



National Civic League Civic Index

4th
edition
2019



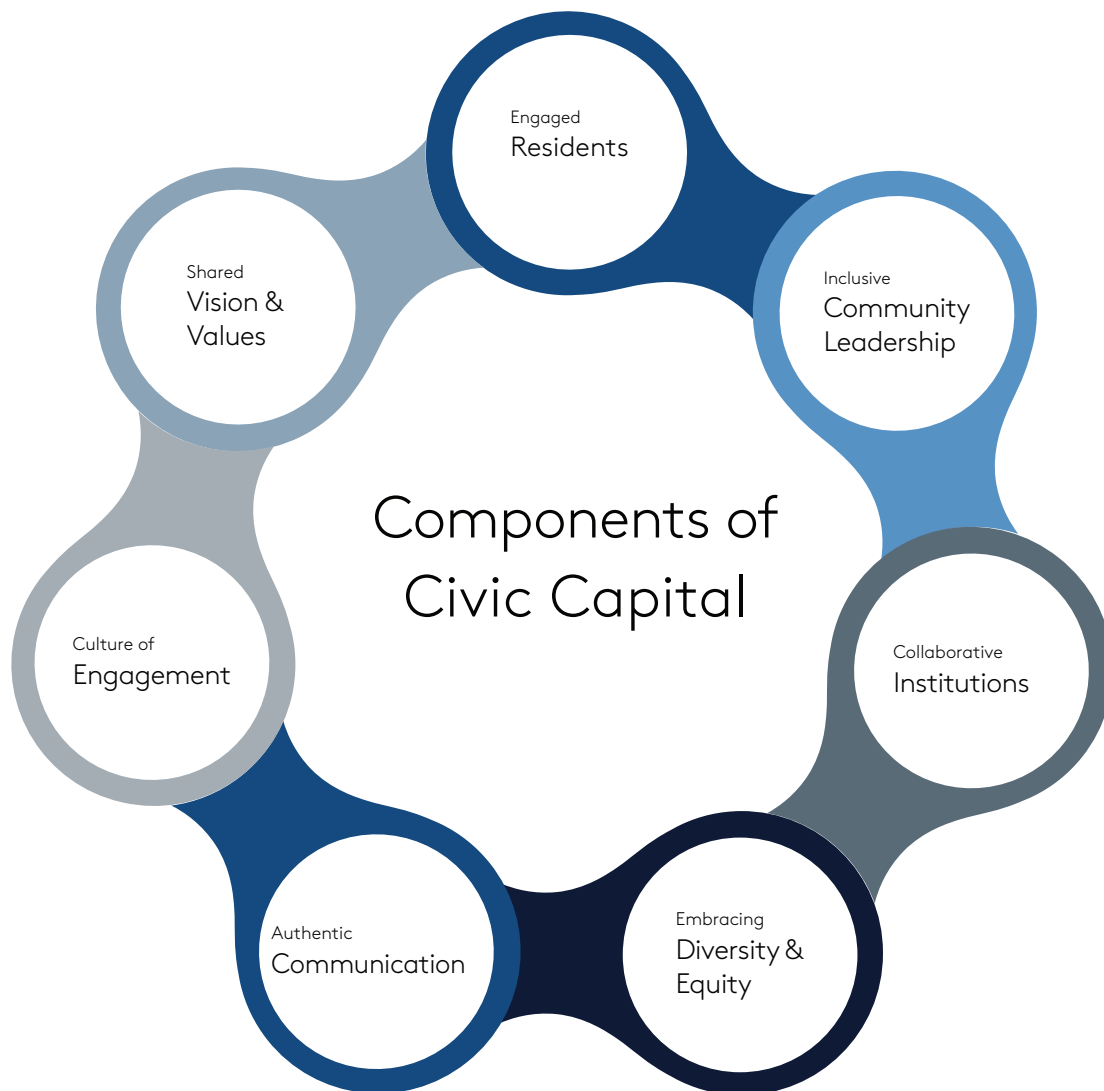
Civic Capital

The formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities communities use to make decisions and solve problems



Civic Capital

4th
edition



About this edition

The *Civic Index* has been updated periodically since it was first introduced in 1987. This fourth edition – building on decades of work in communities - includes an even greater focus than previous versions on the critical role of inclusive civic engagement and equity as key components of civic capital. Writing and layout of this publication was spearheaded by Aaron Leavy with support from Sarah Lipscomb, Carla Kimbrough, Rebecca Trout and League President, Doug Linkhart.

About the National Civic League

Founded in 1894 by civic leaders including Theodore Roosevelt and Louis Brandeis, the National Civic League is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization whose mission is:

to advance civic engagement to create equitable, thriving communities. We achieve this by inspiring, supporting and recognizing inclusive approaches to community decision-making.

The National Civic League envisions a country in which the full diversity of community members is actively and meaningfully engaged in local governance, including both decision-making and implementation of activities to advance the common good.

In addition to the *Civic Index*, other League programs include the All-America City awards, *National Civic Review*, Model City Charter, Promising Practices Database, All-America Conversations Toolkit and Community Assistance. The League uses these and other tools to help local communities use civic engagement to advance health, education, sustainability, racial equity and other important values.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
WWW.NATIONALCIVICLEAGUE.ORG

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Cleaning up
during Dublin
California's pride
week

The Civic Index

What makes some communities more able than others to solve the tough social, political, economic or physical challenges they face?

This was a question the National Civic League set out to answer in 1986. On-the-ground research revealed a set of factors that we call civic capital– the formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities that communities use to make decisions and solve problems.

A common thread in successful communities is the ongoing struggle through formal and informal processes to identify common goals and meet individual and community needs and aspirations. ~ Former National Civic League President John Parr

This common thread is civic capital, a term that *National Civic Review* authors William Potapchuk and Jarle P. Crocker once defined as “the collective civic capacities of a community, the currency supporting collaborative strategies that pursue innovative programs and forge new relationships to build a future with better results for children and families.”

Somewhat like social capital, but not to be confused with financial capital, civic capital can be found in all sorts of communities, not just the most affluent, educated or advantaged. While myriad other factors contribute to community progress, civic capital is the core factor identified by the National Civic League as the primary explanation for long-term community success.

At the National Civic League, we know of many communities with an abundant supply of civic capital. The All-America City program has recognized over 500 of these communities during the past 69 years. All have varying levels of

civic engagement, collaboration and leadership, and have been able to tackle tough issues in a sustainable manner--by bringing a diverse group of residents and stakeholders to the table.

Beginning with the first edition in 1986, the *Civic Index* has been an essential tool for measuring a community's civic capital. The *Civic Index* is a self-assessment tool consisting of a set of questions that provide a framework for discussing and measuring a community's civic capital.

Communities have used the *Civic Index* to better understand their civic strengths and to identify gaps or areas in need of further attention, soliciting community input to create a baseline measure of their civic capital and monitor progress over time as they work to enhance their internal capacity. The *Civic Index* is intended to be subjective and qualitative; how a community ranks on the index depends on the views of residents and other community stakeholders. And, importantly, the rankings by different parts of the community should not be averaged, lest the differences among various parts of the community be lost.

The Seven Components of Civic Capital

1. Engaged Residents
2. Inclusive Community Leadership
3. Collaborative Institutions
4. Embracing Diversity and Equity
5. Authentic Communication
6. Culture of Engagement
7. Shared Vision and Values

Civic Capital shapes:

- How community challenges are addressed or acknowledged
- How decisions are made
- Civic pride and how residents view their community's quality of life
- The resiliency of a community in the face of crises or challenging times

About this Publication

This booklet takes the seven components of civic capital developed as part of the *Civic Index* and offers a more complete picture of how these components play out in real communities.

Each section describes a particular component and includes examples from communities across the country. For each component, the National Civic League has developed four to six questions which communities can use to assess the strength of their civic capital in this area.

Throughout this publication we share stories of governments, individuals, businesses and organizations that are exercising their community's civic capital to solve tough problems. The National Civic League gathered these stories from All-America City Award winning communities, our many national and local partners and through research into the best examples of civic capital building throughout the country.

In addition to more specific examples, we have created three longer case studies for Longmont, Colorado; Hampton, Virginia and Somerville, Massachusetts. These case studies help to show what it looks like when communities build civic capital across the components.

Included in the back is a facilitator's guide, which is designed to support small group (8-20 people) conversations using the *Civic Index* questions, either as a separate exercise or as part of a large gathering with breakout groups. These small group conversations allow people to learn from one another and discuss ways to leverage the community's strengths and address its challenges. Where possible, it is best to use the *Civic Index* either with groups from a broad cross-section of the community or in gatherings in different parts of the community to better understand how different people view the *Index's* measures.

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Components of Civic Capital

Engaged Residents
Inclusive Community Leadership
Collaborative Institutions
Embracing Diversity and Equity
Authentic Communication
Culture of Engagement
Shared Vision and Values



Communities with strong civic capital:

Have residents who play a more active role in shaping decisions. Residents work to solve problems rather than waiting for government to solve their problems.

Cultivate and support leaders from all backgrounds and diverse perspectives.

Effectively collaborate across sectors.

Address diversity and equity; and move toward better outcomes for all.

Support credible, valuable information moving between residents, institutions and other stakeholders.

Effectively engage the residents most affected by particular problems creating stronger more relevant programs, policies and efforts.

Create a shared vision and values from which aligned action emerges.

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Ways to use the Civic Index

1. Host community conversations, preferably with small breakout groups, in which people answer the *Civic Index* questions and discuss the implications of their answers.
2. Encourage partners or grantees to use the *Civic Index* to create a common language or set of goals around civic capital.
3. Share questions on social media to spark a conversation about the community's civic capital.
4. Include *Index* questions in program evaluations, or measure how a key program helps build civic capital.
5. Include questions from the *Index* into a civic scorecard, or an annual update on the health of the community.
6. Use it at a staff retreat, or council visioning session to align programs around key civic capital goals.
7. Use it with an elected body, or a governing board to surface key issues within the community.
8. Use the *Index* as a framing exercise or tool for strategic planning/visioning efforts.
9. Encourage local candidates to pledge to pursue policies which they believe will help foster civic capital.

The *Civic Index* provides a framework for discussing and measuring a community's civic capital



Residents come together to tend a community garden

Engaged Residents

Residents play an active role in shaping decisions and civic affairs.

"The health of a democratic society may be measured by the quality of functions performed by private citizens."- Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America

Communities are more likely to thrive where residents play an active role in shaping decisions and taking action. The notion that "government cannot do it alone" was an important part of de Tocqueville's message and is increasingly evident in times of limited resources. Activities to address particular issues are more likely to be sustainable when community members are involved in their development and implementation.

