



## Civic Action

*A monthly update from the National Civic League*

September 2016

### How Strong is Your Civic Infrastructure?

*By Doug Linkhart, President of NCL*

Does your city have a strong civic infrastructure? What makes some communities better able than others to solve the tough social, political, economic or physical challenges they face? This was a question the board and staff of the National Civic League set out to answer in 1986. After more than 90 years of work on municipal reform and "good government," it was time to look into the inner workings of cities to see what makes some more successful than others.

The answer to this question came in the form of a "civic index," a new tool communities could use to analyze their civic strengths and weaknesses in collective efforts to solve problems or envision a better future. Unveiled at the National Conference on Governance in Boston in 1987, and updated twice since then, the Civic Index now consists of seven variables. These include:

- Community Leadership
- Public Participation and Civic Engagement
- Diversity and Inclusiveness
- Networking and Communication
- Decision-making and Consensus-Building
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Community Vision and Pride

For each of these variables, the Civic Index weighs a variety of factors, and asks individuals to rank these factors to come up with a total score. More importantly, the Civic Index discusses ways that cities can achieve excellence within each variable, not only advancing the city's score, but more importantly helping the city solve tough issues and build a community that people feel proud of.

Much of our work at the National Civic League revolves around the values listed above. We encourage

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communities to use the Civic Index, but also to learn from the stories in our quarterly journal, the National Civic Review, the products of our other programs and our technical assistance services to advance their long-term well-being.

[Join us!](#) By becoming a member of the National Civic League, you will enjoy the benefits of the Civic Index and all the other programs we sponsor. More importantly, you'll become part of a movement to strengthen our country, one community at a time.

[\*\*\*Learn more about becoming a member!\*\*\*](#)

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## **Welcome to Suggsville**

Welcome to Suggsville, USA, a poor, rural community with higher than average rates of disease and unemployment, lower than average test scores and a growing drug problem.

Suggsville is not a real town, but a composite case study of a community where citizens are "doing the work of democracy" by naming and framing local problems, deliberating, identifying resources, acting and learning. In a National Civic Review article, Kettering Foundation President and author David Mathews draws on decades of research, learning exchanges and the experiences of real communities to illustrate the workings of these six democratic practices. Read about it by [downloading this free PDF](#) from the Summer, 2016 edition of NCR.

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## **Visit the NCL booth at ICMA's national conference for a chance to win a round trip Southwest ticket**

Look for NCL staff and our booth at the 2016 ICMA National Conference. Visit the NCL booth (933) to learn more about our exciting programs and projects - plus enter to win a free roundtrip ticket on Southwest Airlines - the official airline of the All-America City Award.

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## **Advancing a new model for infrastructure investment**

The Bipartisan Policy Center is presenting a forum in Denver discussing the critical issue of infrastructure investment. "Join the Bipartisan Policy Center for a discussion to both explore how Colorado can continue to push the envelope and assess ways to systematically



incentivize and implement the new model around the country. "

The event is Tuesday, September 9 at the Denver Chamber of Commerce from 12-2pm. It will feature former HUD secretary Henry Cisneros former House Majority Leader Eric Cantor as well as state experts in infrastructure investment. [Click here to RSVP](#)

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