforts grow over time. When mayors and other municipal officials reach out to engage school leaders, they also send a strong signal that schools are not "in this alone" when trying to improve academic achievement or foster other positive outcomes for children and youth.

Effectively engage young people.

Engaging a diverse group of youth with different perspectives is as vital as having a broad range of adult stakeholders participating in the process. Youth can contribute to all of the various aspects of the youth master planning process, but both young people and the adults with whom they interact often need some training or support to ensure that youth voices are valued, encouraged, and reflected in the community's final plan.

Envision a plan that can guide future action.

Thinking at the outset about what the youth master plan will look like – what topics it will cover and how its findings and recommendations will be presented – can be very helpful in focusing all participants on the task that lies ahead. Developing and documenting clear goals, action steps, and specific timelines for action heightens the plan's impact and prospects for success.

Lay the groundwork for sustainability from the beginning.

The long-term success of the youth master plan hinges on generating support across the entire community to implement and sustain the plan. Launching a public outreach campaign, celebrating early victories, and making plans to collect data on key outcomes can help build a sense of ownership and commitment within both the city and the school district, as well as among the full range of key stakeholders concerned about children and youth.

Five key elements form the backbone of an effective youth master planning process. Each component is an integral part of the planning effort, and when neglected or ignored such efforts often falter.

Engage key stakeholders throughout the community.

Schools and young people are two essential partners for city leaders in developing a youth master plan. In every community, however, a diverse range of other agencies, organizations, and parents have a stake in the well-being of young people and an ability to contribute to the success of the planning effort. In the City of Durango and La Plata County, Colo., officials set up a Web site to continuously engage community members and stakeholders throughout the process, while city leaders in Pomona, Calif., involved residents in a series of community forums.

Establish and promote a shared vision for youth.

The mayor can play a unique role in developing and promoting a shared community vision for children and youth. A strong vision statement conveys urgency, is linked to a measurable set of indicators, and resonates with the community's broader hopes and concerns. The vision statements in Santa Fe, N.M., ("All children deserve a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment in which to grow.") and Denver, Colo., ("Denver youth are prepared for learning, work, and life.") promote messages of inclusiveness and define shared priorities that are central to each city's master plan.

Assess needs and design comprehensive strategies.

The process of moving from a common vision to cross-cutting strategies for youth requires an evaluation of what is working (i.e., strengths/assets on which to build) and what is not (i.e., biggest problems and challenges). Focus groups, community

meetings, surveys, data collection and analysis, and community youth mapping are a few methods of generating an initial needs assessment with all key players at the table. NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth* offers a valuable framework for assessing needs and a rich array of action steps to consider when developing strategies for moving forward.

Create a framework for shared accountability.

Keeping key stakeholders at the table after strategies have been crafted is essential in order to ensure that new programs and policies are effectively implemented. A framework for shared accountability, when developed by these stakeholders, specifies the roles and responsibilities of each major partner. Over the long term, shared accountability hinges upon success in setting clear benchmarks and agreeing at the outset upon consequences when those benchmarks are not met. Stressing connections between new strategies and each partner's existing priorities can further strengthen their commitment to collaborative initiatives.

Coordinate city, school, and other community efforts.

Many cities have established some type of formal coordinating body to sustain coalitions and keep critical partnerships on track. Identifying organizations and individuals that have the capacity, motivation, and standing in the community to monitor and report on progress is an important element of this work. Coordinating entities can also promote better alignment of current programs, policies, and systems. For instance, a two-tiered Mayor's Leadership Committee and Planning Team in Charleston, S.C., plays this role, linking city and school initiatives while also engaging youth, county, and other community leaders.

The vital role of schools in shaping the lives of young people makes city-school collaboration a central aspect of any youth master planning strategy. Although municipal leaders in most cities do not have direct authority over school districts, they can partner with school officials to provide resources and services that support learning and enhance youth development. The following steps will help city and school leaders work together to create and sustain a youth master plan:

Establish strong lines of communication.

