NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

CENTER FOR CITY SOLUTIONS

LIVABLE COMMUNITIES:

INNOVATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE CITIES

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people. NLC works to strengthen local leadership, influence federal policy and drive innovative solutions.

NLC's Center for City Solutions provides research and analysis on key topics and trends important to cities, creative solutions to improve the quality of life in communities, inspiration and ideas for local officials to use in tackling tough issues, and opportunities for city leaders to connect with peers, share experiences and learn about innovative approaches in cities.

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Introduction

This report seeks to organize the concept of community livability by providing a framework through which to consider cities and their policies, and to arm policymakers with a tool by which they can assess the scalability of different approaches.

There exists a broad social movement to create livable communities for all people, yet confusion remains about what "livable" really means.

Livability can encompass everything from planting street trees to revolutionizing public transportation. A livable community can be one that cultivates leadership everywhere, creates a sense of community, connects people and resources, practices ongoing dialogue, embraces diversity, operationalizes racial justices and shapes its future.

Many of these characteristics are hard to measure, making it difficult for researchers and practitioners to provide useful policy recommendations with livability as a goal. How can we objectively assess whether a certain policy "creates a sense of community"? If we cannot define what it means for a place to "practice ongoing dialogue," then how can we determine whether it is truly livable?

But not all the characteristics are as nebulous. Two lend themselves well to quantitative measurement: "Connects people and resources" and "embraces diversity." Socioeconomic and demographic data are particularly helpful here and allow us to better understand the extent to which places are truly livable.

Categorizing cities based on the extent to which they embrace diversity and connect people and resources helps us identify those communities prioritizing livability. This categorization also assists in lifting up cases of communities that are striving to become more livable. Grouping communities with similar economic conditions, similar demographic characteristics and similar public policy choices ultimately yields three categories of cities: 1) those initializing livability, 2) those pursuing livability for all populations, and 3) those activating existing livability policies.

There are lessons to be learned from the policy choices made by each of the cities highlighted in this report, regardless of where a city falls in the extent of its livability, and particularly in light of the economic and health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Scalability Assessment tool developed and applied to policy examples provided in this report makes it possible, at a glance, to determine the extent to which a certain policy can be implemented or adopted under different conditions.

The "Innovative and Equitable Policies and Practices for Livable Communities" section of this report details wide-ranging policies — from some addressing housing or transportation access, to others bolstering the health of residents or stimulating community engagement — that each seek to do one thing: Improve the city by making it more livable for all of its residents.

Defining Livable: Innovative, Equitable and Inclusive

The definition and framework for assessing the livability of cities through this report is rooted in the work of the Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities, a national network of more than 1,000 local, state and national organizations, collaborative partnerships, and citizens focused on improving the economic, social, and physical well-being of people and places. The coalition seeks to uplift the values of livable communities at all levels and highlights certain principals as fundamental to livability: A shared vision for community values, improved quality of life for all residents, diverse citizen participation and widespread community ownership, a focus on "systems change," and the development of local assets and resources.

We expand this definition of "livable" to include the words "innovative," "equitable" and "inclusive."

Livable communities are constantly evolving and changing to support generations of all ages. As they do, livable communities recognize the interconnectedness of issues facing their city, town or village and how every **innovative** policy and practice works together to support diverse communities, individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum, and generations of all ages. Each policy and practice highlighted in this report furthers livability and is consistent with this working definition because it is:

- Forward-Thinking
- Adaptable
- Scalable

Along with being innovative, the policies and practices highlighted in this report are also **equitable** and **inclusive**. Livable communities recognize that not every resident has been treated justly and fairly, and that not every policy and practice in its history has been inclusive and intersectional. Recognizing these shortfalls, livable cities implement equitable and inclusive policies and practices that actively address disparities, seek to rectify historic inequities, and intend to meet the needs of the community's most vulnerable populations. Policies and practices highlighted in the later section of this report were selected because they are:

- Operationalizing Racial Equity
- Community-Focused
- Collaborative

Communities, as defined in this report, are authentically livable when they incorporate innovative, equitable and inclusive policies and practices that address the unique challenges a city faces, while looking to improve the quality of life for residents. Building livable communities for people of all races, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic levels, ages and disabilities requires recognizing the systemic and institutional inequities of past policies and practices, while putting into practice policies that are forward-thinking, just and fair. This report looks to surface policies that are exactly that, and to provide an assessment tool that can be used by city leaders to determine a policy's scalability to meet the needs of their community.

Categorizing Cities by Livability

To uncover and identify cities prioritizing livability, it is useful to group communities with similar economic conditions, similar demographic characteristics, and similar public policy choices by conducting a **cluster analysis**. Based on existing research by the National League of Cities (NLC) on housing market conditions, this cluster analysis is especially useful for providing a framework around the concept of livability by categorizing places based on their promotion of policies that connect people and embrace the diversity of those individuals.

To better understand livability, we must consider three key factors based on the definition of livable communities provided by the Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities:

1. **Demographic characteristics** including population growth; percent of the population that is Millennial, White, Black, Latinx and Asian; percent of the population that has a bachelor's degree; and median income;

2. **Economic characteristics** including nonfarm job growth; and

3. **Transportation characteristics** including proximity to jobs and the percent of the population that walk or use transportation other than cars or public transit.

Based on these key factors, NLC classified a sample of 754 cities with populations greater than 50,000 into three categories: Those initializing livability, pursuing livability or activating livability.

The table on the next page summarizes the defining characteristics of each of the three categories and includes examples of cities that fall into each cluster. Specific policies in action for each of these city examples are described in detail in the "Innovative and Equitable Policies and Practices for Livable Communities" section of this report.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CITY CATEGORIES AND FEATURED CITIES
Based on the Definition of Livable Communities

Cluster	Percent of Cities in Sample	Demographic Characteristics	Economic Characteristics	Transportation Characteristics	Featured Cities
Initializing Livability	30%	Lowest population growth; highest % Millennial; highest % Black, lowest % Latinx and Asian subpopulations	Lower levels of educational attainment; lowest income levels; lowest job growth; furthest from jobs	Highest % ability to vacate	Baton Rouge, Louisiana El Paso, Texas Hartford, Connecticut Mobile, Alabama Providence, Rhode Island
Pursuing Livability	32%	Highest population growth; lowest % Millennial; lowest % Black, highest % Latinx and Asian subpopulations	Highest levels of educational attainment; highest income levels; highest job growth; closest to jobs	Lowest % ability to vacate	Anchorage, Alaska Santa Monica, California Seattle, Washington Washington, D.C.
Activating Livability	38%	Medium population growth; medium % Millennial; medium % Black, medium % Latinx and Asian subpopulations	Moderate levels of educational attainment; medium income levels; medium job growth; close to jobs	Medium % ability to vacate	Norfolk, Virginia Omaha, Nebraska Boston, Massachusetts Portland, Oregon Saint Paul, Minnesota

Note: Cleveland Heights, Ohio is not in the sample due to having a population below 50,000.

Initializing Livability

Cities in the initializing livability category tend to exhibit the lowest population growth among black and Millennial subpopulations, and the lowest job growth. This group of cities also tend to exhibit the highest ability to vacate in case of a vulnerable natural hazard. While these cities have some of the lower demographic, economic, and transportation characteristics in the sample, in many cases they are strong innovators in areas relating to health, climate and public spaces.

Pursuing Livability

Cities in the pursuing livability category tend to exhibit the highest population growth among white and Generation X subpopulations as well as the highest job growth and proximity to job opportunities. However, these cities also tend to exhibit the lowest ability to vacate in case of a natural hazard such as a hurricane or fire, with approximately seven percent of the population having no means of car, motorcycle, taxi, public transportation, bicycle, or ability to walk, compared to less than five percent for other livability categories. While these cities tend to exhibit the highest population and job growth, a great sign of connecting people and resources, they can continue to do more to operationalize racial equity and advance racial justice

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EXAMPLE

PURSUING LIVABILITY
Santa Monica, CA

Santa Monica, California falls into the pursuing livability group. Approximately 72 percent of its population holds an Associate's degree or higher, compared to 41 percent of the nation. While the city's demographic makeup is not the most diverse, with 4.3 percent of residents being Black but only three percent Latinx and three percent Asian, its proximity to jobs is much higher than the national average. Taken together, these characteristics tell us that while Santa Monica excels in some characteristics, it lacks in others. Santa Monica needs to maintain what has been built and keep working to operationalize and advance race equity.

Activating Livability

Cities in the activating livability category tend to exhibit medium population growth among Black, Latinx, Asian and Millennial subpopulations, and medium job growth. Cities in this group also tend to exhibit a moderate ability to vacate in case of a natural hazard. Cities are categorized as activating livability because they tend to actively pursue greater connections between a diverse population and resources that address their specific needs.

Detailed assessments of policies and practices furthering livability from each of these cities are compiled in the "Innovative and Equitable Policies and Practices for Livable Communities" section of this report.

EXAMPLE

ACTIVATING LIVABILITY
Omaha, NE

Omaha, Nebraska falls in the activating livability category. Approximately 43 percent of its population holds an Associate's degree or higher, slightly better than the nation. While its demographic makeup is not very diverse, approximately seven percent of its population is Asian, matching the nation. But its population growth and job growth are far higher than the national average, at 22 percent compared to only 11 percent, and 15 percent compared to only 9 percent, respectively. Additionally, the city's Millennial share of the population matches the nation at 41 percent.[7] Omaha would do well to be intentional with operationalizing racial equity, advancing racial justice and implementing an intersectional lens. Ongoing investments in public transit also need to be sustained.

The Scalability Assessment

- **State Legislative Authority:** Describes whether a city, town or village is likely to need to seek authority from their state or commonwealth's legislature to implement a policy or practice.

- **Mechanisms for Evaluation:** Describes if a city, town or village's council is likely to be able to easily monitor or put into place a monitoring tool to assess the success of the implemented policy or practice.

It is the goal of this report that the Scalability Assessment be applied by policymakers looking to assess policy or practices beyond those included here. Consideration of these factors — while placing a priority on innovative, equitable and inclusive policies — can assist in building a more livable community.

With a priority placed on innovative, equitable and inclusive policies that can improve the livability of a community, this report introduces the **Scalability Assessment**. This assessment tool is designed for policymakers looking to identify whether a policy or practice can be scaled and implemented in their local jurisdiction.

The Scalability Assessment enables a deliberate qualitative evaluation of a policy or practice by analyzing what action a policymaker will need to take such as securing implementation approval at the state level, and what potential barriers may exist to properly scaling a policy or practice to their community such as significant budget requirements. Each policy evaluation included in the pages that follow also features questions to guide policymakers through steps or considerations for developing or implementing a policy or practice found in this report.