It is essential for leaders to encourage participation and make space for residents. Accusations of apathy and lack of understanding

of the issues, frequently mask institutional structures and practices that make participation difficult and where decisions are often made before residents are even consulted or involved. To build the civic capacity of a community and develop robust civic capital, residents must step forward to take action and leaders and institutions must encourage and support this participation and decision-making.



LAKEWOOD'S 2016 ALL-AMERICA CITY PRESENTATION FOCUSED ON RESIDENTS STEPPING FORWARD TO ACT

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON LEAVY

LAKEWOOD, COLORADO

In Lakewood, Colorado, residents interested in creating more sustainable neighborhoods find support from city staffers. Begun as a pilot program in 2011, the Lakewood Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative provides support and encourages direct citizen action to promote green living standards through civic engagement. Interested neighborhoods work with city staff to engage residents about their interests and concerns. Staff and neighborhood leaders select initiatives that best align with the needs of the community.

Residents in each neighborhood host workshops and complete projects that advance sustainability, enhance livability and reduce ecological footprint, earning points that are used to rate performance. These points are tracked on a public website encouraging a spirit of friendly-competition and helping residents to track their progress toward the goals they set for themselves. There are currently eight Lakewood neighborhoods involved in the program, which has now been copied by fourteen other Denver-area cities.

CLEVELAND, OHIO

Since 2003, Neighborhood Connections has provided small grants to groups of residents in Cleveland and East Cleveland, Ohio to do projects that improve the quality of life in their communities. These grants range in value from \$500 to \$5,000. A committee of Cleveland and East Cleveland residents review the grant requests, so residents are the grant-makers, determining what projects will best improve their neighborhoods. Since 2003, more than 2,300 projects have received more than \$7.5 million in funding.

PHOTO FROM [HTTPS://SUSTAINABLENEIGHBORHOODNETWORK.ORG/](https://sustainableneighborhoodnetwork.org/)



PHOTO BY TIM EVANSON

A sample of recently funded projects illustrates the eclectic nature of the program.

- Mercedarian Walkers received \$500 to promote their physical fitness program.
- The Walker Group received \$4,000 for an enrichment program designed to provide information and resources to expectant mothers.
- Lawn Life received \$2,500 to create a 10-week course on lawn mower repair on residential and commercial mowers. Funds will be used for tools and the collection of broken lawn mowers.
- East 108th Street Club received \$2,598 for its 6th Annual Intergenerational Community Day, an event bringing the community together for food and fun.

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Outsiders often imagine Las Vegas, Nevada as little more than the sum of its casinos, hotels and restaurants. For the city's more than 600,000 residents, however, there is far more than just the "strip." Residents care deeply about their community and its history. In 2010, The Westside School Alumni Foundation (WSAF) was founded to preserve the historic Las Vegas Westside School site, educate the public on its history and value, and encourage the development of the vacant school as a cultural destination. The



WEST SIDE SCHOOL. PHOTO CREDIT: ALVIS HENDLEY

Westside School, which opened in 1923, was the first Las Vegas school to open its doors to African American and Native American students.

After residents organized themselves and took action in support of the Westside School, the city coordinated with local leaders to help embed the work of the WSAF into its ongoing planning efforts. In 2016, the city adopted a community development plan with the intention of revitalizing the Westside School community. The community was highly engaged in the visioning process and strongly encouraged to attend meetings and contribute ideas. The resulting plans from this process were incorporated into the Las Vegas 2035 Downtown Master Plan, making it an official city council-approved document to be incorporated into future development. Today, the school site stands as a testament to Las Vegas' ongoing efforts to facilitate racial healing and community dialogue.

PLACENTIA, CALIFORNIA

Like cities across the country, Placentia, California faced a major fiscal crisis following the 2008 recession. Placentia implemented many cost-reduction and revenue enhancement measures but, despite these efforts, it continued to operate with a yearly deficit of at least \$1.5 million. Without a long-term solution, the city would continue to struggle financially and find it difficult to provide quality municipal



To combat higher than normal rates of heart disease in their congregations, religious leaders in Southeast San Diego have banded together with residents to improve their health. Above, Immanuel Chapel Christian Church members on a "gospel walk." The gospel walk is a chance to sing and walk around the neighborhood followed by discussion of heart health

services to the community. Unlike many cities, Placentia trusted residents enough to put the future of its fiscal health in the hands of a group of residents from all walks of life.

In 2014, Placentia entrusted its residents with the responsibility to help chart a course for the city's future. The city created a Citizens Fiscal Sustainability Task Force to identify potential cost reduction and revenue enhancement. Appointed by the Placentia City Council, the task force included an artist, professor, arborist, engineer, regional distribution center manager, financial consultant for public and not-for-profit agencies, and two retirees. Its purpose was to closely examine the city's revenue structure and budget deficit and make recommendations for creating new revenues and/or reducing costs. The members were from all parts of the city, from the most disadvantaged neighborhood to the most affluent and all parts in between.

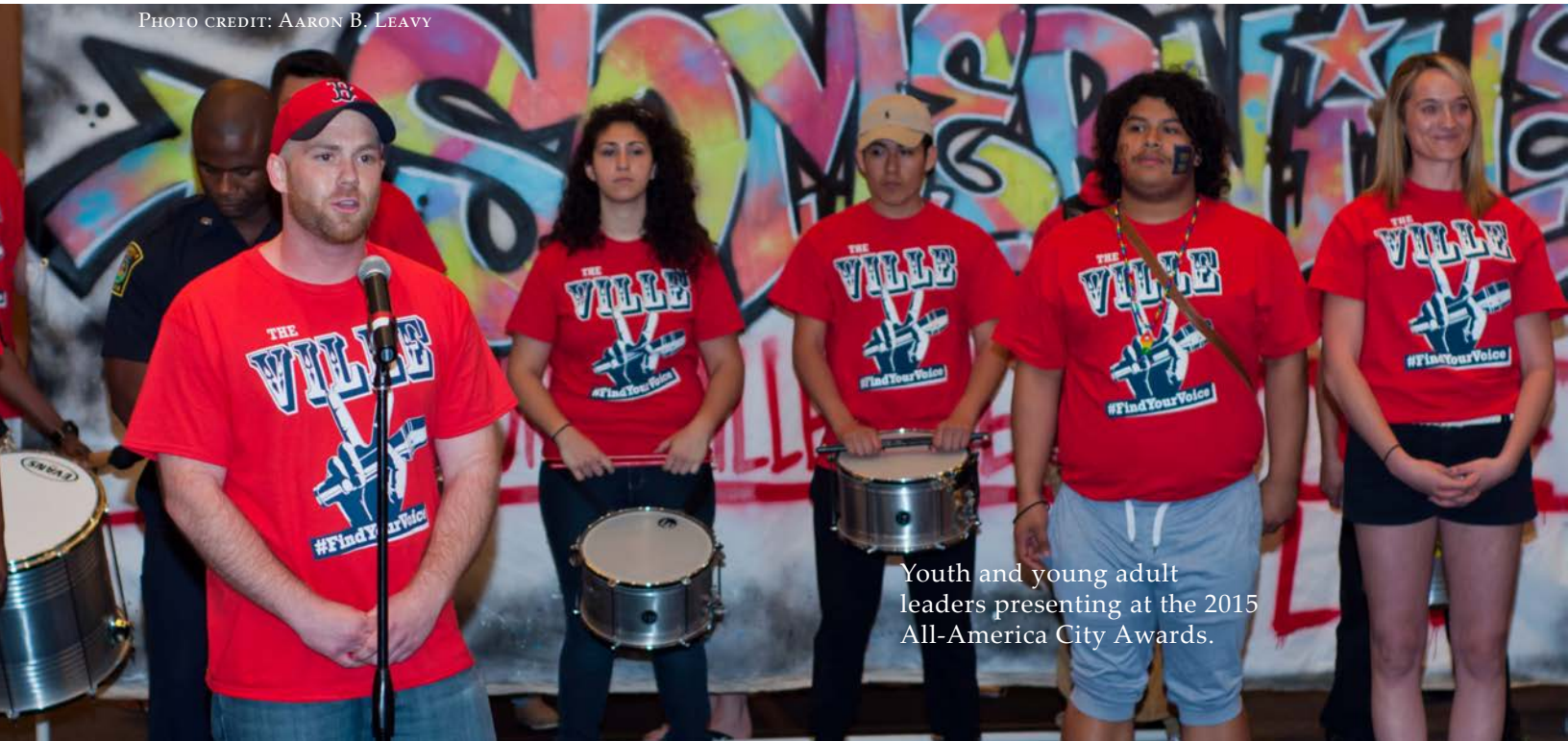
Over three years, the task force held 30 public meetings in locations across the city. It analyzed the city's finances and prepared a final report for city council. Among other recommendations, the task force suggested that Placentia declare a fiscal emergency. But the task force didn't just put the onus on the city to move forward, it suggested exploring additional local revenue, including a voter-enacted measure as appropriate and the ongoing need for a citizens group to help reach fiscal sustainability. In Placentia, the city recognized that residents could take on the responsibility of thoroughly examining the city budget and help the city prioritize difficult budget choices.



Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We have many resident-initiated and resident-led community/ neighborhood organizations and activities*
- ❑ *In community meetings, people tend to work collaboratively to solve-problems; instead of being critical and confrontational*
- ❑ *Neighborhood councils and community groups reflect the community's diversity and regularly work with city officials to provide input into decision-making*
- ❑ *It is easy to find residents to serve on local boards and commissions, or run for office*

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON B. LEAVY



Youth and young adult leaders presenting at the 2015 All-America City Awards.

Inclusive Community Leadership

The community actively cultivates and supports leaders from diverse backgrounds and with diverse perspectives

Communities with good civic capital have leaders that represent all segments of the population, along with abundant opportunities for leadership development. Such communities often have formal leadership programs and generally have a variety of boards, commissions and community positions in which rising leaders can play a role.

Most important, it should be possible for anyone to rise to a leadership position. As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, *“Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve... You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve.”* Communities with inclusive community leadership do not limit leadership opportunities to those with college degrees, professional titles or who reside in specific zip codes.

BEAVERTON, OREGON

In Beaverton, Oregon a boom in the population of immigrants, refugees, and communities of color highlighted the need to ensure that these communities were involved in decision-making. Changing demographics led the city to partner with United Oregon to develop a free leadership program targeting immigrants, refugees and people of color intended to promote civic engagement and encourage diversity in city leadership positions. Beaverton Organizing and Leadership Development (BOLD) identifies, engages and trains emerging leaders from immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color. BOLD is a unique and dedicated space for immigrants, refugees and other people of color to come together, discover their common goals and struggles and

BOLD brings together an incredible cross-section of the Beaverton community, with as many as 15 different countries represented in a single cohort.

find support to pursue community leadership opportunities. BOLD brings together an incredible cross-section of the community, with as many as 15 different countries represented in a single cohort.