Consistent communication between municipal and school leaders is a first step in advancing a city-school partnership and collaborating on a youth master plan. Regular meetings between the mayor and/or city council, school board, and school superintendent can cultivate supportive relationships, reduce tensions or turf battles, and build political will for facilitating coordination of services. In Claremont, Calif., school district and city leaders instituted a “six pack” meeting, in which the mayor, mayor pro tem, school board president and vice president, city manager, and school superintendent meet on a regular basis to discuss the youth master plan and the status of the city’s young people.

Work together to engage hard-to-reach youth and parents.

While mayors and other local elected officials have a powerful platform to command the public’s attention, schools are well-positioned to directly engage both youth and parents – two key sets of voices in a youth master planning process. In neighborhoods with few services for young people and high levels of need, schools are often among the few institutions with direct and immediate access to children, youth, and their parents, who can better inform planning efforts.

Construct a fuller picture of the needs of children, youth, and families.

School officials can help the entire community understand the needs of young people and their families and the resources available to meet those needs by sharing data on student and

family characteristics, achievement levels, health and nutritional status, and school expenditures in key areas. All of this information can be used to ensure that a plan of action is well targeted and addresses underlying needs.

Ensure that school priorities are reflected in the final plan.

Whether it is classroom instruction, school safety, dropout and truancy rates, teacher quality, or student wellness, successful youth master plans reflect the various priorities on which schools are already focused. Some municipal leaders have used the federal requirement for school districts to implement school wellness policies as one point of entry for providing assistance and beginning discussions about common goals for young people – and there are countless other possibilities.

Seek joint approval by the city council and school board.

The adoption of a joint resolution by the city council and school board in support of a youth master plan sends a strong message to the community about their collective commitment to children and youth. Prospects for an enthusiastic endorsement of the plan are greatest when city council and school board members have been involved throughout the process as members of the planning team or as strategic partners in one or more issue areas.

In developing its youth master plan, the City of Lakewood, Ohio, created a Blue Ribbon Task Force that included the mayor, school superintendent, city council, youth leaders, and civic volunteers. This partnership led to a survey of high school students to gain their input into the planning process.

Youth serve as important resources and partners in any effective youth master planning process. Meaningful youth engagement requires concerted effort and a willingness to challenge long-held preconceptions. Deep collaboration and shared decision-making authority between youth and adults are often new experiences for everyone involved, and may directly challenge prevailing views of young people as dependent or immature. The following action steps will help city and school leaders elicit the insights and contributions of youth that are critical to the success of the planning effort:

Engage youth in every aspect of the planning process.

Youth voices can enrich discussions and improve outcomes at each stage of the process, from crafting a vision to identifying and implementing strategies for moving forward. Many cities have found the perspectives of young people invaluable as the community assesses its current resources, needs, and opportunities. In Spokane, Wash., the Youth Commission launched a youth mapping project in which high school students conducted 260 phone interviews and surveyed 300 high school freshmen to better understand teenagers' needs and perspectives. Through this process, youth participants gained practical research skills while also generating a wealth of new data to inform future discussions.

Appoint youth to leadership roles.

A first step toward meaningful youth voice is to appoint young people to the team that is charged with developing the youth master plan. Choosing at least two youth to be on the planning team will make each young person more comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions; peer support puts youth at ease and bolsters their confidence. Offering leadership roles to youth on the planning team is an even more powerful way to share decision-making responsibilities between adults and youth. In Santa Clarita, Calif., youth played an active role on the steering committee, while youth led the process of developing the Portland, Ore., Children's Bill of Rights.

Train youth and adult leaders.

Both youth and adults will benefit from youth-adult partnership training that teaches them to adjust their working styles for maximum cooperation. Adults will need to avoid jargon and remind themselves that youth are equal partners, while youth may need to overcome their own preconceptions of adults and learn business meeting procedures. For example, youth and adult members appointed to the city's boards and commissions in Nashville, Tenn., have received training to help them work together more effectively.