Each action item or potential hurdle for policymakers contributes to the success or failure of a policy or practice, determining its potential effectiveness and overall scalability to communities of different sizes. Factors considered in the Scalability Assessment include:

- **Municipal Action:** Describes if an ordinance or a resolution needs to be adopted by a city, town or village for a policy or practice to go into effect and to be institutionalized.

- **Adaptiveness:** Describes if the mechanics of the policy or practice can either be reproduced or modified to fit the needs and wants of communities of various sizes.

- **Collaboration Needed:** Describes if the policy or practice requires involvement beyond a city, town, or village's staff in order to be successful, such as support from community residents, state and federal agencies, non-government organizations, for-profit businesses or philanthropic organizations.

- **Cost of Implementation:** Describes the extent to which funding for personnel, materials, supplies and trainings is needed to ensure that the policy or practice is funded to be successful.

KEY FOR THE SCALABILITY ASSESSMENT

Policies and practices included in the "Innovative and Equitable Policies and Practices for Livable Communities" section of this report have been evaluated using the Scalability Assessment tool. The following **Scalability Assessment Key** denotes the extent to which a factor is a potential barrier to scalability, and whether a policymaker will need to take a specific action in order to implement a given policy. In reading this report, the key below allows policymakers to see, at a glance, how scalable and readily implementable a policy or practice is to their community:

- 🔴 Municipal Action
- 🟢 Adaptive
- 🟡 Collaboration Needed
- 🟣 Cost of Implementation
- 🟢 State Legislative Authority
- 🟡 Mechanisms for Evaluation

🔴 **ACTION IS NEEDED** for successful implementation, or that this factor does pose a significant threat to scalability

Example: A city is likely to need authority from the state legislature in order to implement; A policy or practice requires significant up-front financial investment for successful implementation; It is difficult to measure success or evaluate this policy or practice

🟢 **ACTION IS NOT NEEDED** for successful implementation, or that this factor does not pose a significant threat to scalability

Example: An ordinance or resolution passed by city council is unlikely to be needed in order to implement this policy or practice; A policy or practice is highly adaptive in meeting the needs of communities of different sizes; Successful implementation does not involve significant costs to the city

🟡 **ACTION MIGHT BE NEEDED** for successful implementation in some cases, or that this factor is a minor threat to scalability

Example: Cities in some states might need to secure authority from the state legislature in order to implement; Successful implementation is likely to require moderate costs and city expenditures; A policy or practice requires significant up-front financial investment for successful implementation; It may be difficult to put effective evaluation measures in place for measuring the success of this policy or practice

🟣 **UNKNOWN WHETHER THIS ACTION IS NEEDED** for successful implementation in any given city, or whether this factor is a threat to scalability

Many locally-driven policy innovations that take unique circumstances into account are not turn-key solutions. However, they are model programs which other cities can learn from and adapt to their community.

Innovative and Equitable Policies and Practices for Livable Communities

Drawing from cities identified as initializing, pursuing or activating livability, the following section of this report provides a closer look at some of the policies and practices being implemented in those cities to make them more livable for all members of the community. As cities look to meet the diverse needs of residents, these policies fall across a range of issue areas — from housing and transportation, to climate resilience and use of public spaces. But each of them can be recognized as innovative, equitable and inclusive.

A detailed description of each policy or practice is provided based on interviews with city leaders and staff, along with questions for consideration by policymakers looking to implement a similar program in their own city. Each policy or practice has also been evaluated by NLC using the Scalability Assessment tool, making it possible to see potential hurdles to implementation at a glance.

Housing

In a livable community, housing should be safe, affordable, quality, and available in a range of options, from a single-family house to an accessory dwelling unit, to meet the needs of people of all ages, incomes and abilities. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

• **Mobile, AL's** Blight Reduction Strategy
• **Santa Monica, CA's** Homelessness Strategy
• **Washington, D.C.'s** Office of the Tenant Advocate

Blight Reduction Strategy

Background

What began as an effort to take a closer look at the issue of blight by Mayor Sandy Stimpson of Mobile soon after he was elected in 2013, grew into a series of transformative changes to local and state legal processes and laws that govern code enforcement and the disposition of vacant and abandoned properties.

The City of Mobile's local code enforcement processes highlighted the issuance of violation notices and fines, but it did not compel property owners to fix code delinquent properties. Working with local leaders and city departments such as Neighborhood Development, the city's Innovation Team ("i-team") helped to design a new local ordinance, passed by the City Council, that allowed local officials to take bolder action to prevent certain vacant and abandoned, yet habitable, code delinquent properties from falling into ruin. Under the new ordinance, property owners would have 20 days to bring code delinquent properties into compliance or the City would make the needed repairs and place municipal code liens on the properties to recoup the costs.

Yet even municipal code liens were insufficient. In Alabama, only an unsatisfied tax lien could trigger a legal process to force the transfer of vacant and abandoned property rights to the City — a mechanism complicated by the City's duty to provide notice of a tax lien to all of owners

of a property. When a blighted property gets passed down to family members without a will, the beneficial owners of such property could number into the hundreds. Circumstances such as these made it nearly impossible for the City to meet the notification requirements of the existing legal processes and claim ownership to many of the City's problem properties. However, the work of the city's i-team, the assistant city attorney and departments at the local level, influenced the passage of HB430, a new Alabama state law that streamlined the legal process by which local courts can use municipal code liens as a basis for conveying property rights to municipalities. This enabled them to then sell the properties with clear title to responsible owners wanting to live in Mobile.

As of 2019, Mobile's **blight reduction program** is more robust than ever. The city makes grants available for low-income homeowners to rehabilitate their properties, as well as free will preparation services to help residents pass on clear title to heirs. Mobile's efforts have resulted in a 44 percent reduction in the number of blighted homes within city limits, and thousands of dollars in increased property values for Mobile citizens.

Scalability

- Municipal Action
- Adaptive
- Collaboration Needed
- Cost of Implementation
- State Legislative Authority
- Mechanisms for Evaluation

The overarching goals of Mobile's blight reduction efforts were to provide city leaders with an understanding of the true extent of blight in the City, ensure that citizens' investments in their homes and communities were protected, preserve the culture of Mobile's neighborhoods, and find an equitable solution. The City's willingness to make and influence changes to local and state legislation was critical in its success.

The i-team worked collaboratively with the city's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Neighborhood Development Department to survey and map blighted properties, to develop a true blight inventory map that moved the department away from pen and paper, and to understand the scope of impact of blight in Mobile.

Longtime community residents and stakeholders such as the assistant city attorney, Alabama State House Representatives, area historic preservation experts and the Center for Community Progress were critical partners in the passage of Mobile's new blight reduction ordinance and state law.

Operational and technical support for this project was provided in the form of a multi-year grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies and additional funding for blight removal was provided from the City's community housing budget.

To monitor ongoing progress, the City performs a blight survey each year. Both qualitative and quantitative measures are analyzed, including the total number and location of blighted properties, the number of homes in proximity to blight, code enforcement activity and compliance, blighted home demolition and restoration rates, and estimates of changes in market value to homes in communities impacted by blight.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar solution may want to consider the following:

1. Is your city committed to understanding the root cause of complex housing issues such as blight?

2. Are existing code enforcement processes enough to bring blighted, code delinquent properties into compliance? What changes to state and local property laws may be required to enhance jurisdictions' ability to proactively stabilize communities and properties on the brink of blight?

3. How can local leaders and city staff test assumptions and potential solutions through piloting and prototyping, prior to making sweeping changes to the current system?

4. Has your city taken a human-centered approached to complex challenges to ensure solutions are equity-driven and ensure that the right voices are at the table?

Homelessness Strategy

SANTA MONICA, CA

Background

Nestled in the midst of Los Angeles County's growing homelessness crisis, Santa Monica has long worked to develop and employ national best practices for combatting homelessness. In light of its geographic positioning, the City Council set a goal of taking a leadership role in regional efforts to address homelessness in August 2015. However, despite the city maintaining a stable homeless count between 2010 and 2016 while the county rate continued to rise, Santa Monica documented a 26 percent increase in homelessness in 2017. Redoubling its efforts, the City Council voted unanimously to approve a **Homeless Strategic Goal Action Plan** in November 2017.

Santa Monica's strategy addresses homelessness through: **outreach**, particularly in the form of the Homeless Multidisciplinary Street Team (HMST) and the police department's Homeless Liaison Program (HLP); **care management and supportive services**, including those seeking to meet behavioral and mental health needs of homeless individuals both on and off the streets; and **affordable housing and permanent supportive housing**.

The city-wide strategy centers around four key pillars:

1. Prevent Santa Monicans from becoming homeless and increasing affordable housing options

2. Address the behavioral health needs of vulnerable residents

3. Maintain equitable access to safe, fun and healthy open spaces

4. Strengthen regional capacity to address homelessness

Efforts targeting these goals were bolstered in October 2017 by the City Council's authorization of an additional $1.4 million in one-time funds. This investment created an opportunity to expand the city's street-based engagement and outreach teams, increase the capacity of the local police department with the addition of new officers on the HLP team, and place social workers in the library to help deliver services directly. The Council has also approved up to 150 units of affordable housing on city-owned land and is studying its approach to interim housing.

Since intensifying its focus on combatting homelessness, Santa Monica has been able to maintain a relatively stable rate of homelessness while it has continued to be a pervasive issue in neighboring areas. The 2019 Homeless Count showed just a 3 percent increase in the total number of people experiencing homelessness in the city (an increase from 957 individuals to 987), while homelessness increased by 12 percent in the broader Los Angeles County and by 19 percent on the Westside.

Scalability

- 🔴 **Municipal Action**
- 🟢 **Adaptive**
- 🔴 **Collaboration Needed**
- 🔴 **Cost of Implementation**
- 🟢 **State Legislative Authority**
- 🟢 **Mechanisms for Evaluation**

At the core of Santa Monica's strategy is an emphasis on reaching chronically homeless individuals — those who are the most vulnerable and who experience the highest level of risk. City officials realized that a small number of long-term homeless individuals both generated a large proportion of complaints about disruptiveness and frequently relied upon municipal and emergency services and prioritizes these individuals for outreach. A disproportionate share of these individuals also face health and substance use challenges, along with a higher likelihood of incarceration rather than referral to effective treatment options. With an eye toward this demonstrated health inequity, the city is working to deploy mobile resources to meet people where they are and fill the gaps in physical health, mental health and substance use services. The team on the ground uses a light touch, often checking in with homeless individuals multiple times a week over several weeks or months in order to build trust and ultimately encourage them to accept housing and support services.