BOLD is offered free of cost to participants and interpretation is provided each year in multiple languages to accommodate participation by English Language Learners. The cohorts are intentionally intergenerational, with participants ranging from high school to retirement age. The program includes three full days of hands-on sessions focused on the following areas: building leadership, community organizing, and advocacy skills; strengthening cross-cultural understanding and solidarity; and providing an in-depth orientation to city government and opportunities for engagement.

The BOLD Program is helping build more diverse leadership in Beaverton's city government. To date the program has graduated five cohorts and over 100 participants. More than half of participants engage in supplemental activities after graduating and a significant percentage take on volunteer roles ranging from short term to multi-year commitments.

The BOLD program has been recognized on a national level by the National League of Cities and the Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative as an innovative approach to engaging underrepresented populations in local government.

Perhaps the strongest measure of success is that BOLD graduates have now served on at least eight of the city's standing advisory boards and commissions and a series of other city committees, demonstrating long-term,



2018 BOLD CLASS

PHOTO COURTESY OF CITY OF BEAVERTON

meaningful engagement that is changing the conversation in those spaces.

EL PASO, TEXAS

When El Paso, Texas, Neighborhood Services staff began meeting with various residents and neighborhood associations to understand the issues they faced, it became immediately clear that some residents and associations were more effective at communicating their needs and championing their causes than others. cursory analysis into the situation suggested that the neighborhoods with the strongest and best-informed leaders were significantly more capable of getting their issues addressed. Instead of allowing neighborhoods with stronger leaders to dominate community decision-making, the city worked to develop more effective leaders throughout the community to ensure equity in service provision.

The city developed the Neighborhood Leadership Academy (NLA), a 20-week educational program to develop non-traditional community leaders, promote civic engagement and residents' roles in decision making processes and increase residents' understanding of how their city government works for them. Enrollment in the annual program is typically 60 residents. The results have been incredible--nearly one in ten NLA graduates has been appointed to city boards and

commissions or other local and regional advisory groups. Two graduates were elected to the El Paso City Council.

After eight years of implementing the NLA, Neighborhood Services staff recognized that there was still an apparent gap regarding leadership skills. Not content to simply run an effective leadership training, staff realized that to fully equip its most active and engaged resident-leaders it needed to provide more advanced training. So, in 2015 Neighborhood Services hosted the first Advanced Leadership Training. The training series is so highly regarded and in demand that it is now provided on an ongoing basis with a different topic every quarter.

In addition to providing the tools and skills that resident leaders need to be effective, the city also provides funding for neighborhood associations so that those leaders have the opportunity to make a visible, tangible impact in their neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Improvement

Nearly one in ten NLA graduates has been appointed to city boards and commissions. Two were elected to City Council.

Program (NIP) provides the opportunity for neighborhood associations to request small-scale, permanent physical improvement projects to enhance the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The intent is to facilitate an organized process for residents to have direct input on physical improvements in their neighborhood. Originally funded at \$1.5 million, the NIP was so well-received by residents, city departments, and elected officials, that the program was given a significant boost with voters approving \$10 million for the program through a 2012 quality of life bond election.

El Paso, Texas' commitment to inclusive community leadership also requires that board and commission members include



2016 NLA GRADUATES

PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF EL PASO

residents who will be impacted by the decisions made by those entities. An example is the Community Development Block Grant Steering Committee, which is charged with providing recommendations to city council for the selection of capital and social service projects that support low to moderate income neighborhoods. To ensure that the voices on that committee are representative of the interests of the population they seek to serve, appointees to the steering committee must reside in a low to moderate income neighborhood, or be over the age of 55, disabled, or homeless.

TACOMA, WASHINGTON

In Tacoma, Washington, sustained outreach to the Latinx community resulted in several positive actions. While Tacoma-Pierce County is only 10 percent Latinx, this population is growing, with many foreign-born residents. In 2016, Latinx activists worked with the City of Tacoma to produce two Latinx Town Hall meetings that attracted more than 250 attendees. As a result of the Latinx Town Halls, organizers formed *Latinos Unidos del South Sound* to continue working towards the goals from the two Town Halls. The group has a dedicated liaison with the Tacoma City Manager's Office to serve as a conduit between the Latinx Community and the City. Another result of the town halls was an action by the Tacoma City Council in late 2017 to create the Commission on Immigrant and Refugee Affairs.

LONGMONT, COLORADO

Longmont, Colorado, has consistently invested in developing local leaders. Leadership opportunities include efforts like the Longmont Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Longmont program and the Community Foundation of Boulder County's Leadership Fellow, as well as more targeted efforts. People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL), is a training program to increase involvement among people of color on boards and commissions across Boulder County. Participants prepare to take on positions of leadership on boards and commissions, participate civically in their community, and gain the skills and tools necessary to better understand the processes, structure, and make-up of boards and commissions.

The St. Vrain School District, in Longmont has also set up a leadership and participation training program. The first group of parents that participated in the district's program went on to form an organization of parents called "Grassroots St. Vrain" that has more than 2,000 participants. The program has been a model for other school districts and won an award from the International Association for Public Participation in 2014.

Longmont has worked to provide leadership opportunities to the full diversity of its residents. In partnership with the City of Longmont, the Boulder County Latino Chamber of Commerce provides \$10,000 in scholarships to minority residents of Longmont to attend leadership training courses. So far 50 Longmont residents have taken advantage of the scholarships. Learn how Longmont's investment in leadership programs fits with its other efforts to develop civic capital. Read the more comprehensive Longmont Civic Capital Case Study on 32.



PHOTO CREDIT: NATHAN PULLEY

Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We have a wealth of trusted, respected leaders across all-sectors and levels*
- ❑ *We have programs to develop leaders from all backgrounds, ages and sectors; especially those from traditionally marginalized communities*
- ❑ *Local leaders work together, build consensus, and set aside their own ego to focus on getting things done for the whole community*
- ❑ *Leaders and community members face challenges head-on, instead of ignoring tough conversations or decisions*
- ❑ *Government advisory boards, commissions reflect the full diversity of the community and exercise real decision-making power*



PHOTO CREDIT: AARON B. LEAVY

Collaborative Institutions

Communities with good civic capital have regular collaboration among the government, business, nonprofit and other sectors, as well as structures in place that facilitate such collaboration.

The old saying that, “so and so is a great team player, as long as they get to be captain,” all too often describes collaborative efforts in communities. Many organizations and institutions are willing to collaborate so long as they get to call the shots, receive the credit and set the priorities. Communities with strong civic capital collaborate across sectors, not just to secure grants or funding, but to pursue lasting change. In these communities, coordinated, collaborative effort are simply “how we do business” and this approach can be seen in efforts both large and small.

Information and ideas easily flow between sectors in communities with strong civic capital.

These communities recognize that most issues require aligned, if not integrated, action. Rather than isolated efforts or “turf wars,” organizations and institutions identify common challenges and leverage their individual capacities and strengths to collectively move the needle.

Collaboration strengthens the ability of local governments and local collaboratives to solve problems. As Bruce Katz and Jeremy Nowak discuss in *The New Localism*, local communities have become more powerful players in solving national issues because they have rediscovered the power of community collaboration. Katz argues that:¹

¹ Bruce Katz, ‘Envisioning the New Localism’, ICMA.org: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/envisioning-new-localism>



A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON B. LEAVY

Leadership by the public, the private or the civic sector alone is often not sufficient to tackle the multidimensional nature of challenges today.

DUBUQUE, IOWA

Like much of the United States, the 10 years from 2000 to 2010 saw Dubuque, Iowa, become more racially and ethnically diverse. This shift was reflected in the workforce, yet too often employees reported they did not feel welcome or connected to the community of Dubuque. The business community, the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, local non-profits, and local government worked together to help address the issue by creating Inclusive Dubuque.

Inclusive Dubuque is a local network of more than 50 organizations and individuals from faith, labor, education, business, non-profit and government dedicated to advancing equity and inclusion in Dubuque. The network, launched in October 2013, meets for peer learning monthly, identifies and supports opportunities for action, and hosted a series of community dialogue sessions and surveys in 2015 that culminated in the release of a community equity profile.

EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

Eau Claire, Wisconsin's aptly named Confluence Center, stands as a physical testament to the power of collaboration and coordination. In

2012, the city of Eau Claire and the University of Wisconsin Eau Claire each faced the daunting task of rebuilding their own aging theaters. Rather than going it alone and trying to rebuild separate theaters, the city, local arts groups, university and others made a different choice.

The \$80 million Confluence Center came from the shared efforts of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC), the city, local arts non-profits, arts advocates and the state. The confluence of all these different groups and interests enabled the creation of a building and a space that is far greater than any of them could have envisioned separately.

Not that long ago, such a collaboration would have been seen as unlikely, at best, or impossible at worst. In 2005, the City of Eau Claire engaged the National Civic League to help facilitate a resident-led strategic visioning process for the community. Residents and community leaders came together to identify key challenges, capacities and aspirations for their community.

The process known as Clear Vision Eau Claire, which gave rise to a nonprofit of the same name, revealed a need for greater community-wide cooperation and collaboration, particularly among local arts groups. At that time, residents lamented that, "All the art centers in the region are vying for the same funding and consequently don't work together," and that they wanted to work toward a vision where: "Nonprofits



Eau Claire leaders break ground on the Confluence Center

PHOTO BY ANDREA PAULSETH

communicate with each other and work better together toward a community common good – not just their own.”

As City Manager Dale Peters explains,

“The roots of [the Confluence Center] go back to Clear Vision... That’s where the seeds were planted, where citizens said what this community needs – ‘We need the arts to come together, we need cooperation and collaboration.’”

The Clear Vision process surfaced these concerns, and brought together the parties and leaders who years later would spearhead the Confluence Center effort. Peters reflected that Clear Vision brought together key people from “the arts, city, and university” and “If those people had not been in the room at Clear Vision it [the Confluence Center] wouldn’t have worked.”

FALL RIVER, MASSACHUSETTS

In Fall River, Massachusetts, leaders recognize that no single agency could address the myriad issues facing the community’s young people. Only through collaboration and partnership could the community address such intertwined and complex issues. The School-Community Partnership (SCP) was created with the collective power of more than 30 agencies providing a variety of services to youth. This collaboration brings youth and providers together and ensures that different agencies work together. The SCP ensures that youth concerns are taken into consideration by city programs and that youth are represented on different commissions and councils. The work resulted in a new Youth of the Year award program, a Youth Violence Prevention Initiative, and a Youth Candidates Night.