Utilize youth voices to raise awareness about the plan.

One effective way to generate publicity and recruit other participants in the planning process is to enlist young people as key messengers to local leaders and media outlets. When youth speak from experience about the youth master planning process, they can be powerful advocates. Youth can speak about the plan at city council meetings or community events. For instance, youth in Portland, Ore., regularly update local elected officials on their progress in implementing the Children's Bill of Rights.

City leaders in Thousand Oaks, Calif., decided that young people would lead the development of the city's youth master plan. As part of their strategy, municipal officials appointed two youth from the city's youth commission and worked with schools, which recruited two student representatives from each school in the city to serve on the planning team. When the planning team's leadership group was formed, it was composed of an equal number of youth and adults.

At the conclusion of the planning process, city leaders – working in collaboration with school officials, youth, parents, and community partners – typically highlight major findings and decisions by publishing a youth master plan. The final form of this document varies greatly across communities. Some cities even create multiple versions, including a condensed version or executive summary as well as a more comprehensive document, in order to reach diverse audiences. Common components of a youth master plan include:

❖ *A clear vision statement*

A shared vision statement drives the development of a youth master plan. When concise and compelling, it provides a common language that lends itself to frequent, flexible use by all stakeholders, and it is often placed prominently in the plan. For example, the City of Brighton, Colorado’s vision of “Brighton, a community where all children, youth, and families thrive” appears at the beginning of the plan and is placed in the header of each page.

❖ *A summary of the planning process*

Many plans describe the diverse range of stakeholders engaged in the planning effort, the series of activities that supported the development of the plan (e.g., team meetings, community forums, surveys, focus groups, and interviews), and the time period over which planning took place. Additionally, plans may identify the youth development frameworks – such as the Search Institute’s Developmental Assets or Communities that Care’s Social Development Strategy – that informed their process and describe how they determined the scope of their plan (i.e., neighborhood, city, or county level).

❖ *Key findings on community strengths and unmet needs*

Every plan uses data to illustrate the community’s strengths and identify unmet needs. More than 130 sites have implemented Community Youth Mapping, a youth-led canvassing strategy developed by the Academy for Educational Development’s (AED) Center for Youth Development and Policy Research to help communities identify baseline data on places to go, things to do, and priority issues for children and youth. Several cities have partnered with local universities to help gather baseline data. In Diamond Bar, Calif., planning team members gathered information from census data, workshops, phone surveys,

stakeholder interviews, and the California Healthy Kids Survey to develop a community needs assessment.

❖ *Major goals or targets*

Goals can be organized by target population (young children, school-age, young adult), systems and supports (education, health, economic well-being), infrastructure (coordination and sustainability of efforts, fostering youth voice), or may cut across categories. Under each broad goal, specific strategies or action steps should be described in greater detail. For example, the Charleston Youth Master Plan has seven goals with specific corresponding strategies, including one goal focused on health and wellness, which includes a call for setting up a health clinic in every school.

❖ *A plan of action to achieve these goals*

Creating the youth master plan document is not the culmination of work, but the starting point of a community’s comprehensive efforts for children and youth. An important component in a youth master plan is the documentation of next steps, including a delineation of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders charged with implementation, an outline of the organizational structure(s) that will guide ongoing work, and a method for evaluating the plan. Setting priorities, using timelines with target implementation dates, and developing clear benchmarks for measuring success in each area can also enhance the plan’s effectiveness.

In Newport News, Va., the planning team reviewed findings from a developmental asset survey of students, youth mapping report, America’s Promise Report, census data, and other community indicators to determine the most pressing issues facing youth. The team decided on five primary goals, specified objectives and strategies for each goal, and delineated roles and responsibilities for the Commission on Youth, Office of Youth Development, community organizations, and other youth-serving agencies.