These on-the-ground case managers, first responders and other support service providers all benefit from a greater focus on data collection and sharing through the use of mobile applications. By having a full range of stakeholders engaged and sharing information in real-time — and by identifying trends in complaint calls to the police — Santa Monica officials have been able to identify "hotspots" and better allocate city resources. A 2019 study by the RAND Corporation found that these targeted, locally focused efforts to move residents into housing and reduce their use of public services offset city spending on the program by between 17 and 43 percent. However, the same study also shed light on the challenge posed by the persistence of homelessness: Only one of 26 people targeted by the Santa Monica program became stable enough to transition into less intensive care. Santa Monica hopes to overcome this hurdle to sustainable of success through continued investment and close partnership at the county-level, as well as by building on the city's citizen education efforts to actively engage community members in the process of healing and support.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Are the people you aim to serve truly at the center of your program design and planning? How is racial equity being operationalized? Engage individuals with a range of lived-experiences to uncover potential faults in systems of care.

2. Is your approach driven by data and are you collecting the information you'll need in order to measure success? How can you leverage technology to centralize case management, identify hotspots and track long-term impact?

3. How is your city fostering collaboration with stakeholders? The long-term nature of homelessness interventions can put a strain on resources, so engage interdepartmental teams, service providers and community partners, academic institutions, faith-based organizations and philanthropies in program planning from the beginning.

4. How can you better engage your larger community and bring them along in the process? Give regular updates at community meetings and designate a staff person to hold one-on-one or small group discussions to hear concerns. Consider an online campaign or a digital dashboard so community members can celebrate successes with you.

Office of the Tenant Advocate

WASHINGTON, DC

Scalability

- 🔴 Municipal Action
- 🟢 Adaptive
- 🔴 Collaboration Needed
- 🔴 Cost of Implementation
- 🟡 State Legislative Authority
- 🟢 Mechanisms for Evaluation

Background

The only dedicated office of its kind nationwide, Washington D.C.'s **Office of the Tenant Advocate** (OTA) aims to educate and support the District's vast tenant community regarding disputes with landlords. First established through the Budget Support Act of 2005, the OTA provides D.C. tenants with legal representation and advice for judicial or administrative hearings, conciliation meetings with landlords, or regarding complaints and petitions. The Office also offers and distributes financial assistance to displaced tenants and is tasked with advocating on behalf of renters in the legislative, regulatory, and judicial contexts. With lease matters and housing code concerns or violations topping the issues for which D.C. residents seek support, the Office serves roughly 10,000 tenants annually with a team of 24 people.

Headed up by a Chief Tenant Advocate, the Office was largely created out of advocacy efforts and demands from the community. It was instrumental in the creation of the District's Tenant Bill of Rights in 2015, a document that landlords are required to provide with housing applicants along with a lease that the OTA is responsible for updating on an ongoing basis. The Office offers critical education on topics such as rental control, safety specifications related to residential inspections, and D.C.'s unique Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), which gives D.C. tenants the right to

purchase a rental property if their landlord intends to sell it. Particularly pivotal to this education and outreach effort is the tenant hotline staffed by the Office and the annual Tenant Summit, a day-long forum coordinated by the OTA that brings together tenants and tenant associations, housing advocates and attorneys, policy experts, community leaders, and District officials to discuss issues directly related to local tenants. The Office facilitates the city's Emergency Housing Assistance Program (EHAP), which provides housing accommodations and government assistance for tenants who find themselves temporarily homeless due to an unexpected event such as a fire or uninhabitable housing conditions.

In addition to providing critical direct services to the D.C. tenant community, the Office of the Tenant Advocate provides a vital data tracking and reporting function for the city. The OTA provides the City Council with key data on tenant issues to inform housing policy, including information related to local evictions and TOPA filings. The Office is in the process of establishing a District-wide Housing Clearinghouse Database that was recently mandated by the City Council and that will provide insights into rent rates and multifamily housing.

Originally having fallen under the umbrella of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, the Office of the Tenant Advocate became a fully independent District government agency in October 2007. The Office has also expanded its authority and services to meet the growing needs of the city's tenant community, pivotally gaining lien authority in 2016, which has made it possible for the OTA to recoup investments and better hold landlords accountable.

This independence has been a critical function of the Office, which takes a leading role in pursuing legislation that is favorable toward renters. Yet its position as a government agency enables the team to more effectively represent the community while navigating often complex legal and governmental systems.

With a budget of roughly $4.2 million for fiscal year 2020, the OTA has seen a high return on its investment on behalf of tenants. This budget accounts for legal assistance and services provided by the Office, EHAP funding, education efforts and outreach, personnel expenses, and office maintenance. It has also paved the way for the OTA to effect meaningful change on the D.C. tenant community through direct legal support, with the establishment of the Tenant Bill of Rights, and through its advocacy for tenant-friendly legislation and policies.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. What is the scope of the needs of your tenant community, and how could those needs change as the housing landscape does? What subpopulations are the most impacted and why? What data insights are currently available for issues such as evictions, emergency housing needs, or housing safety and inspection concerns?

2. For smaller communities, are there neighboring towns or villages that could partner for implementation on a consortium basis?

3. Does your renter community currently have an established Tenant Bill of Rights? What authority would the office have to enforce it?

4. Has your city identified a career staffer with knowledge of housing and community development, in addition to a background in the legal system, to lead the office and require reappointment on a multi-year schedule?

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Transportation

The backbone of a livable community is its transportation system. In a livable community, the transportation system, from cars to bike lanes, connect and move people to social and economic activities. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

- **Omaha, NE**'s Bus Rapid Transit System
- **Cleveland Heights, OH**'s Complete Green Street Policy
- **Seattle, WA**'s Transportation Equity Program

Omaha Rapid Bus Transit System

OMAHA, NE

Background

In planning for the future of the Omaha region's public transportation system, Omaha Metro, the City of Omaha, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency conducted an extensive analysis and public outreach campaign to determine the best way to better connect the region.

During that process, local leaders realized that 16% of households within one-quarter mile of Omaha's Dodge Street corridor did not have access to a vehicle. The lack of transportation presented an obstacle and potentially prevented families from having access to healthcare, educational opportunities, and more than 50,000 jobs located in proximity to the Dodge Street corridor. In 2014, local leaders and stakeholders concluded that a bus rapid transit system along Dodge Street, the backbone of Omaha's bus network, would help to significantly reduce such barriers. Plans for the new Omaha Rapid Bus Transit (ORBT) system were soon solidified.

ORBT is a smart technology enabled, streamlined bus rapid transit system providing faster and more frequent public transportation use along the Dodge Street corridor. As the Omaha region's largest transit investment in decades, the ORBT system boasts state of the art stations and platforms designed and built to facilitate faster travel and maximize rider comfort and experience.

ORBT vehicles are 50% longer and more spacious than buses currently in use within the region and loaded with features such as level boarding at station platforms, auditory and visual stop indicators, on board bike racks, and Wi-Fi. Other travel upgrades such as dedicated public transit lanes and transit signal priority technology will allow the ORBT system to connect more people, more frequently.

ORBT serves as the foundation of a larger regional expansion of the transportation network.

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

Operational responsibility for the ORBT rests with Metro Omaha (Metro), an independent political subdivision of the State of Nebraska. Aside from local legislation required to increase the maximum allowable bus length in the City, the ORBT required no other formal ordinance or resolution from Omaha's City Council.

Extensive coordination with local government leaders and other partners has been a foundational starting point for implementation of ORBT. While planning for ORBT, local leaders worked to ensure that the new transit system was strategically aligned with the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency's regional plans and the City of Omaha's transportation master plan. City staff has provided support in the coordination of leases and other arrangements to define operating parameters and jurisdictional responsibilities with the region.

Community engagement was at the center of the planning, decision making, and implementation processes of ORBT. From the beginning, public input has influenced the selection of bus rapid transit for the region, shaped station design and vehicle layout, and provided critical feedback for local leaders during a wide range of public meetings, workshops, conversations, online forums, stakeholder committees, and other methods. Each outlet for public engagement allowed neighborhood associations, residents, local institutions, advocacy groups, elected officials, and other stakeholders to maintain consistent communication and connection throughout the various phases of the ORBT project.

Funding for ORBT was provided by several philanthropic organizations, including the Peter Kiewit Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation, Mutual of Omaha, the Nebraska environmental Trust, and the Metropolitan Utilities District. The City of Omaha provided early funding for the planning and analysis phases, along with in-kind expertise throughout the planning and implementation phases of the project. Federal funding in the form of a competitive $14.9 million TIGER grant and philanthropic dollars have funded project construction. Operational costs of ORBT will be funded by Metro. A cost-benefit analysis suggests that eight dollars will be returned to Omaha's local economy for every dollar invested in the ORBT project.

Among the goals that local leaders hope to achieve with ORBT are increased mobility within the region, reduced household transportation costs, boosted health and wellness, the attraction and retention of talented workforce employees, more economic development, less traffic and environmental impact, and an increasingly connected region. The performance and success of the ORBT will be evaluated by criteria set forth by the Federal Transit Administration, including boarding and alighting numbers, operating and maintenance costs, service levels, passenger count, on -time performance, rider demographics, and development intensity.

Cities, towns or villages interested in implementing a bus rapid transit system may want to consider the following:

1. What should community engagement look like for your city? Early and consistent community engagement pays off and it can take time to build authentic relationships with the entire community, so patience and empathy are key.

2. What will coordination with local transit systems and operators entail? Transit planning, design, and implementation should be guided by a clear strategic vision that has achieved widespread buy-in from the community and local governmental partners.

3. To what extent do you hear directly from residents about their desired transportation options? Local leaders should take the time to fully understand their residents' commitment to transit as broad voter and community support will be required.

4. How do you currently communicate with residents about infrastructure and transit programs? Extra care should be taken to maintain good, honest communication, about the project with the community and partners.

Complete and Green Streets Policy

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OH

Background

Adopted in 2018, the City of Cleveland Heights' **Complete and Green Streets Policy** aims to rethink and redesign its transportation network to meet the livability and environmental needs of the community. Putting the city's most vulnerable members at the center, the policy prioritizes the safety and comfort of pedestrians — particularly the elderly and people with disabilities — cyclists, and public transit users, while accommodating motorists. The city-wide effort to improve accessibility incorporates best practices from green infrastructure in order to reduce waste, manage stormwater runoff, and minimize energy consumption.