In keeping with this collaborative approach, the Superintendent of the Fall River school district partnered with the mayor’s office to create the Mayor/Superintendent’s Attendance Task Force. Members of the task force include school counselors, nurses and attendance officers but also representatives from more than 20 Fall River agencies and organizations. The community



PHOTO BY KENNETH C. ZIRKEL

recognized that education and specifically attendance were not simply issues for the schools, but that community-wide collaboration was required. This provides an opportunity for regular information-sharing across organizations and sectors. The task force has collaborated with a variety of local agencies, churches and community organizations to emphasize the importance of school attendance through community forums, church services, and other events.

When discussions with parents revealed that students often missed a full day of school for a doctor’s appointment, the collaborative spirit of the community prompted task force members to engage pediatricians. Now, pediatricians are helping to reinforce to parents and children the importance of returning to school, in order to be there for as much of the day as possible.

STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA

For decades, the South Stockton neighborhood has suffered neglect in quality of education, economic investment, job opportunities, healthy food choices, and medical services. For generations, these neighborhoods consistently had higher rates of incarceration, abuse, neglect, poverty, homelessness, and violence. With repeated exposure, trauma and chronic stress have been woven into the fabric of this community and represents a serious and

The aim is to create relationships between partners so a continuum of trauma care can be adopted

unaddressed barrier to mental and physical stability.

Although the community has been working to address many of these issues in the last decade, there had not been a coordinated effort to address trauma collectively, until recently. In 2016, San Joaquin County conducted a community health needs assessment with the Department of Public Health, health care providers, and community partners. This community and data-led initiative allowed partners to identify trauma as a factor in everything from gang violence to low test scores. The collaborative applied for funding to address factors contributing to trauma and create a coordinated capital supporting individual and community healing. The resulting effort, Healing South Stockton, engages residents who have experienced trauma and chronic stress, link them with behavioral health services and community supports appropriate to their needs and culture and address systemic community issues that lead to or increase community trauma.

The collaborative developed a shared governance structure, creating a leadership team with members from the health, governmental and non-profit sectors, as well as residents. In its first year, the team held community meetings to engage partner groups across sectors of education, health, housing, law enforcement and economic development, developing a shared understanding of the importance of trauma prevention work. The group also coordinated with community-based organizations, schools and faith-based groups to engage residents in focus groups about what they feel contributes to trauma and what kind of support is needed beyond existing services. This information helps focus policy advocacy, systems change and increasing access to appropriate services.


Taking input from community members and



numerous partners, the Healing South Stockton project is now working on an asset mapping strategy that outlines a variety of partners, programs, and physical resources serving South Stockton around trauma and social supports. In addition to general community assets, the group is specifically looking at services and systems surrounding populations with historically high levels of trauma, like foster youth, low-income families, the LGBTQ+ population, victims of violence, and formerly incarcerated individuals. The aim is to create relationships between partners so a continuum of trauma care can be adopted by community, health care, government, school and law enforcement partners.

Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We work with other communities to address local and regional challenges*
- ❑ *Local government, nonprofits, philanthropies, schools, civic associations and businesses collaborate effectively to solve community problems*
- ❑ *We have many trusted organizations that bring people together to resolve pressing conflicts and challenges.*
- ❑ *We have regular, established opportunities for information-sharing and decision-making across various sectors*



Community conversation
in Decatur, Georgia as
part of the community's
Better Together Initiative

Embracing Diversity, Equity

Communities with strong civic capital recognize and celebrate their diversity. They strive for equity in services, support and engagement.

America is becoming more diverse has been said so frequently that it risks becoming a cliché or background noise. The truth and implications of that statement must remain front and center for those who care about their communities. Increasing diversity will continue to shape communities and their progress in the years to come. Not only *will* America become more diverse, but it has *already become* more diverse. Between 1980 and 2010, 98 percent of America's metropolitan areas and 97 percent of micropolitan areas became more racially diverse. The implications of our increasing diversity are not limited to an amorphous future; they are defining what it means to be a strong community today.

Today, we see communities that embrace their growing racial diversity and seek to achieve

equity making more progress on tackling local challenges. The most enduring problems facing communities – education, health, housing and economic prosperity, among others - are often characterized by disparities among different populations. Communities are stronger and better able to address these problems when people work together across the divides of race, ethnicity, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression, or income levels to recognize differences, discuss historic discrimination and pursue policies and structures that lead to greater equity.

Recent research from Katharine Bradbury and Robert Triest into the impact of inequality on economic growth found that greater equality of opportunity yields greater growth. Metro areas where low-income children were more able to



Hayward residents spoke about their diversity as a major strength during their 2016 All-America City Award presentation

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON B. LEAVY

move up the economic ladder experienced faster per capita growth - while controlling for other factors that influence growth.¹ As Richard Florida argues, "metro economies grow faster, stronger, and for longer spells when prosperity isn't limited to just a few segments of the population."²

This means more communities must find the courage necessary to confront institutional and structural barriers to equity. While there is nothing easy about this work, its difficulty is matched only by its necessity.

HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

In January 2017, the city of Hayward, California, experienced "heightened community concerns about human and civil rights, and about increased tensions between community members based on people's political affiliation, economic status, place of origin, immigration status...and other physical

characteristics."³ In response, the city set up a community task force to use an inclusive process to update Hayward's 1992 anti-discrimination action plan.

The task force, reflecting the full diversity of the community, met several times over the course of nine months, forming subcommittees to work on specific portions of the plan. In the end, the task force created dozens of specific action steps. Including calling on the city to ensure equitable access to information and activities, "particularly for underserved and vulnerable community members" and to "make direct, intentional investments in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods." Another key step was requiring annual implicit bias training for all city workers.

Challenging discrimination head-on is a critical component of a strong community. Communities with strong civic capital go still-further and work to honor, value and highlight the contributions of the community's full diversity in public spaces.

1 Bradbury, K., & Triest, R. K. (2016). Inequality of opportunity and aggregate economic performance. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.rsfjournal.org/doi/full/10.7758/RSF.2016.2.2.08>

2 Richard Florida, 'For a Strong Economy, Focus on Inclusive Growth', CityLab, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/09/the-how-and-why-of-inclusive-growth/541422/>

3 https://www.hayward-ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/CIECC_Accepted.pdf



One of Minneapolis' 180 parks.

PHOTO BY TONY WEBSTER (CREATIVE COMMONS)

MARSHALL, TEXAS

Outsiders might be forgiven for not recognizing Marshall, Texas, as a major hub of African American history and progress. However, the East Texas community, has played a far larger role in African American history than its small size would suggest. To ensure residents and visitors recognize the incredible contributions of its African American residents, Marshall has made a concentrated effort to research, document, and preserve its history.

Named for Rebecca Buard (1909-2000), a teacher at Wiley College (the oldest historically African-American college west of the Mississippi) - The Buard History Trail commemorates important sites associated with Marshall's role in African-American history and the civil rights movement. The trail includes important African American sites, such as historic Wiley College, the graves of two of the famous Tuskegee Airmen who served in World War II. It also tells the story of Professor Melvin B. Tolson who led the "great debaters" of Wiley College to a national debate championship in the 1930s, a feat celebrated in the 2007 film, *The Great Debaters*. One of those debaters, James Farmer, Jr., helped found the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). By celebrating this history and placing it front and center, Marshall is ensuring that all people recognize the great contributions its African American residents have made to the community and country.

Ultimately, communities seeking equity must confront historical barriers to participation, inclusion and employment and the inequitable provision of services and opportunities.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

Minneapolis, Minnesota, is home to 180 parks, and they are felt by many to be among the city's most prized assets. At the same time, investment in parks located in African-American and low-income neighborhoods lagged far behind those in other, wealthier areas. Rather than ignore this, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) publicly acknowledged the legacy of these policies and committed to taking action focused on achieving equity. According to the MPRB:

Because parks play a special role in people's quality of life, MPRB has a responsibility to strive for racial equity... We are having conversations about race and putting new behaviors and policies into practice. We are committed to working with communities, the City of Minneapolis and other government agencies to eliminate inequities between white people and people of color — and increase everyone's ability to succeed.⁴

In 2016, the MPRB and the City of Minneapolis approved ordinances to reverse years of under-

⁴ 20-year Neighborhood Park Plan, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. https://www.minneapolis-parks.org/about_us/budget_financial/20-year_neighborhood_park_plan/

funding in neighborhood parks. Moving forward, the city is using a first-of-its-kind, criteria-based funding system that focuses on racial and economic equity to ensure that capital investments are targeted first in the parks and communities where they are needed the most.

BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN

In 2015, Battle Creek, Michigan, launched BC Vision a community-driven movement for change. Stakeholders-- including the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and Kellogg Company, members of the faith community, workforce and economic development agencies, government, business, schools and residents--gathered to discuss how to spark transformation in Battle Creek.

As part of its engagement efforts, BC Vision knocked on more than 30,000 doors, held dozens of community meetings, and spoke with thousands of neighbors to receive input from as many people as possible. Hundreds of individuals, from every sector in the community, contributed. This widespread engagement of residents from all parts of the community helped ensure that all plans are owned by and rooted in the community. The result was an actionable, long-term economic development plan that includes neighborhoods and community members who have historically had less access to resources that lead to prosperity.

All of BC Vision's work is measured using an equity lens to ensure efforts are centered on providing access to opportunities for all residents. Last year BC Vision developed the following equity statement as its guide:

We know, and will not ignore, the significant inequities in the Battle Creek Community.

We will:

- *Listen to, include, and act on the voices of the unheard.*
- *Direct resources to where the need is greatest.*
- *Break down barriers to employment.*



PHOTO FROM WMUK.ORG

City Manager, Rebecca Fleury explained:

We created an equity statement as a steering committee of BC Vision because, as we peeled back the layers of the conversations we realized that [equity] was at the heart of everything. As a community, if we didn't start putting equity at the forefront and challenging people to look through equity lenses as we do our work we weren't going to be successful...As a community, Battle Creek is putting this in the forefront."



Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *Services and opportunities are provided equitably to all groups and neighborhoods*
- ❑ *We have policies to fight discrimination in all forms*
- ❑ *Immigrants, new residents and under-represented groups actively participate in community events and discussions*
- ❑ *We honor, value and highlight the contributions of the community's full diversity in our public spaces*
- ❑ *We are taking ongoing steps to discuss, learn about, and help address historical barriers to participation, inclusion and employment*



Authentic Communication

Healthy communities need credible civic-minded sources of information presented in a way that residents can use.

The quality of information and communication in a community has a dramatic impact on its civic health. Authentic communication is more than just the presence of trusted, civic-minded news-gathering entities (though that is critical). In communities that prioritize authentic communication, organizations provide information in multiple ways to meet the needs of residents, including in different languages to accommodate their area's diversity. Authentic communication is essential for building trust and enabling residents to take action.

Between 2008 and 2017 newsrooms across the U.S. lost more than 26,000 jobs.¹ As the depth

of local news coverage has fallen due to the dramatic decline in print journalism, other institutions have an increasingly important role to play. With fewer papers and journalists, getting information and a complete picture of the community has become harder.