The long-term success of a youth master plan hinges on generating support for its implementation among city and school leaders as well as other stakeholders involved in the planning team. The plan will be most effective when it is integrated into the work of all partners as a living document, one that informs and guides youth investments and programming. In order to ensure that the plan continues to shape local youth work, city leaders can:

Publicize and market the plan.

Cities can ensure that the final plan is accessible to all citizens by celebrating and publicizing its completion through media events, town hall meetings, presentations before elected bodies, and informational sessions with neighborhood groups and associations. A public relations campaign with a clear message can reinforce these efforts. Finally, city officials can use earned media opportunities (e.g., letters to the editor, press releases, kick-off events) to keep the youth master plan in the public eye. In Diamond Bar, Calif., youth and adult leaders worked together to create the Diamond Bar 4 Youth master plan. Youth led efforts to hold an art contest for high school students to design the plan's logo as a way to promote the plan, and the contest's winner was publicly recognized at a city council meeting.

Designate a lead agency to coordinate implementation.

Designating a municipal or community agency to guide the plan's implementation will help ensure that all partners are working together effectively. In Minneapolis, Minn., the Youth Coordinating Board, an existing partnership of governmental entities with jurisdiction over children and youth issues in Minneapolis, oversees the implementation of the city's Children and Youth Agenda. In Savannah, Ga., the Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority, a community collaborative, is charged with implementing the city's strategic plan for youth.

Build support among community leaders.

As the youth master plan is implemented, it is vital that a broad range of city and community leaders lend their support and blend the plan's strategies into the way their organizations do business. In Omaha, the mayor, assistant school superintendent, and vice chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center lead the task forces implementing the city's Building Bright Futures plan, ensuring continued high-level support.

Measure progress over time.

By establishing a process for ongoing data collection, the planning team can assess the status of child and family well-being and measure the effectiveness of each strategy delineated

in the plan. Planning teams have drawn on numerous sources of community-level data to track progress, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT Data Book and online Data Center, city, county, and state governments, and local school districts and police departments. A children's report card, like the one used in Philadelphia, can serve as a useful tool to hold all stakeholders accountable for implementation of the plan. When Claremont, Calif., officials updated the city's youth master plan in 2007, they conducted a comprehensive review of their previous plan from 1995 and created a "Scorecard for Indicators of Progress" that tracked efforts to meet the specific goals and action steps in the original plan. This scorecard helped lay the groundwork for the city's ongoing evaluation of its current plan.

Celebrate early victories.

By focusing initially on goals that may be easier to achieve, the planning team can demonstrate tangible results on behalf of children, youth, and families. Celebrating these early victories will help generate and sustain momentum and maintain support from the city, school, and community leaders taking part in the planning process. Cities can take advantage of periodic opportunities to recognize and celebrate success, from holding a press conference to announce the opening of a new youth program space or afterschool center, inviting local media to visit an expanded youth program, or honoring team members who worked collaboratively to achieve important milestones.

The City of Hampton, Va., identified the Hampton Coalition for Youth as primarily responsible for oversight of the youth master plan, but several other city agencies and community organizations were actively engaged in the implementation process, including the city planning department, Hampton Youth Commission, and Alternatives, Inc. Special efforts were made to publicize the plan, including the printing of posters, generation of positive local and national media coverage, and meetings throughout Hampton neighborhoods to introduce the plan to all members of the community. Additionally, Hampton's Youth Commission regularly champions the youth component of the city's comprehensive plan in meetings with local elected officials and other residents.

Brighton, Colorado (Pop. 29,750)

Early in its planning process, the City of Brighton adopted the seven action areas in NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth* as a framework for their youth master plan. A planning consultant worked with the city to form planning committees composed of city and school officials, youth, and a range of community residents for these seven issue areas. Each committee gathered extensive community data, conducted focus groups and interviews, surveyed parents of young children, and partnered with the local school district to distribute the Search Institute's Survey of Student Resources and Assets to a random sample of Brighton students. After analyzing the data, the planning committees worked with city staff and the Brighton Youth Commission to finalize the goals of the youth master plan before presenting it to a joint meeting of the city council and school board.