Jump-started as part of the city's 2017 Master Plan, the Complete and Green Streets Policy applies to public and private streets, as well as parking lots. Projects have included:

- Creating protected bike lines
- Reducing the width or number of driving lanes in order to slow traffic
- Improving visibility for crosswalks
- Ensuring that curb cuts are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Eliminating excess pavement and installing retention basins

For the Cleveland Heights Department of Planning, Complete and Green Streets is more than just a policy — it represents a new way of thinking. It codifies support for cyclists and pedestrians, an issue that consistently topped the list of community priorities in surveys that informed the city's Master Plan, in a way that supersedes any individual Planner or Council Member. From the early stages of implementation, the Complete and Green Streets Policy has been guided by direct feedback from the community through surveys, community meetings, and on-the-ground engagement efforts. The city's planners explicitly call on individuals living, and commuting, in Cleveland Heights neighborhoods to direct their attention to intersections, blocks, and streets where people feel unsafe or have difficulty navigating.

Driven to employ this approach by concern for non-motorist safety, particularly cyclist accidents, city planners emphasize the importance of collecting and analyzing data at the micro-level: Looking at individual streets, tracking traffic patterns of specific intersections, and making liberal use of pedestrian counters to inform redesign projects. This data is a key component of the rigorous annual reporting process mandated by the City Council resolution. Evaluation of the program hinges on quantitative analysis in 16 key areas, including the number and locations of accidents (including those involving pedestrians

and cyclists), the miles of bike lanes and number of new bike parking locations, the net number of trees added, the square footage of new bioretention facilities and of pavement that has been removed, and an analysis of the modes of transportation used by the community. The Department will report on and document its efforts to engage and consider the input of frequently underrepresented communities, as well as evaluate the equitable distribution of improvements with regard to income and race.

Scalability

- 🔴 Municipal Action
- 🟢 Adaptive
- 🔴 Collaboration Needed
- 🔴 Cost of Implementation
- 🟡 State Legislative Authority
- 🟢 Mechanisms for Evaluation

Borne out of a need for action on pedestrian and cyclist safety to reduce frequency and severity of crashes, increased walking, bicycling and scooter riding, decreased driving and decreased car ownership, Cleveland Height's Complete and Green Streets policy has hinged on integrating community feedback with a data-driven approach. Planners leveraged data support from the National Complete Streets Coalition in tandem with outreach efforts that focused on lifting the voices of otherwise often underrepresented communities. With input from the community being pivotal to the planning process — not just a box to be checked — city workers relied heavily on this feedback to guide projects and priorities. Beyond surveys and meetings, these efforts went so far as to include going into neighborhoods with chalk and encouraging residents to mark up the streets, or to suggest redesigns such as a new cut-through that would improve their day-to-day experience.

Once tasked with a new project, the city officials worked to secure funding from numerous streams, such as community development block grants for Strategic Impact Opportunity zones and federal funding. Community support and willingness to take responsibility for maintenance quickly became key for streetscape initiatives, and often yielded opportunities for matching funds. Collaboration and alignment with the Ohio Department of Transportation was a key determinant of success. Although the City did not need state authority to pass the policy, use of federal funds resulted in frequent oversight from state-level engineers. But ultimately, each project remained grounded in improving livability for the community's most vulnerable members.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Do you know where the most accidents — and "near misses" — happen? Do you know where cyclists and pedestrians feel the most at-risk? Try asking crossing guards, students, and older community members.

2. How are your city street projects currently determined and prioritized? Are you considering the needs of community members that may have limited representation or voice at meetings or on your City Council?

3. To what extent is environmental impact considered as part of the city planning process? Have you integrated climate-conscious metrics into your reporting?

4. Are there opportunities to undertake street redesign projects in tandem with other neighborhood improvements or federal investments?

5. How can your city think more creatively? Some dangerous intersections may require a complete overhaul, while other projects might be better suited to solutions of a different scale. Try piloting your approach and assess the impact before initiating a full roll-out.

Transportation Equity Program

SEATTLE, WA

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

Background

Seattle's Transportation Equity Program is an outgrowth of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, an effort to eliminate racial disparities by tearing down any lingering strongholds of institutional racism within city government. The Transportation Equity Program was established to make Seattle's transportation planning process and transportation options more accessible, safe, affordable and environmentally sustainable for historically disenfranchised and underrepresented communities — many of which have disproportionately experienced higher costs and wait times associated with transit. Through the Transportation Equity Program, the City of Seattle seeks to ensure that all people can thrive in place and affordably travel throughout Seattle's vibrant and healthy communities.

As part of the Transportation Equity Program, income eligible individuals between the age of 19 and 64, with household income less than two times the federal poverty level, are qualified to receive reduced price public transportation fare cards. All Seattle public high school students and income eligible middle school students may also receive a free, unlimited use fare cards. In 2019, the city's funded fare cards saved students more than $2.67 million, an average cost savings of $356 per student. Income qualified vehicle owners are also eligible to receive a $20 rebate on Seattle vehicle license fees.

The Transportation Equity Program, through its Youth Transportation Ambassadors Program, partners with community-based organizations serving communities of color to develop and implement transportation-related projects for youth. Additionally, in partnership with the Seattle Department of Transportation, the Transportation Equity Program launched a pilot program to educate Seattle residents about an underutilized program that provides reduced-fare transit cards to both riders with disabilities and Medicare recipients.

The Seattle Department of Transportation (DOT), working in partnership with the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, King County Metro and the Seattle-King County Public Health Department, have distributed over 12,000 transit fare cards in connection with the Transportation Equity Program. The Seattle DOT and its local governmental partners view these services as key equity strategies that have been essential to creating and ensuring access to public transportation, particularly for individuals and families with low incomes and mounting transportation cost burdens.

In late 2017, Mayor Jenny Durkan issued an executive order outlining City Hall's commitment to social justice and transportation equity. The Seattle City Council further affirmed this commitment by adopting Resolution 31773. The unanimously adopted resolutions marked the City Council's support of transportation equity and set goals for the Transportation Equity Program that identified populations that should benefit equity from the city's transportation investments, mobility innovation and create safe, environmentally sustainable, accessible and transportation options. Resolution 31773 also created a workgroup that became instrumental to the development of the Transportation Equity Agenda.

The workgroup consisted of 8 – 10 community stakeholders with relevant personal and/or professional expertise, who had not traditionally been part of City decision making processes. City leaders provided a safe environment for Workgroup members to share experiences and ideas from their unique perspectives. As a result, the services, polices, and programs that were incorporated into the Transportation Equity Program are serving the very communities that have long experienced disparities in transportation outcomes.

In evaluating the success of the Transportation Equity Program, City officials measure and evaluate: the total number of free transit cards issued; rider dollars saved; number of trips per week per user; total cost savings, and cost savings per user. City officials also monitor the total number of schools, housing authority properties, youth organizations, senior centers, and community organizations with which the Transportation Equity Program has engaged with.

Financial support for the Transportation Equity Program is provided by a voter-approved measure to establish the Seattle Transportation Benefits District (STBD), which generates revenue to improve availability and access to public transportation through a $60 increase in vehicle license fees and a 0.1% increase in sales taxes. Of the approximately $50 million in revenue generated by the STBD, up to $2 million annually is allocated to the Transportation Equity Program to make public transportation more accessible to lower income riders.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Is there an understanding of institutional and structural racism, its impacts upon people of color and underrepresented communities, and a commitment to social justice and transportation equity among local government leaders and departmental staff?

2. What does community engagement look like for your city?

3. What methods will your city use to engage with communities that have experienced disinvestment in local transit assets and the associated inequities in transportation outcomes? How can your city co-develop a Transportation Equity Agenda with its residents?

4. What institutional stakeholders outside of the city are critical to the success of building a Transportation Equity Plan?

5. What existing or new sources of municipal revenue can be leveraged to invest in a transportation equity program?
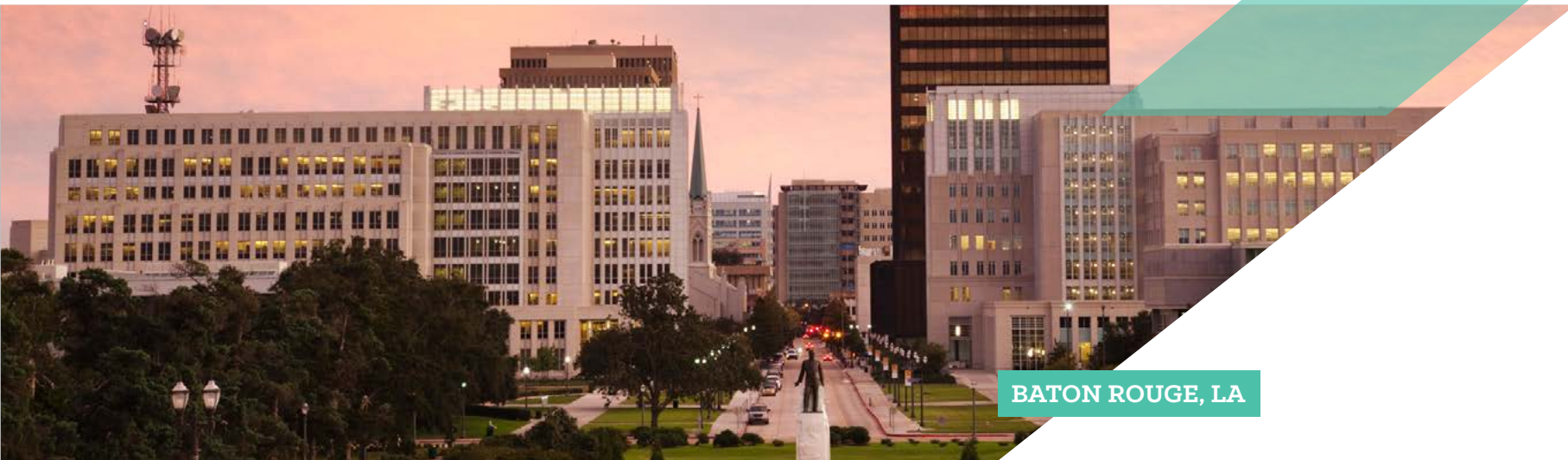
Health and Wellness

Health and Wellness is critical to livable communities. Access to healthy food options, quality healthcare providers and preventive care programs can foster a better quality of life for all residents. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

• **Baton Rouge, LA**'s Healthy Baton Rouge
• **EL Paso, TX**'s Vaccinations for Health

Healthy Baton Rouge

BATON ROUGE, LA

Background

With a mission to foster a movement based on communication, coordination and collaboration that promotes a better and healthier life for all people in the City of Baton Rouge, **Healthy Baton Rouge** (Healthy BR) serves as the clearinghouse for sharing health information and city-wide. Comprised of over 80+ nonprofits, Healthy BR is a collective impact organization that was created in 2008 after a listening tour that engaged over 40 community organizations. Originally formed as the Mayor's Healthy City Initiative to coordinate efforts and assist residents across Baton Rouge in eating healthier and leading a more active lifestyle, the initiative soon evolved into Healthy BR, a 501c3, with the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010.

