



Civic Action

A monthly update from the National Civic League

January 2016

Rededicating Ourselves to Rebuilding Community

By Doug Linkhart, President of NCL

More and more cities and towns are discovering that community partnerships are a necessary ingredient in civic governance. The former Mayor of Lakewood, Colorado, Bob Murphy, said it best when visiting the NCL office a couple of weeks ago: "As a Mayor, I had many roles-ambassador for the city, etc.-but what it really came down to was community-building."

Cities are increasingly turning to grassroots, community-based approaches to address a variety of issues facing their communities. The Police Department in DeSoto, Texas uses [neighborhood partnerships, open access to crime data and youth programs to prevent crime](#). The Tahoe-Truckee School District in California works with community volunteers and service groups to [improve the literacy of third-graders](#). In Somerville, Massachusetts the Pocket Change effort [encourages local residents and businesses to hire local youth and support youth entrepreneurs](#). None of these efforts could succeed without actively engaging residents and community groups.

The National Civic League has promoted community-building for the past 120 years. While many of our programs help cities use community engagement as a means of tackling specific issues, others are creating a stronger community first, giving residents a permanent place at the problem-solving table. Portland, Oregon's network of neighborhood associations and the Marana, Arizona Citizen's Forum - which brings together residents to [identify issues and propose solutions to pressing problems](#) - are examples of creating civic infrastructure that can have a lasting ability to effectively address whatever issues may arise in the future.

In his book, "Community, The Structure of Belonging,"

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[Get Free NCR Article - How disasters reveal hidden civic capacities](#)

[Free Technical Assistance on Issues related to Solar Energy](#)

Download our newest tool - the Civic Index Quick Quiz - and identify your civic strengths and challenges.

Civic Index Quick Quiz

Use this tool to identify your city's strengths and challenges in the areas of civic engagement, community leadership, public participation and civic engagement, and diversity and inclusiveness. The quiz is based on the National Civic League's Civic Index, a tool used to measure a city's civic health. The quiz is available in both English and Spanish. For more information, visit [www.ncl.org/civicindex](#).

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Community Leadership				
1. I am a member of a community organization.				
2. I am a member of a neighborhood association.				
3. I am a member of a business association.				
4. I am a member of a religious organization.				
5. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
6. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
7. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
8. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
9. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
10. I am a member of a community organization that provides services to the community.				
Public Participation and Civic Engagement				
11. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
12. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
13. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
14. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
15. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
16. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
17. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
18. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
19. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
20. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
Diversity and Inclusiveness				
21. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
22. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
23. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
24. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
25. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
26. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
27. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
28. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
29. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				
30. I have participated in a community meeting or public hearing.				

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[The Civic Index Quick Quiz](#) enables residents to easily identify key civic assets and areas in need of further focus.

Peter Block writes that "the vitality and connectedness of our communities will determine the strength of our democracy." With the hopelessness that many feel about national politics these days, it's important to recognize the rising role of cities and their communities and the incredible potential they hold for creating a better future.

All-America City Spotlight: Marshall, TX

In 2015 Marshall, Texas was named an All-America City finalist for the second year in a row. A diverse team of residents traveled to Denver to share their community's success stories in hopes of being chosen as a 2015 All-America City.



Their collaborative community-driven projects spanned from innovative Boys and Girls Club programming to promoting a healthy lifestyle in America's BBQ Belt to documenting their unique history to empower young people's future through a knowledge of the past. The spirit and vision of Marshall, Texas to work together to get things done, led them to be designated an All-America City in 2015.

According to Marshall's team leader, Christina Cocek Anderson: "*The rigorous All-America City application and presentation process was an uplifting, unifying endeavor for our community. It provided an opportunity to identify and communicate some of the ways our amazing and diverse community has worked together as one to get good things done. It also provided the opportunity to share with and learn from new friends from other cities nationwide who are working to bring powerful, positive change to the lives of their citizens as well. Marshall, Texas is very honored to be an All-America City and we appreciate the National Civic League for making such a valuable experience possible for communities throughout America.*"

[Learn more about Marshall's winning projects here.](#)
[Apply to become a 2016 All-America City here.](#)

Increasingly Frequent Natural Disasters May Also Reveal Hidden Civic Capacities

After years of drought, Southern California communities are now facing a new threat, torrential rains and flooded streets thanks to the effects of the Pacific weather pattern known as El Nino. Seems like every time you turn on the

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television or the read the newspapers there's a new outbreak of freakish weather. These events challenge the fabric of our communities, but they can also bring out hidden civic capacities.

Find out how community organizers and volunteers in Boulder County, CO rallied to provide relief and resources for the victims of the disastrous 2013 floods. The magnitude of



the disaster, writes author Aaron Leavy in a recent issue of the National Civic Review, "reshuffled people's expectations about who can and should take action and what is possible. In the moments and months after the floods, people recognized in themselves and their neighbors a previously unseen capacity to tackle critical problems, to forge strong connections, and to shape the future of their communities through informal groups."

[Read the article here](#)

New Opportunity to Get Free Technical Assistance to Build a Stronger Solar Community

In 2015, National Civic League announced its partnership with ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) to establish a national recognition program to celebrate communities that are building the infrastructure and regulations to create strong solar marketplaces. Now in 2016, interested communities can receive free technical assistance (up to 100 hours) to help build a more solar ready community, and pursue national recognition for their efforts. [For more information click here](#)

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