Charleston, South Carolina (Pop. 107,845)

In October 2005, Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley appointed a youth master planning team to develop a countywide plan, gaining support from the mayors of North Charleston, Mount Pleasant, and 14 other municipalities in Charleston County. This team of city, school, nonprofit, and faith community leaders trained facilitators to conduct nine youth and seven adult focus groups and worked with the school district to survey 900 youth in the county. The team used this community data to create the seven goals of their plan. Following the development of the plan, an implementation team was formed with 21 representatives from the city and county governments, school district, libraries, and mental health agencies to advance these key priorities. The team has partnered with local college students to develop a marketing campaign that will raise awareness and support for the plan.

Claremont, California (Pop. 37,141)

The City of Claremont, Calif., created its youth master plan in 1995 and has since updated the plan in 2007. The initial decision to create the plan was driven by budget shortfalls in the school district and the city's recreation services, which resulted in a reduction in youth services. The city updated the plan in 2007 as the city and school district experienced another period of budget cuts as well as changes in demographics, duplication of services, and concerns about the relevancy and accessibility of existing youth programs. In 1995, the process involved 18 months of surveying the community with initial support from a facilitator to identify ten specific goals, an implementation strategy, and a monitoring system. The jointly-funded process to revise the plan created an evaluation process sustained by the

city, the school district, and service providers. In 2007, the city council and board of education established the Committee on Youth and Family to facilitate implementation, coordination, and evaluation of the plan.

Hampton, Virginia (Pop. 145,017)

Led by the mayor's decision to make youth a top priority, the Hampton City Council convened city and community leaders in the early 1990s to develop a plan for ensuring that youth become productive members of the community and workforce. Through extensive outreach, more than 5,000 youth and adults were involved in focus groups and surveys, which led to the framework of their youth master plan. The plan was incorporated into the larger Hampton Community Plan, which included a youth component written entirely by young people. Hampton youth continue to be engaged in community decision-making as appointees to the city's youth commission, other city boards and commissions, and the city planning department, which hires two youth to annually update the youth component of the community plan and to work closely with the Hampton Youth Commission.

Indio, California (Pop. 76,896)

In 2004, Indio officials realized that the city was experiencing rapid growth and changing youth demographics. In response, the city council created a youth master planning committee that included youth from the outset. After two years of outreach, a survey of 1,600 youth regarding community issues, and roughly 250 meetings with different community and faith-based groups, the planning committee established five focus areas for the plan: afterschool, education, health, parks and youth facilities, and transportation. They then conducted a two-day retreat for 200 key leaders of the planning process to discuss challenges and action steps in each area. One outcome of these discussions was a change to the local park system, in which the city created a new teen center, built two new parks, and renovated six other parks. The city council approved the finalized plan in December 2005.

Minneapolis, Minnesota (Pop. 372,833)

The Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board (YCB), an intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting the healthy development of Minneapolis' children and youth through collaborative action and policy alignment, initially created a 20-year strategic plan in 1987. The plan led to several effective initiatives but after a few years lost momentum. The arrival of a new school superintendent presented YCB with an opportunity to revisit the plan in 2006 and create a youth master plan. The Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21™ framework guided the vision statement and long-term goals of the plan, dubbed the Children and Youth Agenda 2020. Youth were seen as critical



partners in the process, in which YCB partnered with a community organization to develop a youth resource mapping component. The city used a youth town hall forum to celebrate the completion of the plan, which drew the attendance of many local leaders.