Under Healthy BR, leading health and human service organizations and hospitals in Baton Rouge came together and made a promise to invest in the future and make Baton Rouge a healthier place to live and work. In 2012, Healthy BR served as convener of a collaborative Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), then in 2015 produced the nation's first Joint Community Health Needs Assessment and Implementation Plan (CHIP).

In 2018, Healthy BR served once again as a convener and created a joint CHNA and CHIP for all five area hospitals. Each area hospital CEO agreed to include Social Determinants of Health in the 2018 CHNA. Healthy BR wrote the 2018 CHNA through a lens of equity and engaged both the Democracy Collaborative and the Atlanta Branch of the Federal Reserve on how to address Social Determinants of Health. In the 2018 Joint CHNA and CHIP, Healthy BR calls out zip code disparities as a priority for the organization.

With the goals laid out in its 2018 CHIP, Healthy BR plans to address the top four community needs of Baton Rouge — Access to Care, Behavioral Health, Healthy Living, and Sexually Transmitted Infections/HIV — as well as the Social Determinants of Health, through the implementation of its Anchor Strategies of hiring locally, purchasing locally and investing locally.

Scalability

- Municipal Action
- Adaptive
- Collaboration Needed
- Cost of Implementation
- State Legislative Authority
- Mechanisms for Evaluation

The success of Healthy BR is built upon the collaborative efforts of many different community partners. The Baton Rouge Area Foundation served as a financial intermediary and key early partner for Healthy BR, providing important structural and operational support such as meeting space and legal assistance. Other local nonprofit organizations shared resources, information, and planning assets to ensure that the Healthy BR initiative reflected the expressed needs and desires of the community. The Mayor's Office was a key partner in attracting and retaining well-placed individuals, such as CEOs and other experienced individuals, to serve on Healthy BR's board of directors. The City of Baton Rouge provides an in-kind donation of one full-time staff member, a Town Hall Fellow or employee of the Mayor's office, whose salary and benefits are paid by the Mayor's office.

Healthy BR's main mechanism for evaluation is its Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP), which functions as an overarching strategy plan informed by a collaborative community health needs assessment. The CHIP outlines measurable objectives aimed at addressing Healthy BR's four main community health. Strategies and measures of success are crafted for each priority identified.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Is there local political leadership willing to invest political capital to bring a diverse set of stakeholders together to address critical issues facing their community?

2. How can your nonprofit community's propensity for collaboration amongst itself, and with local government, work to champion an issue long after an administration has changed?

3. What are the unique health needs, challenges and priorities of your community? How can the city partner with residents to identify and amplify these needs, challenges and priorities through a racial and health equity lens?

4. How are the local hospitals and health care service organizations and the local government working together to tackle issues chronically affecting the community? Have the city or the local hospitals partnered to complete a Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Implementation Plan to tackle issues facing the community?

Vaccinations for Health

EL PASO, TX

Background

The City of El Paso's **Vaccinations for Health** program is the product of a unique cross-departmental partnership between the El Paso Fire and Public Health departments that delivers free preventative health care services to the City's most vulnerable citizens. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of emergency hospitalizations from preventable illnesses such as flu, pneumonia and hypertension through the use of basic health screenings and vaccinations.

As part of the Vaccinations for Health program, basic health screenings and flu vaccinations are administered alongside more specialized services like ColoCARE (colorectal cancer) screenings for individuals aged 50 or older, and pneumonia vaccinations for anyone aged 65 or older. The health screenings and vaccinations are offered on nearly one dozen dates at the El Paso Fire Department's Safety, Health & Outreach Center from October to December. To qualify for these free services, individuals and families must be uninsured or enrolled in Medicaid and meet minimum age requirements.

Both the Fire and Health departments worked to tailor the Vaccinations for Health program to the specific needs of the community. In doing so, the El Paso Public Health Department identified specific communities with higher incidences of emergency medical service transports and formidable sociodemographic barriers to preventative care. The El Paso Fire Department coordinated logistics and personnel. As a result, the City of El Paso has been able to provide a unique, tailored health program to the community, driving better health outcomes and a higher quality of life for residents.

Scalability

- 🔴 Municipal Action
- 🟢 Adaptive
- 🔴 Collaboration Needed
- 🔴 Cost of Implementation
- 🟣 State Legislative Authority
- 🟢 Mechanisms for Evaluation

The City of El Paso received a mandate, 1115 Healthcare Transformation Wavier, from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to improve access to healthcare and promote cost savings. In response, the City of El Paso passed a resolution in support of the Health Department working in conjunction with the Fire Department to propose and operationalize an innovative program, Vaccinations for Health, to achieve such aims. With the city's assistance in helping the El Paso Health Department meet its state Health and Human Services Commission goals, the passage of the resolution helped the Vaccinations for Health program secure much-needed funding for the community services aspect of the program.

The success of this program hinged upon cross-departmental coordination. Fire stations are used as clinics for the delivery of the preventative health care services and for their proximity to the program's intended population. This partnership with the El Paso Fire Department was ideal because fire stations are located in neighborhoods, and the EMS personnel who work at local fire stations have the skills and training needed to provide vaccination and screening services.

The implementation of the Vaccinations for the Health program also required significant collaboration with partners outside of city government to build awareness of the program within communities. Key partners included local universities, newspapers, and other local media outlets. Local universities were a critical source of program volunteers for patient registration and data evaluation. The universities were also able to help promote the Vaccinations for Health program as part of regular outreach and health screening programs in the university community. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission provided crucial funding, as well as benchmarking and guidelines. Community organizations also assisted with promotion and community mobilization. Not only that, as the Vaccinations for Health program gained popularity, information began to spread to residents' friends, family, and neighbors via word of mouth.

Funding for the Vaccinations for Health program is provided by the state of Texas through a Section 1115 Healthcare Transformation Waiver, which authorizes states to use demonstration projects, such as El Paso's Vaccinations for Health program, as vehicles to test innovative new ways to deliver and pay for health care services through Medicaid. The program has a budget of approximately $600,000, which funds operational costs such as personnel, vaccines, clinical apparatus and supplies, administrative services, transportation and equipment.

A strategic plan establishing a series of measurable objectives was established for the Vaccinations for Health program with a key aim of serving at least 1,000 citizens each year. To facilitate these performance reviews, the El Paso Health Department coordinates with the Fire Department to obtain monthly tallies of persons and services provided. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission also receives a semi-annual report detailing the effectiveness of the program, its activities, and any measured improvement in healthcare service delivery. The El Paso City Manager's Office then reviews the performance of the program, and periodically provides reports and updates during City Council meetings and as part of citywide budget proposal presentations.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. In the absence of a state mandate, what local goals or community health priorities could be the catalyzing force behind a new preventative care initiative?

2. Which city departments or external organizations enjoy high reputational standing in the community and would make good partners in initiatives with local health departments to reach underserved communities?

3. What other centrally located public locations such as schools, community centers, and other civic assets could be used as potential clinic locations?

4. How can local jurisdictions market the new preventative health initiative to maximize its reach to intended populations and communities?

5. What public, nonprofit, and pharmaceutical industry partners can be identified to provide supplemental financing, in-kind services, or vaccine donations for the initiative?

Public Spaces

Livable communities have public spaces that are accessible to all residents. These open and mixed-use areas offer opportunities for building a true sense of community by fostering social connections, as well as for providing much-needed services. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

• **Hartford, CT**'s The American Place
• **Saint Paul, MN**'s Parkland Dedication Ordinance

The American Place
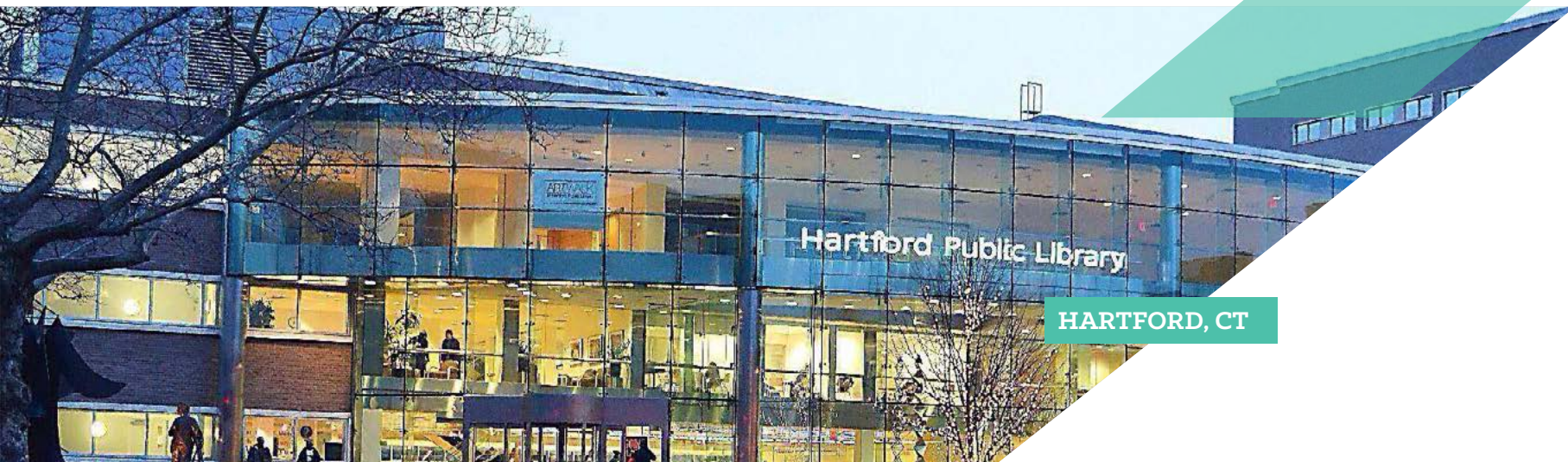
HARTFORD, CT

Background

The American Place (TAP) was established through the Hartford Public Library to meet the needs of a growing population of recent immigrants and refugees arriving in the City of Hartford, Connecticut. Starting out as an English as a Second Language (ESL) program that evolved into an award-winning initiative, TAP is a free program that welcomes and transitions residents to their new home and city.