The proliferation of social media platforms provides more opportunities than ever before to broadcast information and share ideas. However, in communities focused on authentic communication, social media is not just a tool for pushing information out. It is also a tool for deepening engagement, drawing in new ideas and insights. Beth Simone Noveck, director of the GovLab at New York University says "It's a mindset shift, from that one-way communication to fostering a conversation. It takes real skill to know how to do that and put that conversation

1 Pew Research Center analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics data.

together and focus it on solving a problem.”² Communities with robust civic capital in terms of authentic communication have multiple means for residents to learn, explore, share and engage with institutions and one another.

Social media platforms and websites like Facebook, Twitter and most recently NextDoor have often been touted as new, “disruptive” ways for people to share information and build community. Despite obvious benefits, most have also been used to spread misinformation and breed mistrust. As platforms continue to emerge, it seems likely that no one approach will be sufficient - that communities will continue to need multiple approaches.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

In Detroit, Michigan, two competing narratives vie for attention in local coverage: one heralds downtown revitalization and hip restaurants, while the other retraces the story of Detroit’s decline, its struggling neighborhoods, violent crime and lack of opportunities. To tell the story of the lives and reality between these narratives, Mayor Mike Duggan approached Aaron Foley with an idea: join the city as its first “chief storyteller.” Foley, a veteran African American journalist and Detroit native, now helps provide residents with a fuller picture of their own community. Supplementing, rather than replacing the role of local journalists, Foley and his team work to provide context and depth to people’s understanding of the real Detroit through video and other multimedia, multiplatform efforts.

Nobody denies that there are challenges in Detroit. However, in between these two extreme narratives, you have neighborhoods that have persevered, residents who opened businesses, started new block clubs and community organizations, and continue to make Detroit their home.

² Four strategies that are defining the future of city communications, Bloomberg Philanthropies <https://www.bloomberg.org/blog/4-strategies-defining-future-city-communications/>



PHOTO CREDIT: RICHARD FELONI

We’re trying to give people a platform where they can see themselves

Everyone knows Detroit has a long way to go. But there are hundreds of thousands of people in Detroit and they all have different stories to tell. We’re not trying to overtake or supplant local media. The idea is to really uplift and amplify the stories of Detroiters who are doing good things. We’re trying to give people a platform where they can see themselves, and start to fill in these gaps.
 – Aaron Foley, Chief Storyteller, City of Detroit³

What’s more, while many media fail to provide adequate coverage of the contributions and stories of people of color, new immigrants or the LGBTQ community, Foley makes sure these residents are seen and heard. Foley explains, “I make it my mission to spotlight a lot of different communities that don’t normally get mainstream media coverage. So we’re talking about our LGBTQ communities, our Muslim communities, and our immigrant communities and also, people of color, period.”

³ How Detroit’s ‘chief storyteller’ is crafting a new narrative for his city, Medium.com <https://medium.com/@BloombergCities/how-detroits-chief-storyteller-is-crafting-a-new-narrative-for-his-city-3c14d0fa559c>

It's a mindset shift, from one-way communication to fostering a conversation

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA

Roanoke, Virginia, has earned the coveted All-America City Award a stunning seven times. Recently the city opened an Office of Citizen Engagement “to bring government and citizens together to foster collaborative conversations, build positive relationships and create new and innovative ways to get citizens involved.” As the city’s Citizen Engagement Officer, Timothy Martin says, “There is a fundamental difference in communicating “to” citizens and communicating “with” them. This office does the latter.”

Recently, the Office of Citizen Engagement leveraged the city’s myriad social media pages to engage residents around the search for a new city manager. Martin explained that,

Roanoke used all of our main social media pages to seek feedback in the search for a new city manager. During the month of April, the Office of Citizen Engagement gathered feedback from more than 800 people. During a city manager search in 2009, only 80 citizens participated.⁴

There is a fundamental difference in communicating “to” citizens and communicating “with” them

⁴ How to Engage Your Community with Social Media: A Q&A with Citizen Engagement Officer Timothy Martin, ICMA.org, <https://icma.org/articles/article/how-engage-your-community-social-media-qa-citizen-engagement-officer-timothy-martin>



Photo by Michael S. Shannon

YAKIMA, WASHINGTON

Located in the fertile Yakima Valley in Central Washington, Yakima has a primarily agricultural-based economy and a large population of immigrant farmworkers from Mexico. According to data from the 2016 American Community Survey, 46 percent of city residents are Hispanic or Latinx, and 49 percent are non-Hispanic white. In 2016, after years without representation on the Yakima City Council, the first three Latinx council members were elected. This resulted in an increased focus by the council on issues related to equity and equality, which has in turned sparked community-wide discussion.

Recently, one of the new Latina council members suggested holding a series of public safety neighborhood forums across the city. In the past these meetings would be held in English and frequently included Spanish translation. This time, three forums were held in Spanish with English translation. The change made it easier for Spanish speaking residents to participate and opened eyes among some English speakers. As a city staff member explained.

English-speakers have said ‘now that was a different experience’ – talk about an eye opener. It has helped to give them a different perspective. It’s a simple thing. ‘Oh, so that’s how it is to attend a meeting in a language you don’t understand.’

The city is hopeful that these experiences might help residents better understand the challenge of a Spanish speaker going to a store, or trying to pay their water bill, or trying to function in a community that is primarily English-speaking.

OLATHE, KANSAS

Olathe, Kansas, like many communities, has public meetings to discuss budget issues and holds them in different venues to get more people to attend. But even going out to the neighborhoods and bringing meetings to the people didn't seem to attract crowds, so the city's communications and public engagement department sought new ideas.


The city held an E-town meeting in the studio of the local government access cable station to drive interest and participation with social media. The city launched an online forum six days before the scheduled e-meeting, asking residents to submit questions. Questions could also be submitted live during the meeting. Chris Hernandez, a Kansas City TV news personality, hosted the meeting, which was cablecast and live-streamed, and members of the public asked questions to city council members via e-mail, the city's budget webpage, Twitter, and Facebook.

Chris Kelly, the city's information technology director explains "We're trying to meet the residents where they are, which is online."

Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We have many trusted, civic-minded sources of information and news in the community*
- ❑ *Local government and other groups provide information in the languages that people speak and in ways that are culturally appropriate*
- ❑ *There are many ways to communicate with and get information from government (i.e., 311, social media, text, local events, etc)*
- ❑ *We have authentic two-way communications between members of the community, the government and other institutions*

PHOTO CREDIT: AARON B. LEAVY



Gladstone,
Missouri residents
discuss their
community's future

Culture of Engagement

Involvement by residents, businesses, nonprofits and other stakeholders in every aspect of civic affairs should be part of local culture—an expectation, not an afterthought.

The National Civic League views engagement as more than presenting information or having people respond to questionnaires (though both are important); instead, communities with a strong culture of engagement listen to, and learn from, residents in ongoing conversations and leverage those insights to shape the way programs are designed, administered and executed.

In communities with a true culture of engagement, inclusion of the full diversity of the community, particularly those historically excluded from decision-making conversations, is not “going above and beyond.” It is the baseline for legitimate engagement efforts. The shop-worn excuse, “*We tried to engage ‘them,’ but no one showed up*” is not sufficient.

Developing a culture of engagement, like any culture, requires action over time. No one effort or program can create a culture, instead it is the result of ongoing, consistent action. Neither organizational culture nor community expectations emerge overnight, nor do they spring into life without sustained effort and attention.

De Tocqueville marveled at how Americans formed associations for “the smallest undertaking,” saying that citizens stood ready to tackle any need. In a community with a good culture of engagement, this occurs naturally and on a daily basis, whether it’s someone helping to push a car out of a snowbank or a group of people forming a new association or nonprofit organization.

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

In Fort Collins, Colorado, the city government intentionally sought to create an organizational culture which not only values but mandates resident engagement. The city has prioritized engagement; residents have come to expect to be involved. Deputy City Manager Jeff Mihelich explained,

People here want to get involved and want to be engaged....It is a community expectation that we will do robust civic engagement. Council rarely, if ever, makes decisions of any real impact without a significant engagement process. And if they tried to do it, people would storm City Hall and say, "You didn't talk to this group, this group or this group. Isn't my opinion important to you?"

Council members now expect diverse stakeholders and residents to be engaged as part of formulating any policy. As a result, engagement is considered from the outset, with staff developing and presenting an engagement plan before setting out to design or develop policies. Ginny Sawyer, the city's Policy and Project Manager, explained the process, "we have a public engagement plan for anything that is coming to council so they could see the timing of projects, our messaging, what we're going to be asking or informing citizens on. [The plan] also calls out major stakeholders who we'll be targeting. So if we were missing a group, or if council feels a stakeholder group was unbalanced they could let us know and we could shift gears early enough in the project to supplement or adjust as necessary."

Through these and numerous other actions, the city and community have developed what city staff describe as a "culture of engagement." Senior Assistant City Manager, Kelly DiMartino summarized Fort Collins' culture of engagement, saying "It's just what the community expects. It's what our elected officials expect. It's what we as an organization value." The city doesn't just talk about the importance of civic engagement; it is part of staff performance reviews and a key factor in hiring decisions.



As Ginny Sawyer describes it, engagement permeates work throughout the government, so that organization-wide, "we value public opinion and feel that better decisions are made based upon engaging the public. That's the ethic from which everything derives."

HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

Hampton, Virginia, has long been a recognized leader in civic engagement. Such efforts date back to the mid-eighties and carry forward to this day. Hampton is a three-time All-America City Award winner, demonstrating that it is never content to rest on its laurels.¹

The development of Hampton's culture of engagement was guided by the premise that government cannot, and indeed should not, solve all issues on its own and a belief that better results come when residents are part of the solution. To learn more about Hampton's work to create a culture of engagement and build a strong civic capital read their Civic Capital Case Study on page 36.

In 2010, the city faced a daunting budget shortfall. With \$20 million worth of cuts to be made, the I-Value campaign asked residents to weigh in on what services were most important to protect and which they were willing to cut. The conversations asked residents to think about

¹ The story of Hampton's culture of engagement is adapted from an article by City Manager Mary Bunting published in the Fall 2018 Edition of the National Civic Review

Hampton, Virginia's culture of engagement grew from the recognition that government cannot solve all a community's issues on its own and a real belief that better results come when residents are part of the solution

the city budget much as they would a household budget, rating services according to which were "needs," and which were "wants." Recorders transcribed resident input and printed it out to share with residents before the end of each meeting. Meeting results were published on-line and shared with the council, outlining where the majority of Hampton residents thought cuts were necessary.