Omaha, Nebraska (Pop. 419,545)

Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey and other community leaders commissioned SRI International to examine ways in which the city could ensure that all local youth receive the education, training, and support they need. This research resulted in a Master Plan for Investing in Children and Youth, published in April 2007. The plan focuses on gaps in services and recommends specific initiatives targeting early childhood, education, afterschool and mentoring, truancy reduction, behavioral health, and higher education. The plan also identifies four cross-cutting themes: improving information systems, strengthening and leveraging existing capacity, coordinating across agencies and service providers, and ensuring that all youth have access to mentors and professional counselors.

Portland, Oregon (Pop. 537,081)

With support from Mayor Tom Potter and former County Chair Diane Linn, the City of Portland and Multnomah County developed a Children and Youth Bill of Rights. Over the course of more than one year, municipal staff and community volunteers worked with a core group of youth in planning a process for drafting the document. This process engaged more than 3,000 youth in writing the document and gaining input from classrooms, community events, and forums asking youth about their rights, which the youth-adult planning team sorted into six "articles." The document was "ratified" by more than 500 youth at a Convention on the Rights of Children and Youth. The adults planned the convention logistics with final approval from the youth, who were responsible for drafting the Bill of Rights. Youth also led efforts to educate city councilmembers and county board members and successfully advocated for the city's and county's adoption of the Bill of Rights. The youth then created an action plan that involves working within the city and county governments on an implementation strategy.

Roanoke, Virginia (Pop. 91,552)

With test scores and graduation rates lagging behind state averages, the Roanoke City Council adopted a three-year youth master plan in June 2006. City administrators formed a task force of city councilmembers, the city manager, school officials, neighborhood representatives, and members of the youth commission to spearhead what was designated as the V.O.Y.C.E. (Valuing our Youth through Community Engagement) Initiative. This group identified nine focus areas of which four were designated by the city council as priorities. The Youth Comprehensive Plan now serves as a guiding framework for the

implementation of new programs by youth service providers throughout the city, with the youth services division in the parks and recreation department serving as the leading agency.

Santa Clarita, California (Pop. 168,008)

As a new city incorporated in 1987, Santa Clarita has a history of focusing on its growing youth population. In 1992, municipal leaders convened 50 stakeholders, including several young people, to form a youth master planning committee. The city published its first strategic plan in 1996, which established a consensus on youth issues and needs. The plan led to the creation of a youth center to provide young people with a safe place to go after school. Another result of the plan was the creation of Visions in Progress, a group of 30 youth who advise all city departments and the city council. These youth are empowered to take issues back to their schools, get peer input, and relay it to councilmembers. In 2005, the city updated its youth master plan after youth leaders reached out to students in elementary, junior high, and high school.

Savannah, Georgia (Pop. 127,889)

Savannah was the first city to adopt NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth*, which has served as a foundation for the city's planning efforts. The Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority (CYFA), a collaborative, countywide organization of partners that includes all youth agencies, the school district, county health department, juvenile justice department, United Way, and others, produces an annual profile using the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT model as a barometer of the status of the city's youth. As an effective resource in the community for youth, the city has established a strong partnership with CYFA and has charged them with using the framework from the platform to guide the measurement of progress for and implementation of a youth master plan.

Thousand Oaks, California (Pop. 124,207)

The City of Thousand Oaks, in collaboration with school district officials and service agencies, underwent a comprehensive, youth-led, four-year process to develop its youth master plan, which helped the city expand services and opportunities for youth input. In the early phases of the work, the city used an outside facilitator, whose neutral presence brought credibility to the process. The planning team's efforts to build consensus helped all stakeholders draw conclusions from data collection efforts to finalize the plan, which was published in 2002. More than 2,000 individuals contributed to the needs assessment by participating in the planning committee, a focus group, or a survey of middle and high school youth.