TAP provides a space where both immigrant adults and young adults can gather to comprehensively prepare, adjust, learn and succeed in their life in a new city. In addition to offering a space for gathering as a community, The American Place also provides relevant services and supports directly to new residents, including:

- U.S. Citizenship Prep & Application Assistance
- English Classes for Speakers of Other Languages
- Job & Career Training & Assistance
- GED & Other High School Completion Programs
- Computer Training

Each service addresses a need that has been vocalized by the community and observed by the Hartford Public Library. To meet the need for affordable legal services, TAP offers access to qualified legal specialists for legal advice on immigration issues at a low cost with an initiative recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Access Program. To support young adults that enter the public-school system late, TAP and Hartford Public Schools have partnered to develop and implement an afterschool program, Learning, Belonging and Community (LBC) that assists in accelerating academic English learning skills and social integration. To support new immigrants entering into the job market, TAP has partnered with Hartford Public Schools & Family Nutrition Services to implement its Career Pathways Initiative, which trains students on food handling, ESL skills for the work-setting, workplace rights and responsibilities, American workplace culture and assistance on resume writing and job seeking strategies. Lastly, to promote civic involvement among Hartford's immigrant population, TAP's Building Networks of Trust initiative forges connections between immigrants and their new community using strategies that include:

- **Cultural Navigators**: An approach that recruits and trains volunteers who serve as mentors to ease the transition of newly arrived immigrants to their new city.
- **Immigrant Advisory Group**: An approach that serves as a city-wide vehicle to communicate current issues facing immigrants in the community and share best practices with each other.

- **Citywide and Neighborhood Community Dialogue**: An approach to engage the immigrants and the community on topics of mutual interest.
- **Book Group**: An approach that bridges culture through books and film discussions that characterize the immigrant experience and the complexities of cross-cultural experience.
- **We Belong Here Hartford**: A welcoming strategy that embraces immigrants to let them know they belong and are welcome in Hartford.

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

Not a department of the City of Hartford, but a nonprofit organization supported and funded by the city, the Hartford Public Library is a free resource and public space that serves the residents of the City of Hartford and acts as a gateway for refugees and immigrants.

Funding support for The American Place comes from a range of sources, including federal, state and community-based grants. As the program has evolved over the years, Hartford Public Library has institutionalized successful strategies that were initially implemented through The American Place with grant support. Along with the strategies that have remained in place, Hartford Public Library has also converted grant-funded positions to general fund positions.

Community partnerships are also key to success, and The American Place has developed partnerships with community-based organizations and businesses such as Hartford Public Schools and local law firms, as well as state and federal agencies.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. How does your city currently view its library system? What does a 21st century library look like and how should it support its residents, businesses and visitors?

2. How is the city currently supporting the community's library system and how can it be aligned with other economic mobility, racial justice and workforce development goals or initiatives?

3. How is the city's library system working to support the needs of diverse populations, such as with English as a second language classes, workforce development programs, legal services and support with citizenship applications?

4. How is the city and the library system observing, listening and engaging with the community in a genuine way to meet a diverse range of needs?

5. What collaborative partners, resources, staff and funding are needed to support the city's library system in preparing, supporting and connecting your residents?

Parkland Dedication Ordinance

SAINT PAUL, MN

Background

Saint Paul, Minnesota's **Parkland Dedication Ordinance** was implemented to offset the impact of new construction and redevelopment on the city's park system. Designed to meet the growing needs for parks and open space within the city, the Parkland Dedication Ordinance — a component of the city's Zoning Ordinance — requires developers to dedicate land for parkland or pay a fee in lieu of dedicating land itself. The requirement is takes effect whenever a developer looks to increase the number of residential units on a property, expand the floor area or footprint of a commercial or industrial building, or a combination of those actions.

If a developer decides to dedicate land to the City of Saint Paul, the quantity is decided upon by an agreement with the City Council based on the scale of the development itself and the need for park space near where the development will take place. The land will then be used as either a neighborhood or community park, such as a playground, recreation facility, trail, wetland or open space.

If a developer decides to pay a fee in lieu of dedicating land, the fee is set based on the type of development (residential, commercial, industrial, mixed-use residential and commercial/industrial) taking place:

- **Residential Development**

  Maximum of 4.5% of the county assessor's estimated market value of the land on which the development is built

- **Commercial and Industrial Development**

  Maximum of 0.5% of the county assessor's estimated market value of the land on which the development is built

- **Mixed Residential and Commercial/Industrial Development**

  Maximum of 4.5% of the county assessor's estimated market value of the land on which the development is built

- **Affordable Housing Development**

  Reduced fee that is multiplied by the specific percentage of the area median income of the Twin Cities at which the dwelling unit is required to be affordable

Since the ordinance has been in place, the fees have partially funded the creation of Frogtown Park and Farm and the Rice Park Revitalization Project, as well as covering the cost of items requested by the community during community engagement meetings.

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

Implementation of the Parkland Dedication Ordinance required the City of Saint Paul to enact two ordinances, the first of which established the parkland dedication requirement in 2007. The second ordinance, enacted in 2015, revised the Parkland Dedication Ordinance and added specific requirements for developers around committing land or paying a fee in lieu of land. The addition of the provision for paying a fee in lieu of dedicating land required authorization and special legislation from the state legislature.

The establishment of this ordinance did not initiate significant push back from developers and overtime, local developers have become familiar with the expectations of the requirement.

Since the establishment of the fee, Saint Paul has been able to use the funding to support and leverage the development of a handful of new parks, providing the community with needed open space and recreational facilities. A reduced fee is offered in the case of affordable housing developments, with the exact rate based on the affordability of the housing units relative to the Twin Cities area median income. Funds collected in lieu of land are used within one half mile of the development project and are not used for ongoing operations or maintenance.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar policy may want to consider the following:

1. How is your city strategically ensuring that amenities such as parks or opens spaces are available and remain accessible to all residents as new developments are occurring in your city?

2. What steps or legislation are needed for your city to implement an ordinance increasing the establishment and accessibility of park space? Would your municipality require special legislation or authorization from the state, and what additional departmental resources will be needed for administration?

3. What strategic measures can your city take to ensure that parks are developed and distributed equitably throughout your community? Consider the demographics of your neighborhoods, where development is occurring, and whether a fee should be tied to where development is taking place or where parkland is needed most — such as areas disproportionately impacted by racialized zoning policy or residential segregation.

4. Based on the development trends in your city, what is the potential impact of such a parkland dedication requestion on your community's housing market? What is the potential impact or reach of funding garnered through a fee in lieu of land dedication?

5. How can residents and a diverse set of perspectives and needs be engaged in the development and dedication of park space in your city?

Climate Resilience

Livable communities are established through strategies that equip individuals, communities, institutions, businesses and systems to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

- **Anchorage, AK**'s Peer Leadership Navigator Program
- **Norfolk, VA**'s Resilience Zoning Ordinance
- **Providence, RI**'s Climate Justice Plan

Peer Leadership Navigators

Background

Like many major urban cities around the United States, Anchorage, Alaska is an ethnically diverse city. It is a city with a large immigrant and refugee population and has more than 100 languages spoken by children in the public school system. With 17 percent of Anchorage residents speaking a language other than English, the Municipality of Anchorage's Office of Emergency Management sought creative ways to communicate vital information about emergency management to its diverse population.

Seeing the success of the **Peer Leadership Navigator** program (PLN) leveraged by the Anchorage Healthy Literacy Collaborative and the Alaska Literacy Program to further health equity goals, the Municipality of Anchorage partnered with the Alaska Literacy Program to use PLNs to deliver emergency-related information to Anchorage's diverse communities. Through collaboration with the Alaska Literacy Program, the PLNs were able to:

- Build relationships with their peers in need of information and community resources
- Direct their peers to reliable information about emergency services in their community and online
- Empower and support their peers to seek help in their community

With this partnership, the municipality was able to disseminate information to its immigrant and refugee population in their language, better preparing them in an event of emergencies such as wildfires, heat waves, coastal flooding and the ever-present possibility of earthquakes. PLNs were able to do this effectively because the program adopted Health Literacy Strategies, which included:

- Identifying the intended users
- Limiting the number of messages
- Using plain language
- Focusing on behavior
- Supplementing with pictures
- Checking for understanding

Scalability

- 🟢 **Municipal Action**
- 🟢 **Adaptive**
- 🔴 **Collaboration Needed**
- 🔴 **Cost of Implementation**
- 🟢 **State Legislative Authority**
- 🟡 **Mechanisms for Evaluation**

The Peer Leadership Navigators is a community-based program supported, but not developed, by the Municipality of Anchorage. The municipality saw value in collaborating with a successful model that has driven positive outcomes as a result of using volunteers from the target population, Peer Leadership Navigators, to provide reliable information about health and wellness to their peers in their native tongue.

With support from the National League of Cities' Leadership in Community Resilience program, the Municipality of Anchorage brought together community leaders from Anchorage Health Literacy Collaborative's Peer Leadership Navigator program and emergency management officials to replicate the positive results they had witnessed. The partnership created an opportunity for the municipality to train PLNs on the region's climate, natural hazards and emergency preparedness, and for it to close the linguistic gap with emergency readiness by establishing new and effective communication channels between the municipality and the local communities.

Success of the initiative hinged upon this collaboration with diverse partners, adherence to best practices and principles of adult learning, and the use of technology such as tablets and smartphone applications to manage outreach

conducted by volunteers. PLNs initially received $1,000 annually for their work, but the stipend amount was ultimately changed to $25 per hour based on the performance of the program. PLNs received an additional $50 if they documented contact with more than 25 community members in their contact log. The program was also conscious of not overextending PLNs, instead implementing shared coverage of community events, monthly peer meetings to offer support and suggestions, and opportunities for support in preparing for community presentations and activities.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Is your city's resilience and emergency management strategy inclusive of your community's diverse population and does it cater to the city's most vulnerable residents?

2. What community outreach does your emergency management services currently implement to reach racially and culturally diverse communities with potential cultural and language barriers? Does your emergency management program incorporate community outreach with materials in a range of languages and/or staff and volunteers that can communicate in languages other than English?

3. What community-based organizations can your emergency management services collaborate with to reach more residents, outside of neighborhood associations or civic leagues?

4. What resources, staff and funding, does your city need to appropriate to bolster a similar program, or to assist with identifying, recruiting, training and paying Peer Leadership Navigators?

Resilient Zoning Ordinance

Background

In 2018, the City of Norfolk rewrote its zoning ordinance to build a better city by creating the most resilience-focused ordinance in the United States. Re-writing the zoning ordinance was a three-year process that culminated with the following resilience goals:

- Design the coastal community of the future
- Create economic opportunity by advancing efforts to grow existing and new sectors
- Advance initiatives to connect communities, deconcentrate poverty and strengthen neighborhoods

As a city below sea level, Norfolk has a long history of flooding that overtime has become more recurrent, making the city more susceptible to sea level rise and flooding. Inspired by the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities Conference, the City of Norfolk created Vision2100 to address interrelated challenges it anticipates experiencing due to sea-level rise. These challenges include a changing world, population growth and aging infrastructure. Norfolk needed Vision2100 to be more than just a resilience planning effort. To institutionalize Vision2100 and embed it in the fabric of the city, Norfolk adopted resilience through zoning.