In 2014, the I-Value process was successfully used to gauge the community's sentiment to raise taxes to avoid further reductions. Residents were asked whether they would support raising taxes and if so by how much and for what purposes. At the end of that year's engagement, nearly 90 percent of the public expressed support for a significant tax hike. With this high level of documented public support, the council raised its rates with little opposition or consternation. All the council members who ran for reelection the next cycle comfortably won, establishing the true value of the process. According to City Manager Mary Bunting,

The reason I-Value works—or, frankly, any of Hampton's engagement efforts have worked—is that people fundamentally want to be a part of the decisions that impact them. Engagement never guarantees that everyone will be happy with the result. That utopia doesn't exist. However, engagement does produce better decision making and, more importantly, better feeling about the process used to make decisions. When residents know they have (and how) to make a choice to influence decision-making, they inevitably feel better about it



PHOTO COURTESY: SOMERVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

In Somerville, Massachusetts, civic engagement isn't just a strategy, it's an integral part of the fabric of the community. As Somerville has changed from a largely white, working- and middle-class community to a dynamic, diverse and vibrant urban hub of arts and innovation, so has the need to communicate and engage with a diverse constituency. Today, Somerville is an eclectic mix of blue-collar families, young professionals, college students, artists, and recent immigrants from countries as diverse as El Salvador, Haiti, and Brazil. One-third of residents are foreign born, and more than 52 languages are spoken in its public schools.¹

City government engages residents in numerous ways, from traditional town hall meetings to making data readily available to residents and utilizing their feedback to inform future policy. The city includes residents, business owners and stakeholders in advisory committees which inform everything from reviewing master developer proposals for larger business districts, to rodent control measures and trash and

¹ The description of Somerville's culture of engagement is adapted from its 2014-2015 All-America City Application

composting programs.

Somerville's ResiStat initiative gives residents direct access to the mayor, aldermen, and staff from all departments at ward-based meetings held twice yearly in each of the city's seven districts. At each meeting participants receive updates and provide input into issues such as crime rates and public safety matters, neighborhood planning initiatives and public works services. Combined with Somerville's SomerStat model for data-driven management and the community's 311 Constituent Service Center, feedback from meetings is tracked in real-time, reported back to residents via multiple media channels to ensure a continuous feedback loop that also holds municipal government accountable to its constituents, a model that has garnered regional and national recognition and, most importantly, appreciation from residents.

Somerville residents are also encouraged to interact with city generated data and help determine where their tax dollars should be spent. In a new Community Budgeting Process, residents received information on the city's budget and the budgeting process and participated in brainstorming sessions for programs and services within four key areas targeted for additional investment by residents as part of the city's comprehensive planning process.

In 2013, recognizing that traditional outreach and communications efforts were not reaching the full community, the city expanded its non-English language outreach with SomerViva!. The immigrant outreach program includes native speakers of Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole and French who serve as liaisons between the city and its largest immigrant communities.

The program aims to improve access to services citywide, to encourage and guide ongoing efforts to better serve the immigrant community and open channels for greater participation. The program is shaped by extensive input from the immigrant community itself, who provided advice on the best ways to engage their peers and



PHOTO: MERRILL SHEA (VIA TEEN EMPOWERMENT)

the most relevant support and information their community needs.

In Somerville, engagement is essential, not an afterthought. To learn more, read the Somerville Civic Capital Case Study on page 34.

Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We have a culture of engagement; we expect our government and other institutions to engage the full community to guide decision-making*
- ❑ *Government agencies, nonprofits and other institutions work to learn from residents and other stakeholders before creating new programs*
- ❑ *We make an extra effort to ensure traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged as part of community decision-making*
- ❑ *Government, nonprofits and other groups engage people in accessible, comfortable or familiar locations, and at convenient times for residents.*
- ❑ *Local government and others engage community members in an ongoing fashion, not just when they need buy-in or quick feedback*
- ❑ *We have formal discussions about difficult issues like race, immigration, drug addiction, etc.*



San Antonio's 2018 All-America City presentation told the story of progress generated by SA2020.

Shared Vision and Values

Communities with shared values and civic pride have a common foundation for addressing public matters.

When residents of all perspectives share in the development of a community vision, they are more likely to become invested in, and support, that vision. Without a shared vision and sense of direction, plans for community improvements often fail to create lasting results. A shared vision or strategic plan emerging from meaningful engagement of the community's full diversity is more durable, realistic and likely to inform future action.

A shared vision and set of values can either come from an intentional process, such as strategic planning, or be developed organically over time. In both cases, constant reinforcement is needed for long-term sustainability. Many cities engage in community visioning processes; the key to developing a shared vision and values is to reach all parts of the community and end with

a simple, memorable vision or slogan, like "the city of brotherly love." A collectively-held vision and set of shared values can also come from a collectively-defined culture and sense of civic ownership that might result in statements like "that's not how we do things here" or "the (city's name) way."

In communities with a shared vision and set of values, residents may disagree about many topics, but they hold in common a sense of what makes the community special. In these places, residents speak of their neighborhoods with pride and they can articulate values that are shared across the community. Communities with shared values and civic pride know who they are and have a common base from which to build.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

In 2010, San Antonio, Texas launched SA2020, the city's community-wide visioning process. Through a series of public meetings, online chat sessions, and surveys, San Antonians shaped a shared vision for their community's future. Nearly 6,000 residents, a diverse cross-section of San Antonio, helped develop a framework, define community results, and identify measures of success. The first SA2020 report, released in 2011, identified eleven community results tracked by 59 indicators, generating a decade-long strategic vision for San Antonio.

To guide implementation of the vision, SA2020 became an independent, non-profit organization in 2012. In collaboration with city government, 133 non-profits, seven major corporations, the San Antonio Area Foundation, the United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, SA2020 has now created an ecosystem. This ecosystem supports incremental change, tracking progress and identifying gaps, thereby directing programs, initiatives, funding and policy.

The SA2020 Annual Impact Report provides an update on where San Antonio is in relation to its shared vision, as well as direct calls-to-action. Although SA2020 is committed to remaining true to the original set of eleven community results, it seeks to continuously paint a truer picture of where San Antonio stands. In collaboration with the city and, as a result of further community engagement, SA2020 adopted four new indicators, included in the 2017 Impact Report.

SA2020 and the city's Office of Equity applied an Equity Impact Assessment to seven high-impact city initiatives, including street maintenance, civic engagement to inform the city's budget and appointments to boards and commissions. The assessment, a set of guiding questions in six steps, resulted in policies and services that are accountable to communities' needs and priorities. Each high impact initiative created fifteen-member teams diverse by race, gender, and position (from directors to front line employees). These teams represent important opportunities

for city employees to exercise leadership and signify the value of knowledge across organizational hierarchy.

With a vision created by the community-at-large as its north star, San Antonio has intentionally worked toward equitable outcomes and tangible results. Because SA2020 transparently reports on San Antonio's progress toward these goals, community members are able to see where the community is making strides and where it is falling short. With this information, San Antonians are better equipped to advocate and lead change.

Of the 61 indicators being tracked, 70 percent are trending better today than they were in 2010.

As part of the equity assessment in SA2020, community engagement became a central component, with guiding questions like:

- Who are the most affected community members who are concerned with or have experience related to the proposed initiative?
- How are they involved in the development of the initiative?
- What has the engagement process revealed about the factors that produce or perpetuate racial inequity related to this program?
- How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with communities to make sure your work to advance racial equity is effective and sustainable?

This framework of questions has set the standard for working towards equity in engagement of all eleven focus areas and corresponding projects.

Of the 61 indicators currently being tracked, 70 percent are trending better today than they were in 2010. This includes progress toward high school graduation rates, per capita income, health care access, teen birth rate and diabetes rate.



Residents discuss the future of the county.

KERSHAW COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

In early 2015, the Kershaw County (South Carolina) Council sought to engage residents in developing a plan for the county's future. At the heart of VisionKershaw 2030 was a gathering of community input, conducted to collect ideas and attitudes from county residents, community leaders and business owners. Planning staff participated in more than 30 outreach events. These included engagement events at volunteer fire stations, churches and government buildings, schools, as well as at the local NAACP chapter and with youth leaders. A concerted effort was made to reach diverse segments of the population. Beyond outreach events, the process included in-depth interviews and a survey. Additionally, materials were made available in Spanish, and staff was on-hand to answer questions during the annual multi-cultural festival. More than 170 individuals attended these events, which included presentations, idea-generating exercises, listening sessions, and workshop discussions.

Unlike many other visioning efforts, which create reports that go unused, VisionKershaw 2030 is serving as a touchstone for many groups. Since its creation, all local municipalities in the county have adopted VisionKershaw 2030. Each year the Kershaw County Council returns to the findings when discussing the budget, to ensure that the priorities set in the Vision 2030 are supported.

VisionKershaw 2030 is serving as a touchstone for many groups. It has already started to lead to better outcomes.

And numerous private enterprises and public entities reference the vision in planning and budgets.

Only a few years into the plan, many actions have already been accomplished, including: improving existing recreation opportunities; planning for a new permanent downtown farmers market; reestablishment of the county's Human Relations Board; completion of a detailed pedestrian, bike and greenway plan, finishing the first connector trail; passing a \$129 million school board facility bond referendum and penny sales tax just two years after it failed; starting a mobile food pantry to serve food deserts; and expanding the number of EMS stations in underserved areas.

DECATUR, GEORGIA

What is government's role in creating a space for community dialogue across differences? How do we bring everyone to the table, especially those who do not feel welcome or included? Those big questions inspired Decatur, Georgia's Better Together Initiative. A year-long, community-wide visioning process sought "to cultivate a more just, welcoming, inclusive, equitable and compassionate experience for all who live, visit or work here" leading to the creation of the Better Together Initiative.

As part of this initiative, more than 800 residents invested more than 1,300 hours under the guidance of a Leadership Circle to put together a Community Action Plan for Inclusion, Equity and Engagement outlining 60 action items for individuals, organizations and local government. The Leadership Circle brought together faith-based organizations, the school system, city staff, GenXers, millennials, baby boomers, business owners, students, educational institutions, nonprofit leaders, consultants, and more.



The Better Together Leadership Circle: *The Better Together Leadership Circle was made up of 19 individuals from diverse backgrounds. The circle included the police chief and a community member who had publicly accused the police of racial profiling. Other perspectives included a Jewish middle school guidance counselor, an African-American, a Muslim mother who is a program director for a leadership program for teens, a Caucasian city staffer who is a native of Decatur and was at Decatur High during integration, an African American male who is also a paraplegic, and more. Of the 19 Leadership Circle members, there were 9 established community leaders and 10 newer faces and voices.*

Circle members agreed to fully participate and to welcome different, even controversial perspectives. They spent time engaging in conversations across differences, including conversations about race, and equity, thus modeling on a small scale what they ultimately asked of the broader community. The Leadership Circle even included a resident who had publicly charged the police department with racial profiling as well as the Decatur Chief of Police.