Getting Started: Questions to Consider in Creating a Youth Master Plan

- 1) What planning efforts already undertaken by your community can serve as building blocks for a youth master planning process?
- 2) Does your community have a common vision for children, youth, and families?
- 3) How can city leaders engage school officials in a joint planning effort?
- 4) What other stakeholders need to be around the table for the planning process?
- 5) In what ways do agencies working with children, youth, and families collaborate and share information?
- 6) Does the community view youth as participants in the process? What opportunities are there for youth to play leadership roles?
- 7) What systems for data collection in your community can guide planning and implementation?
- 8) What services and resources are available to support children, youth, and families in your community?
- 9) What high-priority needs for children, youth, and families are not being met in your community?
- 10) What funding sources can your community tap to support the creation and implementation of a youth master plan?

Examples of Completed Youth Master Plans

The following cities have developed youth master plans that are available online at www.nlc.org/iyef.

Brighton, Colorado
 Charleston, South Carolina
 Claremont, California
 Durango/La Plata County, Colorado
 Hampton, Virginia
 La Canada Flintridge, California
 Lakewood, Ohio
 Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Newport News, Virginia
 Omaha, Nebraska
 Pomona, California
 Portland, Oregon
 San José, California
 Santa Clarita, California
 Santa Fe, New Mexico
 Sierra Madre, California
 Thousand Oaks, California
 Vacaville, California
 Virginia Beach, Virginia

Resources

NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. The Institute has produced a variety of resources for municipal officials on youth civic engagement, including an action kit on *Promoting Youth Participation*. In addition, NLC's *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth* outlines the essential tasks necessary for sustained progress on behalf of children, youth, and families and provides a set of action steps and ideas for getting started in seven areas: early childhood development, education and afterschool, health and safety, youth in transition, family economic success, youth development, and neighborhoods and community. Many cities have adopted the platform and used it as an assessment tool or framework for creating a youth master plan. www.nlc.org/iyef

Academy for Educational Development's (AED) Center for Youth Development (CYD) engages youth as global citizens advancing innovative and authentic solutions for the success of all youth. CYD leads the Community YouthMapping strategy (www.communityyouthmapping.org) and builds the capacity of the afterschool field through the afterschool portal (www.afterschool.org). AED has over 30 years' experience in youth development – ranging from youth leadership camps to cross-conflict dialogue to job training in employable skills. In the past four years alone, AED has implemented 85 different youth-related projects. Central to AED's organizational philosophy of youth development is the strong belief that youth, when given adequate opportunities for positive involvement, can be critical to ensuring long-term stability, producing effective outcomes within communities, and offering protection from future conflicts. Forty-six years old, independent, and nonprofit, AED is committed to solving critical social problems throughout the world through education, youth development, research, training, citizen advocacy, community participation, and innovative program design. <http://cydpr.aed.org>

American Association of School Administrators (AASA) is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders across the United States. AASA has championed efforts to improve the lives of children in public schools by working on issues impacting the health and success of youth for over 30 years. AASA has also partnered with the Forum for Youth Investment to bring schools and communities together to build a common vision, improve programs, and increase coordination to ensure that young people have the necessary school and community supports they need to succeed and thrive. By taking the Ready by 21™ School/Community Challenge, four communities are committing to create and strengthen school-community partnerships using a "big picture" approach to identify youth needs, community supports, and leadership responses. www.aasa.org

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest multi-sector collaborative dedicated to the well-being of children and youth. Alliance



partners include corporations, nonprofit service organizations, foundations, policymakers, advocacy organizations, and faith groups that work collaboratively to ensure that America's young people receive Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education, and opportunities to help others. Through the power of partnerships, the America's Promise Alliance raises awareness, serves as a catalyst for action, and engages in bipartisan advocacy, and has set an ambitious goal to bring more of the Five Promises to 15 million disadvantaged young people in the next five years. Recognizing the overarching importance of a high school diploma, the Alliance will sponsor Dropout Prevention Summits in all 50 states and at least 50 cities by 2010. These summits will bring together local leaders to develop and implement plans to strengthen schools and provide young people with the wraparound supports they need to graduate prepared for college, work, and life. www.americaspromise.org