With this approach, the City of Norfolk has been able to encourage all developments to use resilient technologies that assist with stormwater management, risk mitigation and energy self-sufficiency. As a result, a groundbreaking feature of this zoning ordinance emerged: The Resilience Quotient.

The Quotient is a point-based system of flexible choices for developers based on a blend of elements that further resiliency. Now a requirement for all development in Norfolk, the Resilience Quotient is a tool that that allows developers and property owners to be a part of the solution of a more resilient city.

Scalability

- 🔴 Municipal Action
- 🟢 Adaptive
- 🔴 Collaboration Needed
- 🟣 Cost of Implementation
- 🔴 State Legislative Authority
- 🟢 Mechanisms for Evaluation

In 2013, the City of Norfolk was selected to participate in the first cohort of 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) by the Rockefeller Foundation. With access to the 100RC network and resources, the city was able to complete a deep dive analysis of potential flood risk and sea level rise while building out its resilience strategy. Since 2013, Norfolk strategic actions led to the re-write of their zoning ordinance and the creation of the Resilience Quotient.

Norfolk's revised zoning ordinance and the Resilience Quotient were the result of an intense community engagement process and collaboration across several city departments, such as the City Manager's Office, the Office of Resilience, Neighborhood Development, City Planning and Information & Technology, along with local businesses and community-based organizations. Community-oriented by nature, the zoning ordinance and the Resilience Quotient are evolving guidelines and tools that can be shaped by a changing world.

By incorporating resilience measures and additional elevation requirements into the zoning ordinance, Norfolk's most vulnerable neighborhoods at risk of flooding now have a greater confidence in home and property values.

The Resilience Quotient has also begun making the city more resilient as a whole: New grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores and gas pumps now have backup generator capacity to maintain their ability to sell fresh foods, dispense prescriptions and pump fuel during power outages. Hundreds of dwelling units have been set up for generators or solar and wind power generation, increasing choices available to residents, and each new home has been elevated at 16 inches to reduce the direct risk of flooding.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. What climate events is your city at risk of being impacted by? Are all populations, particularly communities of color, at equal risk of being impacted? And how can your city plan to reduce risks for its most vulnerable populations, neighborhoods and infrastructure?

2. Does your city have a climate resilience strategy that prioritizes your most vulnerable residents? Has your city considered institutionalizing its climate resilient strategy in its zoning ordinance or as an ordinance?

3. What would a Resilience Quotient look like for your city? What standard, climate code-related items would be applicable for your city, and what would be added in your city's Resilience Quotient?

4. What additional resources, such as more staff and funding, would need to be appropriated to the department implementing a resilience-focused zoning ordinance? What funding sources outside of the municipal government could support both the study and implementation of the zoning ordinance?

Climate Justice Plan

PROVIDENCE, RI

Background

In 2019, the City of Providence released its **Climate Justice Plan**. Co-developed by the city's Office of Sustainability and Providence's Racial and Environmental Justice Committee (REJC), the plan charts a path to an equitable, low-carbon and climate resilient future for the City of Providence.

Building off an executive order signed by Mayor Jorge O. Elorza that sets a goal for Providence to be carbon neutral by 2050, the climate justice plan offers:

- Carbon reduction targets in the transportation and building sectors
- Promotion of clean energy sources
- System-level change in Providence's governance structure, economic system and the overall health of its community to ensure a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels

The Climate Justice Plan prioritizes frontline communities, those communities of color most impacted by crises of ecology, economy and democracy, including the Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and Southeast Asian communities. Providence has observed that climate change does not affect all people equally. For example, Indigenous, low-income, and communities of color are often found living in or adjacent to locations where polluting fossil fuel industries are located.

Committed to grounding its climate and sustainability work around these communities, Providence produced the "Just Providence Framework" to guide their work in creating the Climate Justice Plan before implementation. The Just Providence Framework began as a series of anti-racism trainings that led to an assessment of the needs and priorities of the community, as well as research of best practices for equitable sustainable community development. From this process, recommendations for a Just and Racially Equitable Providence shifted decision-making power on environmental concerns and sustainability to frontline communities. This shift made front line communities the decisionmakers and provided an alternative framework of community engagement. This plan is a reflection of Providence's commitment to implementing a collaborative approach to governance.

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

A major undertaking of Providence's Climate Justice Plan involved completing not a typical process of community engagement, but rather committing itself to a process of continuous collaborative governance. This involved Providence committing to creating a plan that was community-driven and co-developed.

Providence's Office of Sustainability's commitment to understanding and addressing environmental concerns and needs of the city's low-income neighborhoods and communities of color was catalyzed by a $100,000 grant awarded to them by the Partners for Places' program, Equity Pilot Initiatives, which was matched by $50,000 from the Rhode Island Foundation. The award assisted the Office of Sustainability in:

- Hiring a team of experts to evaluate the city's Sustainable Providence plan with a social and racial equity lens
- Engaging residents and stakeholders in the evaluation process
- Conducting social and racial equity training for community leaders, city staff and other key decision makers

The Racial and Environmental Justice Committee of Providence and the Office of Sustainability collaboratively launched an Energy Democracy Community Leaders Program. This program assists community leaders with developing expertise in energy democracy and with applying that expertise to advising the City of Providence on how to move away from fossil fuels by 2050. From this program, frontline community members were interviewed and provided details on the lived experience of individuals most effected by environmental impacts in Providence, which informed policies and programs considered for the city's climate plan.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. Does your city have a climate resilience plan? If so, is it grounded in equity and justice, taking frontline communities who are most impact by environmental risks into consideration? Has your city discussed anti-racism training being required for all city staff, including the mayor and council members?

2. What does an authentic community engagement process look like? Has your city discussed collaborative governance or applied a collaborative governance approach to developing plans that impact the community?

3. How committed is your city to the community engagement process? Is your city open to having a plan evolve into something that looks very different than its original outline?

4. What resources, funding and staff, need to be committed to building the capacity of frontline communities in your city to be collaborative participants in developing climate resilience strategies and plans?

Jobs and Wealth Building

Jobs and Wealth Building are essential to the economy of livable communities. From entrepreneurship and financial empowerment to career development and universal basic income, Jobs and Wealth Building allow residents an equitable chance to earn a living wage and to improve their well-being. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

• **Portland, OR's A&O Level Up Program**
• **Boston, MA**'s Office of Financial Empowerment

A&O Level Up

PORTLAND, OR

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

Background

With more than 7,000 athletic and outdoor jobs in the city and more than 21,000 jobs in the metro area, Portland's Athletic and Outdoor (A&O) sector is "the signature industry of the Portland region." The City of Portland boasts the largest concentration of A&O sector jobs in the nation. The A&O sector in Portland includes a variety of footwear, apparel, bags and accessories, gear, bikes and bike accessories, fashion and business services and suppliers that create support systems for the A&O industry. Given the importance of the sector to the health of the Portland area's regional economy, local leaders have made the continued growth and success of the sector a top priority and recognize a need for greater support of the sector's entrepreneurs, startups, and small-to-mid-sized businesses.

In 2011, Portland's economic and urban development agency, Prosper Portland, worked with local A&O industry participants to convene a series of stakeholder roundtables where the idea for a cohort-based peer learning program materialized. In response, Prosper Portland launched the **A&O Level Up** program, formerly A&O Peer-to-Peer (P2P). A&O Level Up is designed to increase the stability and success of the industry's entrepreneurs and firms as they progress from startup stages to established companies.

Supporting entrepreneurs of small and medium sized companies in the athletic and outdoor consumer goods industry, A&O Level Up provides opportunities for shared learning, exposure to industry best practices, functional expertise and tools, and access to mentoring and consulting networks. Candidates for this peer learning program are generally:

- Based in the Portland metropolitan area
- Owners of consumer product companies with an emphasis on footwear, apparel, accessories, equipment and gear
- Companies making a minimum of $300,000 - $500,000 in annual revenue for a previous year, or having been in business for a minimum of 3 years

Over the course of six bi-monthly sessions, company founders learn from one another and from marketing, manufacturing, finance, and industry experts in areas that are critical to the growth of outdoor and athletic businesses to work toward solutions to their challenges. Sessions have included:

- Choosing a Board of Advisers
- Financial Management and Accounting Best Practices
- Effective Sales Management Techniques for Emerging Brands

In Portland, entrepreneurs and CEOs had a voice in the creation and implementation of A&O Level Up. As co-creators of the program, entrepreneurs and CEOs made significant investments in the success of A&O Level Up by providing both their time and insights on the challenges that they faced while growing their companies.

With an average annual budget of $4,500, Prosper Portland covers the cost of a program facilitator and mentor, as well as event production costs for the program's end-of-year reception. Service providers and experts volunteer their time and expertise, both inside and outside facilitated sessions, to help company founders and CEOs as they navigate challenges associated with the industry.

To measure the success of the program, city staff evaluate participant experiences based on an annual survey at the end of the year and through follow-up meetings with participants over the course of a year. Metrics taken in to consideration include the number of participants, the percentage of participants that are women and people of color, hours of mentoring and coaching provided, overall quality of materials provided to participants, and job growth.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. What are the key industries for your local economy and are there certain sectors with a history of strong industry-led initiatives?

2. What unique needs of local entrepreneurs in the selected industries can be addressed by local government, in partnership with industry stakeholders? Care should be taken to understand the areas where entrepreneurs and CEOs of small and mid-sized businesses need assistance, and to foster a network of industry experts, service providers, and consultants with expertise in these areas to serves as speakers, facilitators and mentors.

3. What selection criteria will be used to evaluate applications from entrepreneurs and startups? City leaders should prioritize accepting a racially and gender diverse pool of applicants, while also being aware that startups in conceptual or pre-revenue stages often face very different challenges than more established ventures. Consider whether you might want to cater specifically to startups at one stage or another.

4. Does the local government have good, collaborative, working relationships with its targeted industries? If not, what can be done to establish one? Since other industry groups and membership organizations may be offering similar programs, it is important for local leaders to understand the existing programmatic landscape in this area by talking to those who are leading similar efforts and identifying opportunities to fill any gaps in existing services.