Extra efforts were made to engage immigrants, young people, seniors, lower-income residents, people of color and other underrepresented residents. The circle designed communication strategies with an eye toward equity, targeting and recruiting those with underrepresented perspectives. Members leveraged their personal networks to ensure Housing Authority residents, Somalis, teens, seniors and others frequently absent from these conversations were specifically invited.

Circle members presented at meetings, engaged people at community events, and used census and other data to generate a demographic profile of the community. The success of the process in bringing those not typically at the table resulted in a plan that reflects a diversity of perspectives



and opinions. The city updated its asset map to reflect newly identified neighborhood groups, civic groups, nonprofits, faith-based organizations and educational institutions.

One Leadership Circle member said, "In order to increase civic engagement cities need to make the effort to seek out diverse voices in spaces they don't traditionally look, not only for community initiatives but also for training, hiring and contract work."

Questions from The Civic Index

- ❑ *We have a strong sense of attachment to, and pride in, our neighborhoods and community*
- ❑ *Our community strategic planning efforts include the full diversity of the community to help identify a common vision*
- ❑ *People have a clear sense of what makes the community unique and a shared vision for what we want to become in the future*
- ❑ *Local government and nonprofit actions clearly align with the community's shared vision*

Civic Capital

A Case Study

LONGMONT

COLORADO

Community involvement in Longmont, Colorado, was fundamentally transformed in the same way it happens in many places: something didn't go right and people pulled together to change it. In 2001, the city council considered a change to where recreational vehicles could park. City staff wrote a new ordinance, held a public meeting at the City of Longmont Civic Center and took the ordinance to council. The process was, by their own admission, "a disaster!" The public expressed anger at barely being involved in the process. The council decided "to develop and implement a comprehensive approach for involving the community in city service delivery and problem-solving efforts." This began the design of Longmont's community involvement program. City leaders wanted involvement to be inclusive, meaningful and productive and to build capacity in the community. Council expected staff to engage residents as partners.

Happiness

2nd

In 2013, Longmont was America's 2nd happiest city (according to content analysis of geo-tagged tweets)

While Longmont has long had active neighborhood associations, the city did not have a comprehensive approach for city agencies to follow in working with the community. Following the recreational vehicle controversy, a team of staff from each department came together to create a framework adapted from the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). This helped staff look at issues and opportunities and determine the "level" of involvement that would be productive and meaningful. A steering team was formed to ensure a strong ongoing culture of engagement.

Often, when staff called a meeting or went out into the community, they attracted the "regulars," but looking at demographic information, they realized there were huge gaps. Longmont's population is 26 percent Latino, but this was not reflected in outreach results. The city began hosting demographically appropriate focus groups; reflecting the demographics of Longmont in age, gender, income, race and education level. The city also went to where people were to get input from those who might never attend a public hearing. Engagement efforts included helping bag food for needy families at El Comité, an organization dedicated to providing advocacy and social services for Latinos. After giving out the food, staff politely asked for interviews. Other staff engaged residents at the local Peruvian festival, a teen mom support group and various Longmont Area Chamber of Commerce events. To these grassroots efforts were added online engagement and telephone town halls.

Quality of Life

84%

of residents rate their quality of life in Longmont as "excellent" or good."

Longmont serves a multilingual community, and supporting the large Spanish speaking population is particularly important. Bilingual employees are recognized with additional compensation for their fluency in the Spanish language (and in sign language) and willingness to use that fluency to assist residents. This bilingual compensation plan, which Longmont implemented in 2003, is used as a model for other communities wishing to increase access and inclusivity.



Facilitation training is provided to Longmont's 22 advisory boards and commissions

PHOTO CREDIT: NATHAN PULLEY

As people became more involved with their government, the city's role began to change into one of facilitative leadership – gathering the community to make decisions and take care of each other. The city's Community and Neighborhood Resources Division helps nurture this growth by building neighborhood capacity. They register neighborhood groups, facilitate a Neighborhood Group Leaders Association, and provide grants to participants to help fund improvements and events that explore the benefits of knowing your neighbors, leading to safer, healthier neighborhoods.

The facilitation and involvement training that was developed for city staff was expanded to all of Longmont's boards and commissions, the school district, neighborhood group leaders, the Longmont Multicultural Action Committee, Boulder County, and the cities of Boulder and Fort Collins.

The St. Vrain School District has also set up a leadership and participation training program. The first group of parents that participated in the district's program went on to form an organization of parents called "Grassroots St. Vrain" with more than 2,000 participants. The program is a model for other school districts and won an award from IAP2 in 2014.

Longmont has worked to provide leadership opportunities to the full diversity of its residents. People Engaged in Raising Leaders (PERL), is a training program to increase involvement among people of color on boards and commissions across Boulder County. Participants prepare to take on positions of leadership on boards and commissions, participate civically in their community, and gain the skills and tools necessary to better understand the processes, structure, and make-up of boards and commissions.

In partnership with Longmont, the Boulder County Latino Chamber of Commerce provides \$10,000 in scholarships to minority residents of Longmont to attend leadership training courses. So far 50 Longmont residents have taken advantage of the scholarships.

Longmont has invested in its civic capital creating a culture of engagement, investing in its capacity to authentically engage Spanish-speaking residents, supporting residents to take action in their own neighborhoods, and developing inclusive leadership opportunities.

Civic Capital

A Case Study

SOMERVILLE MASSACHUSETTS

In Somerville, civic engagement isn't just a strategy, it's an integral part of the fabric of the community. As Somerville has changed from a largely white, working- and middle-class community to a dynamic and diverse urban hub of arts and innovation, so has the need to communicate and engage with a more diverse constituency. Today, Somerville is an eclectic mix of blue collar families, young professionals, college students, artists, and recent immigrants from countries such as El Salvador, Haiti, and Brazil. One-third of residents are foreign born, and more than 52 languages are spoken within in the public schools.

Happiness

7.8

In 2015 the average happiness rating in Somerville was 7.8 out of 10. That's higher than Switzerland (7.6), the "happiest" country in 2015

The city engages residents in numerous ways, from traditional town hall meetings to making data readily available to residents and utilizing their feedback to inform future policy. The city includes residents, business owners and stakeholders in advisory committees, which inform everything from reviewing master developer proposals for larger business districts to the implementation of rodent control measures and trash and composting programs.

The city's 20-year comprehensive plan, "SomerVision," was developed through a three-year community process that incorporated the ideas of hundreds of residents, business people, local organizations and key stakeholders, as well as a 60-member Steering Committee. It contains more than 40 strategic goals for Somerville's future and serves as the basis for planning and community development projects and policies.

In 2013, the city recognized that, despite its many innovative engagement approaches, there were still many residents who struggled to be a part of shaping city decisions. In 2013, the city expanded its non-English language outreach with SomerViva!, its immigrant outreach program, which consists of native speakers of Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole and French who serve as liaisons between the city and the largest immigrant communities. The program aims to improve access to services citywide, and to encourage and guide ongoing efforts to better serve the immigrant community, while also opening channels for greater participation by these residents. The program is shaped by extensive input from the immigrant community itself, which provides advice on how best to engage and communicate with them.

Community Pride

86%

of Somerville residents rate their pride in the community as 7 or higher (out of 10) in a 2015 survey

Along with a commitment to engaging the full diversity of the community, Somerville is cultivating opportunities for leaders from all backgrounds. The community works to provide free leadership and other training programs for residents of all income, education and age levels. Leadership programs include:

- SAIL, (Somerville Academy for Innovative Leadership) engages residents at a high level of commitment for the long term, offering adaptive leadership training in



Somerville hosts "Walking Dialogues with Police," working with youth and residents to tackle community issues.

PHOTO CREDIT: JACKIE ROSSETTI

exchange for community service. Since its inaugural session in 2013, the majority of participants (most of whom had little prior involvement with the city), have joined city commissions and advisory committees.

- Gente Ponderos (Emerging Leaders). This leadership skills program is conducted in Spanish for Latino residents. It teaches how decisions are made within local government and how residents can help shape those decisions through advocacy, while also providing leadership training.

As described in its 2014-2015 All-America City Application:

Where once civic outreach focused on project-specific discussions, Somerville now employs proactive and on-the-spot engagement strategies to capture real-time feedback and foster in-depth discussion among existing groups and organizations. While past practices dictated a top-down, bureaucratic management process, today residents help inform the city's fiscal responsibilities and management initiatives through active discussion and interactive workshops.

Where strategic planning and economic development decisions were once informed exclusively by high-level officials and CEOs, today our Somerville's 20-year comprehensive plan includes more than 130 pages of community member values and recommendations to set the roadmap for our development future. With a well-rounded civic engagement strategy, city management neither starts nor ends with municipal government. It is a continuous cycle and exchange of ideas and best practices that makes Somerville stronger as a community.

Civic Capital

A Case Study

Hampton, Virginia, has long been a recognized leader in civic engagement, with such efforts dating back to the mid-eighties and continuing to this day. Hampton is a three-time All-America City Award winner, demonstrating that it is never content to rest on its laurels.¹



The development of Hampton's culture of engagement was guided by the premise that government cannot, and indeed should not, solve all a community's issues on its own and a belief that better results come when residents are part of the solution.

Hampton's first formal recognition of the need to engage its residents began in the 1980's when a proposed road development caused controversy in the community, spurring then-city manager Robert J. O'Neill, Jr. to bring residents together to find a compromise. The residents found consensus through conversation, inspiring additional engagement efforts.

Soon the city created a Neighborhood Office and staffed it with skilled facilitators. Facilitators worked side-by-side with existing and emerging leaders to help them convene groups of residents and develop neighborhood plans. To ensure the plans did not just become a wish list for more city funding, the Neighborhood Office taught neighborhood leaders how to solicit volunteers and write grants. The city then created and funded a small-scale neighborhood grant program so residents could implement ideas they agreed upon. To receive grants, leaders had to document neighborhood consensus on the project and provide a match that could come in the form of volunteer hours from residents.

While the first neighborhood projects were small scale, over time larger projects with more transformational impact emerged. The Old Northampton neighborhood wanted a community center for their youth to have a safe place to recreate and asked for money to convert a closed school into a neighborhood center. As O'Neill thought about the request, he realized this was a defining moment. The city would never be able to fund every neighborhood's wish list; yet, if the city simply said no, it would undo all the good will developed through the citizen engagement work to date. This led him to issue a challenge. O'Neill committed to renovate the old school into a neighborhood center if the neighborhood would commit to staff it with volunteers. Residents rose to the challenge. The city had done its part and they were determined to do theirs. Neighborhood pride would not allow them to quit. Just a few years after the bold proposition, the Y.H. Thomas Center opened.