The Finance Project is a nonprofit policy research, technical assistance, and information organization created to help improve outcomes for children, families, and communities nationwide. The Finance Project helps leaders make smart investment decisions, develop sound financing strategies, and build solid partnerships that benefit children, families, and communities. The Finance Project publications on *Sustaining Comprehensive Community Initiatives* and *Thinking Broadly: Financing Strategies for Comprehensive Child and Family Initiatives* provide community leaders with resources and assistance for finding and maintaining financial support for comprehensive planning initiatives, such as youth master plans. www.financeproject.org

Forum for Youth Investment is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are ready for college, work, and life. The Ready by 21™ Challenge calls on states and communities to broaden definitions of what it means for youth to be ready, for schools and communities to be supportive, and for all leaders to be engaged. The Forum's five-year goal is for a critical mass of leaders in every state to ensure that all young people have the supports and opportunities they need to be well-prepared. The Forum also offers a range of helpful publications and resources for understanding the different aspects of creating a youth master plan. www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

Innovation Center for Community Youth Development is a partner with the National 4-H Council and helps sponsor the Council's "At the Table" initiative, which encourages youth involvement in community decision-making. The Innovation Center's network of youth and adult staff and partners seek, test, and promote innovative concepts and practices in order to provide cutting-edge tools for youth workers in diverse settings. The Center's *Building Community: A Toolkit for Youth and Adults in Charting Assets and Creating Change* gives users what they need to create youth-adult partnerships, identify community assets, create a community vision and action plan, and mobilize local change. www.theinnovationcenter.org

Onsite-Insights (O/I) is a planning consultant firm dedicated to working with cities to create youth master plans. The two founders were among the original architects of the Hampton youth master planning process. O/I advises city leaders on effective strategies for youth civic

engagement, and has worked with a number of cities on youth master planning efforts. In addition, O/I has used NLC's *City Platform to Strengthen Families and Improve Outcomes for Children and Youth* as a framework for guiding planning processes in Brighton and La Plata County, Colo. www.onsiteinsights.com

Search Institute is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities. At the heart of the Institute's work is the framework of 40 Developmental Assets, which enumerates the positive experiences and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. The 40 Developmental Assets have guided youth master planning processes in many cities, helping them design and administer surveys to collect relevant information and measure progress over time. www.search-institute.org

Youth on Board trains young people and adults in the hard and soft skills they need to work together as peers. The organization's philosophy is that developing agendas and budgets requires dealing with attitudes and relationships. Youth on Board provides consulting and training for organizations and municipalities that are interested in involving youth in decision-making. Both adults and youth facilitate these training sessions. Topics include "Understanding Adulthood – Looking at Barriers that Inhibit Youth Involvement" and "Recruiting Young People for Your Project." Youth on Board offers cities helpful tools to facilitate youth-adult communication and partnership throughout the youth master planning process. www.youthonboard.org

Youth Development Strategies, Inc., is a nonprofit research, evaluation, and technical assistance organization that helps cities and communities improve long-term outcomes for youth. YDSI works with local organizations and institutions (e.g., city agencies, schools, and afterschool programs) to design, implement, and evaluate strategies based on their youth development approach to working with young people – building on their strengths, rather than focusing on their weaknesses. The organization's work focuses on three types of activities: conducting and disseminating research supporting the use of a developmental approach to serving youth; evaluating the effectiveness of organizations and institutions in helping youth attain desired outcomes; and developing and providing technical assistance and tools to measure and improve the quality of services to youth. www.ydsi.org

Leon T. Andrews, program director for youth development at NLC's Institute for Youth, Education, and Families, served as the primary author of this action kit. Rebecca Makar, the Institute's former program associate, led early research on city efforts and produced initial drafts for the action kit. Michael Karpman provided editorial assistance and Kate Sandel generated additional city examples and supplementary materials for the final version. Finally, Clifford Johnson, the Institute's executive director, provided overall editorial direction and Alexander Clarke was responsible for the action kit's design and layout.

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