Office of Financial Empowerment

Background

Boston's **Office of Financial Empowerment** (OFE) was launched in an effort to address poverty and income inequality in the city. Established in 2014 by Mayor Martin J. Walsh, OFE is a collaborative effort between the City, the United Way, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), and the Jewish Vocational Service. The Office strives to "link those seeking financial security and wealth generation with access to capital, financial education, and financial services."
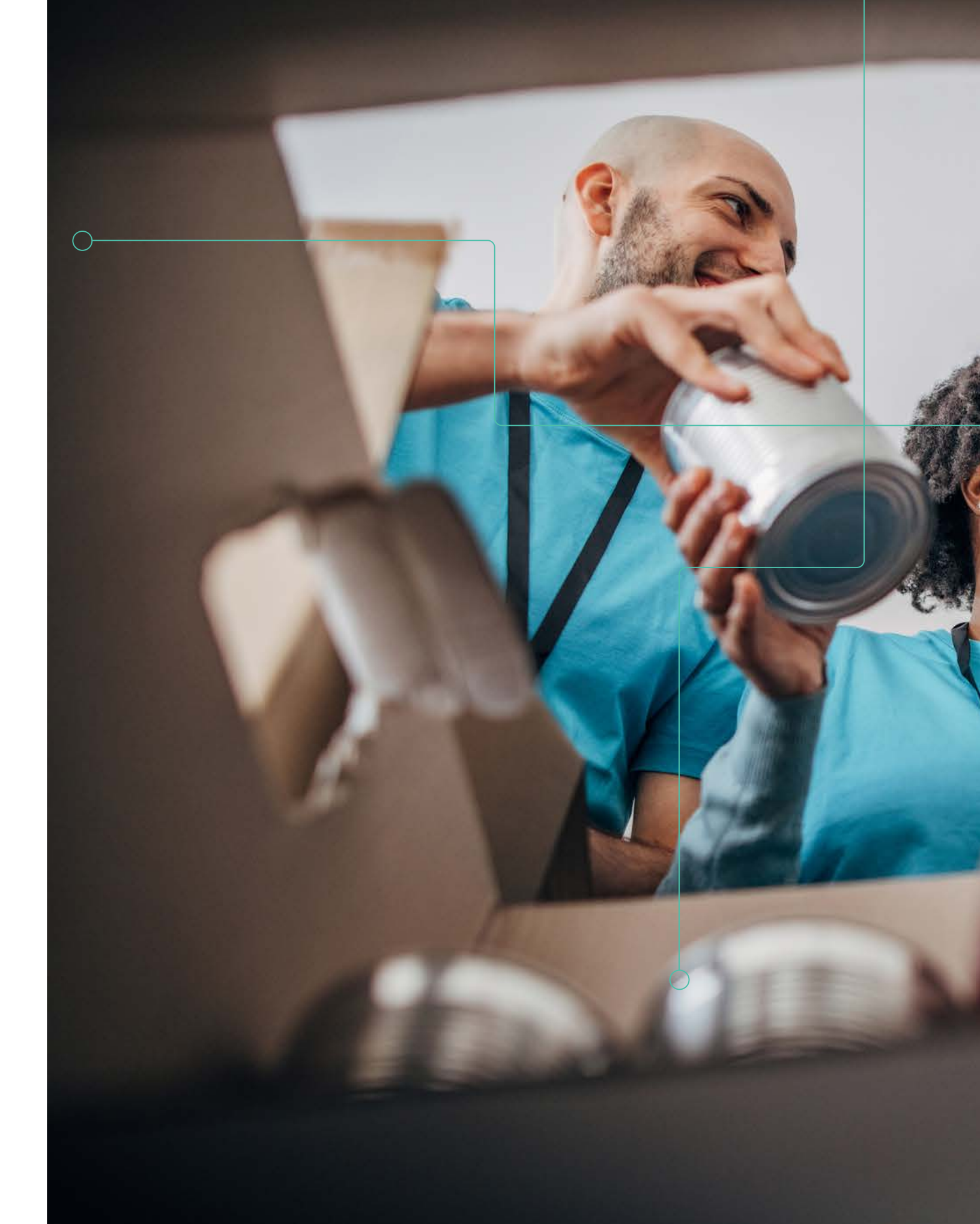
To achieve its mission, OFE operates the following six programs designed to help individuals and families obtain the financial skills, education and employment opportunities needed to join the middle class:

- **Bank on Boston** works in partnership with financial institutions and community-based organizations (CBOs) to connect unbanked and underbanked low and moderate-income Bostonians with reliable, non-predatory, entry-level bank accounts and credit building products

- **Boston Tax Help Coalition** provides free, high-quality, fully inclusive, multi-cultural and multi-lingual tax preparation assistance and asset building opportunities to all eligible Bostonians.

- **Boston Build Credit** is an innovative, city-wide credit-building campaign that seeks to educate and provide credit-building services to increase the credit score of 20,000 Bostonians to at least 670 by 2025. The lead partners in this project include the OFE, LISC, and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack County. Numerous CBOs contribute and participate in the project.

- **Boston Saves** provides all Boston students, beginning in K2 kindergarten, with a children's savings accounts, seeded with $50. Wealth building and financial education is integrated into the programming to build economic agency for youth, as well as to create a culture of going to college for all families in the Boston Public Schools over time.

- **Bridge to Hospitality Career Program** helps to equip Bostonians with the skills needed to succeed in the hospitality and culinary industries. Participants can earn food safety and other certifications and receive industry-specific career training.

- **Roxbury Center for Financial Empowerment** is a hub for personal wealth building where residents can access a range of services, from help getting a job, to finding quality and affordable housing.

Scalability

- ● Municipal Action
- ● Adaptive
- ● Collaboration Needed
- ● Cost of Implementation
- ● State Legislative Authority
- ● Mechanisms for Evaluation

The Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) was established as a mayoral priority to capitalize upon the Mayor's interest and knowledge of financial empowerment strategies. Early on, the Mayor's office received public support for establishing OFE from local unions and community-based organizations.

The Mayor's Economic Development Working Group provided recommendations that formed the basis of key programmatic aspects of OFE. Financial support, budget and staffing for OFE is provided by the economic development arm of the City's Redevelopment Authority. Some funding to support programming is also raised from private and philanthropic partners.

OFE leadership monitors and evaluates program outcomes using customized metrics and evaluation tools developed by the OFE specifically for individualized programs. Some metrics are created as part of national program models and others are created through local partnerships that deliver programs.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. What financial empowerment initiatives currently exist within local government that can be brought under one roof?

2. What disparities in income, financial empowerment, financial literacy, and access to resources or supports exist in your city, particularly based on race, gender or ability?

3. Does local political and financial support exist for the initiative?

4. What financial institutions and community-based organizations could be strong partners for a financial empowerment initiative? Consider assessing the programmatic landscape and existing offerings outside the municipal government to identify areas for collaboration and alignment.

5. How will local government define and measure success? How can intersectional goals be embedded and prioritized through program evaluation?

Community Engagement

Community Engagement in livable communities allows residents to tap into, foster and shape their communities. It creates an opportunity to have important and actionable conversations, identify the needs of underrepresented populations, foster co-development and collaborative governance, and encourage social ties. In this section, you will have an opportunity to learn about and scale:

• **Seattle, WA**'s Get Engaged Toolbox

Get Engaged Toolbox

SEATTLE, WA

Background

The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' **Get Engaged Toolbox** is one of several suites of public resources made available to citizens through the City's online Community Resource Hub, an information portal created to help citizens get informed, engaged, and mobilized to work and connect with local government and with each other. Rather than promoting strictly top-down strategies, the Get Engaged Toolbox aggregates information about programs, best practices and other resources that empower citizens to forge grassroots solutions to community challenges and leverage the inherent leadership within neighborhoods.

Resources within the Get Engaged Toolbox are grouped along five tracts:

- **Public Participation** resources include links to information on voter registration; ways to provide feedback and give input on public projects; and information about City events and meetings

- **Civic Leadership** resources include information on how city government functions; and opportunities for service on local boards and commissions

- **Community Improvements** resources include links to request graffiti removal supplies; help in organizing a neighborhood walk; Adopt-A-Street resources; and applications to receive free tree for neighborhoods

- **Community Building** resources include street closure permits for block parties and community gardening resources

- **Neighborhood Safety** resources include information on joining or starting a Block Watch program; free information and incentives to encourage more families and kids to bike and walk to and from school; and access to leadership skill-building for youth

Within each topic area, citizens can click on links to be directed to detailed information and guidance on topics such as how to help the city decide how to spend its budget for park and street improvements, getting involved through volunteer work, starting a neighborhood watch program, and much more.

Scalability

- **Municipal Action**
- **Adaptive**
- **Collaboration Needed**
- **Cost of Implementation**
- **State Legislative Authority**
- **Mechanisms for Evaluation**

The Get Engaged Toolbox, a sub-section of Seattle's online Community Resource Hub, was created as one of several deliverables addressing a mayoral Executive Order to further the city's commitment to promoting and using equitable and inclusive community outreach and engagement strategies.

The implementation of the toolbox was highly successful in Seattle due to the level of commitment to equity and inclusive community engagement from local elected leaders. City leaders wanted to ensure that the government was hearing from all its residents, especially under-represented communities such as immigrants and people of color.

Developed by the City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods communications team, the toolbox made information, tools, resources and programs, from the city accessible in a variety of formats and languages. Information about other city and community resources such as community improvements, neighborhood safety, and how to register to vote were provided by Seattle's city departments and community-based organizations. After the launch of the online toolbox, the city created a print version of the toolbox that can be download and printed for community residents to enjoy.

To evaluate the success of the toolbox, the city collects feedback from the community, staff and colleague across the City of Seattle.

Cities, towns or villages looking to implement a similar practice may want to consider the following:

1. How does your city facilitate, collect, analyze and act on inclusive feedback and community engagement?

2. What barriers to public participation exist in your community, particularly for under-represented populations?

3. Is there an expressed commitment throughout local government to equitable, inclusive, intersectional and authentic community engagement?

4. Does local government have the technical capacity or financial resources to outsource the creation of engaging web and print resources where community members can access information on civic engagement?

5. How can your city's departments work together to provide seamless information, resources and programs to residents through a variety of formats and various languages?

Conclusion

The policies and practices highlighted throughout this report were selected for their potential to be adapted to communities at any scale. Each is **innovative** in how it approaches a given challenge, **equitable** with regard to who benefits from it and who is subject to the cost, and **inclusive** in considering a diverse range of needs. Regardless of whether a city is at the stage of initializing, pursuing or activating livability, key lessons can be learned from how each of these policies have been implemented. This report has aimed to provide not just examples of policies and programs that can be replicated or scaled, but also a framework through which city leaders can consider and evaluate all policies as they look to foster more livable communities.

It is becoming increasingly important for cities, towns and villages to be livable for all residents — to be communities where individuals and families have access to the jobs, housing, health care, transportation, and public spaces that they need in order to thrive. This has never been more clear than in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has magnified the deeply rooted inequities that exist in — and because of — societal and governmental systems today. At the most basic level, cities thrive when individuals of all races, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic levels, ages and disabilities are put in a position to thrive.

Endnotes

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