The Y.H. Thomas Center is still operating today. In fact, its attendance surpasses that of every other community center in the city. The center is still largely run through volunteer commitment, and city leaders believe it is this volunteer

¹ The story of Hampton's culture of engagement is adapted from an article by City Manager Mary Bunting published in the Fall 2018 Edition of the National Civic Review

spirit that has made the Y.H. Thomas Center the most actively used city facility. The neighborhood has a true sense of ownership; residents are fully invested in its success.

Going beyond isolated projects, the city sought to institutionalize engagement. Through annual allocation of funds for both the small and large-scale grants, the city effectively institutionalized a means for active and sustained neighborhood engagement. The city created a neighborhood commission to help review the grants and ensure that all areas of the city were receiving proper attention through these efforts. Unlike traditional boards and commissions selected by city council through a simple expression of interest, a Hampton Neighborhood Commission appointment required demonstrated grassroots experiences and connectedness with residents in the district to which the applicant was applying.

The city also created a youth commission to ensure an active youth voice in engagement efforts. Through the Hampton Youth Commission, young leaders learn similar skills as their adult counterparts and administer a small-scale grant program for students to make a difference in their schools and neighborhoods. The neighborhood and youth commissions have been developmental grounds for the city's leadership both at the neighborhood level and citywide.

In 2010, the city faced a daunting budget shortfall. With \$20 million worth of cuts to be made, the I-Value campaign asked residents to weigh in on what services were most important to protect and which they were willing to cut. The conversations asked residents to think about the city budget much as they would a household budget, rating services according to which were "needs," and which were "wants." Records transcribed resident input and printed it out to share with residents before the end of each meeting. Meeting results were published on-line and shared with the council, outlining where the majority of Hampton residents thought cuts were necessary.

I-Value has been used in the years since. In 2014, the process was successfully used to gauge the community's sentiment to raise taxes to avoid further reductions. Residents were asked whether they would support raising taxes and if so by how much and for what purposes. At the end of that year's engagement, nearly 90 percent of the public expressed support for a significant tax hike. With this high level of documented public support, the council raised its rates with little opposition or consternation. All the council members who ran for reelection the next cycle comfortably won, establishing the true value of the process. According to City Manager Mary Bunting,

The reason I-Value works—or, frankly, any of Hampton's engagement efforts have worked—is that people fundamentally want to be a part of the decisions that impact them. Engagement never guarantees that everyone will be happy with the result. That utopia doesn't exist. However, engagement does produce better decision making and, more importantly, better feeling about the process used to make decisions. When residents know they have (and how) to make a choice to influence decision-making, they inevitably feel better about it.



The *Civic Index* is a self-assessment tool for measuring a community's civic capital – the formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities that communities use to make decisions and solve problems. You can use this tool in a small group - with partners, community members or others to spark conversation about community strengths and areas in need of improvement. If you're using this with others come to a general agreement on the community you're talking about.

Community: _____ Date: _____

Note: Many of the statements below ask about inclusion of diverse perspectives. By diverse perspectives, we mean the views and experiences of those from different racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds, different socio-economic statuses, sexual orientation or gender identity, physical and mental abilities, long-term residents and recent immigrants, etc. Every community has diverse perspectives, the key is to understand and engage the diversity in your community.

Put a check mark under the response that best reflects your rating for each factor. Consider the full diversity of the community, not just those you usually engage.	We don't have this	This is a challenge for us	This is a moderate strength	This is a real strength
Engaged Residents				
We have many resident-initiated and resident-led community/ neighborhood organizations and activities				
In community meetings, people tend to work collaboratively to solve-problems; instead of being critical and confrontational				
Neighborhood councils and community groups reflect the community's diversity and regularly work with city officials to provide input into decision-making				
It is easy to find residents to serve on local boards and commissions, or run for office				
Inclusive Community Leadership				
We have a wealth of trusted, respected leaders across all-sectors and levels				
We have programs to develop leaders from all backgrounds, ages and sectors; especially those from traditionally marginalized communities				
Local leaders work together, build consensus, and set aside their own ego to focus on getting things done for the whole community				
Leaders and community members face challenges head-on, instead of ignoring tough conversations or decisions				
Government advisory boards, commissions reflect the full diversity of the community <i>and</i> exercise real decision-making power				
Collaborative Institutions				
We work with other communities to address local and regional challenges				
Local government, nonprofits, philanthropies, schools, civic associations and businesses collaborate effectively to solve community problems				
We have many trusted organizations that bring people together to resolve pressing conflicts and challenges.				
We have regular, established opportunities for information-sharing and decision-making across various sectors				

Put a check mark under the response that best reflects your rating for each factor. Consider the full diversity of the community, not just those you usually engage.	We don't have this	This is a challenge for us	This is a moderate strength	This is a real strength
Embracing Diversity, Equity				
Services and opportunities are provided equitably to all groups and neighborhoods				
We have policies to fight discrimination in all forms				
Immigrants, new residents and under-represented groups actively participate in community events and discussions				
We honor, value and highlight the contributions of the community's full diversity in our public spaces				
We are taking ongoing steps to discuss, learn about, and help address historical barriers to participation, inclusion and employment				
Authentic Communication				
We have many trusted, civic-minded sources of information and news in the community				
Local government and other groups provide information in the languages that people speak and in ways that are culturally appropriate				
There are many ways to communicate with and get information from government (i.e., 311, social media, text, local events, etc)				
We have authentic two-way communications between members of the community, the government and other institutions				
Culture of Engagement				
We have a culture of engagement; we expect our government and other institutions to engage the full community to guide decision-making				
Government agencies, nonprofits and other institutions work to learn from residents and other stakeholders before creating new programs				
We make an extra effort to ensure traditionally underrepresented groups are engaged as part of community decision-making				
Government, nonprofits and other groups engage people in accessible, comfortable or familiar locations, and at convenient times for residents.				
Local government and others engage community members in an ongoing fashion, not just when they need buy-in or quick feedback				
We have formal discussions about difficult issues like race, immigration, drug addiction, etc.				
Shared Vision and Values				
We have a strong sense of attachment to, and pride in, our neighborhoods and community				
Our community strategic planning efforts include the full diversity of the community to help identify a common vision				
People have a clear sense of what makes the community unique and a shared vision for what we want to become in the future				
Local government and nonprofit actions clearly align with the community's shared vision				

Exceptional	32 - 27
Strong	26 - 20
Average	19 - 13
Limited	12 - 6
Needs improvement	5 - 0

Count checkmarks in these columns to find your overall score

_____	+	_____
-------	---	-------

Civic Capital Score

moderate+real strength tally _____

check your score against the chart to the left


Facilitator Instructions

This facilitator's guide helps hold a one-hour self-assessment of your community's civic capital with the *Civic Index*. We suggest having conversation in a small group of 10-15 people.

 This symbol marks text to be read aloud, instructions to the facilitator are included in boxes

Introduction

(5 minutes)


 Today we'll be using the National Civic League's *Civic Index*. The *Index* measures the civic capital of the community – the capacities, conditions, skills and ways of working together that enable a community to address important issues and make decisions in a collaborative manner. This fourth edition of the *Index* is the result of decades of work in communities. The *Civic Index* has seven components, and 32 different factors (questions).

 We want to have this conversation because _____. We're interested in better understanding _____. We will take what we learn and _____.

Explain how you will use what you learn through this conversation.

Using the Civic Index


(15 minutes)

 You'll rate our community on seven components of civic capital. You can define community in many ways.

- For today, let's think about our shared community as _____?
- When rating different factors, think about the full diversity of the community – not just those whom you interact with most frequently. Try not to dwell too long on each question; go with your best sense. We'll have time to discuss our thoughts after this first round.
- Let's take 10-12 minutes to rate the community; then we'll break into small groups to discuss ways to move forward and strengthen our civic capital.


Small Group Discussion

(15 minutes)

 In groups of three, take a few minutes to discuss your answers. You'll be answering four questions.

1. What surprised you or made you think?
2. What are the one or two categories where the community is strongest?
3. What are the one or two categories where the community needs the most work?
4. What are some small steps that we could take as a community to build our civic capital in those areas that you think need the most work?

In your small groups remember

 You don't need to come to consensus – you're trying to learn from each other and see where you might have similar or differing views. If you see things differently, ask: "What makes you say that? What are you seeing that I might be missing?"

Full Group Discussion

(20 minutes)

1. Strengths

1. “What’s one component you believe is particularly strong for the community?”

Why did you say that?

2. “Show of hands – how many of you identified that area as a real strength?”

Why did you say that?

3. “Did any of you see it differently?”

“Why did you say that?”

Repeat questions 1,2,3 as time allows to get a sense of the strongest components

2. Challenges

1. So switching gears, “What’s a component (area) that you thought really needed more attention?”

“Why did you say that?”

2. “Show of hands – how many of you identified that as an area where we need to pay more attention?”

“Why did you say that?”

3. “Did others see it differently?”

(Repeat questions 1,2,3 as time allows to get a sense of weaker components)

3. Actions

- “Given our strengths and areas that need more attention – what are some of the actions you identified that we could take to move forward?”

“If we took that action, how might it improve things in that category/area?”

- “Did anyone identify any actions that residents could take?”

Get a list of 4-5 actions.

Next Steps

(5 minutes)

1. Thank the group. Let them know how you will follow up with them (email, another meeting, etc)
2. Share how you intend to use what you learn (share with those in the organization, combine with insight from other conversations, share with other groups, or with your board)
3. Collect each of the sheets so that you can tally the “scores” and look at individual differences.
4. If you are part of a coordinated effort, tally the Civic Capital scores from each participant to find a group average. Share the group average, identified strengths and weaknesses, as well as, key actions with the rest of the team.



Small Group Discussion Questions

In groups of three take a few minutes to discuss your answers to the *Civic Index* questions and potential next steps. Please take notes about different group members' perspectives so that we can learn from your conversations.

1. What surprised you or made you think?

2. What are the one or two components (categories) where the community is strongest?

What makes you say that?

3. What are the one or two components (categories) where the community needs the most work?

What makes you say that?

4. What are some small steps that we could take as a community to build our civic capital in those areas that you think need the most work?

How could we leverage our strengths to help us make progress in these areas?

What role can you imagine for residents? Nonprofits and other groups? Local government?

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 National Civic League set out to answer in 1986. On-the-ground research revealed that civic capital – the formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities that communities use to make decisions collaboratively and solve problems – enabled some communities to move ahead while others become bogged down by infighting and misaligned efforts. Communities with a healthy civic capital are not always the most affluent, educated or advantaged.

And while myriad other factors contribute to the progress of a community, civic capital plays a major and too often ignored role.



Civic Capital

The formal and informal relationships, networks and capacities communities use to make decisions and solve problems

