



# Building Local Strength

EMERGING STRATEGIES FOR  
INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

**CNU**

Building Places People Love.

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**Cover Photo:** Businesses along W. 18th Street in Pilsen, Chicago.  
Credit / Sumner Caughey.



# About this Report

The Congress for the New Urbanism produced this report with support from the Chick-fil-A Foundation and in cooperation with the Westside Future Fund.

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A tour of Historic Westside Atlanta, GA.  
Credit / Westside Future Fund.



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In preparing this report, CNU has sought to portray information with the fullest possible accuracy. CNU takes sole responsibility for any errors herein.

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\* Interviewed for this report

\*\* Patti Southard passed away on April 15th, 2019, prior to the publication of this report. Patti’s contribution to ensuring equity and social justice through the built environment was an inspiration for the work of CNU.



# Executive Summary

Before cars, American cities were built for people. Developed organically and incrementally over time, cities were defined by walkable commercial corridors with a mix of uses at the heart of many neighborhoods. A wide array of housing was available, from single room occupancy to flats and quadruplexes, and employment opportunities were available within walking distance.

With the introduction of car-centric life came new suburbs, where a regulatory regime built communities that separated commerce and industry from housing and people from one another based on race and class. While making ever more room for cars, racist planning and financial practices, including urban renewal and redlining, targeted and destroyed many of the thriving communities of color in major urban areas. Other neighborhoods were left to stagnate and decline as the middle-class and wealthy removed themselves in search of a rebranded American dream of homogeneity and exclusion.

Cities across the country are now experiencing stronger growth than in any decade since the middle of the 20th Century, yet that growth has not been equal across cities and towns. Many neighborhoods continue to stagnate and are left out of the national economic recovery. Others now face development pressure as land values, home prices, rents, and demand for urban living rise.

Both types of neighborhoods—the perpetually under resourced and the now rapidly changing—are struggling due to a complex interplay of federal and local policies driven in large part by structural racism and classism that led to economic exclusion and neglect over time.

One of the biggest challenges facing cities in the 21st Century is identifying and implementing strategies that can help revitalize underserved communities in ways that minimize displacement and increase access to opportunity. The issue becomes even more urgent as federally sponsored Opportunity Zones, created by the Jobs Act of 2017, are designed to spur investment in thousands of low-income census tracts through 2026.

These challenges are systemic and the task ahead will require ongoing engagement, partnerships, research, and policy innovation. The Congress for the New Urbanism does not purport to have all the answers, but is committed to bringing together the wealth of knowledge held by residents, local leaders, neighborhood advocates, municipalities, policymakers, and practitioners to move this conversation forward. This report begins by highlighting some of the municipalities, organizations, and developers seeking to deliver inclusive development and by detailing a critical cross-section of the tools and strategies that are emerging in neighborhoods across the country.

*Building Local Strength* is a practical document for local governments, practitioners, and community leaders who want to understand what they might do to promote inclusive development. The profiles in this report show that both large- and small-scale strategies, combined with holistic approaches that look beyond housing, are needed to reverse the legacy of many 20th Century practices that fostered segregation and disinvestment.



Campus Martius Park in Detroit, MI.  
Credit / Michigan Municipal League.

## A Holistic Approach

Providing access to quality, affordable housing is extraordinarily important in hot and cold market cities alike. Yet a singular focus on housing, which is at the core of so many revitalization programs, can fail residents in a number of ways. A well-functioning neighborhood requires that employment and recreation opportunities, neighborhood-serving retail, schools, public gathering space, and affordable housing are all available within a walkable, transit-oriented environment.

To build and reknit holistic neighborhoods requires a new approach, one that taps into the power of small and incremental changes, leverages partnerships between big and small actors, harnesses a community vision, and emphasizes robust community engagement.

While large-scale projects and big funding sources continue to be important in places that lack affordable housing, incremental development can complement this traditional approach in a number of ways. Smaller, more gradual changes occur at a pace and on a scale that does not overwhelm the character of a place. If resilience is the strength of many parts, incremental development encourages the many small pieces needed to build stronger neighborhoods. Innovation, flexibility, adaptation, and a nimble response are all baked in.

National and local nonprofits, philanthropic institutions, and other non-governmental entities are essential partners in this endeavor. So too are the local leaders, advocates, and residents who hold a wealth of knowledge and know what is needed most acutely. Communities need maximum assistance from these groups who are making investments in hundreds of



underserved neighborhoods across the U.S., often investments that are not possible in the for-profit and government sectors. However, cities themselves must also play a critical role by maximizing infrastructure investments to design safer streets and more appealing public places. Updates to local codes and ordinances can make redevelopment easier and more cost effective. These improvements can encourage the growth of local talent, increase personal stake in revitalization efforts, and spark a local entrepreneurial spirit.

Rebuilding whole, inclusive communities after systemic exclusionary practices have torn them apart is an extraordinary task. The legacy of racist policies continues to shape the built environment in every corner of this country. Combining new and old tools, discovering powerful policy changes, and uplifting the work of diverse and innovative practitioners can be the first step. Providing meaningful paths to engagement and allowing for local knowledge and lived experience to drive a shared vision is perhaps the most important tactic we have seen. We must ensure that community members are central to any change.

This report highlights communities, organizations, and developers that are seeking to deliver inclusive revitalization through creative melding of policies and programs. While this report is not intended as a comprehensive survey of all possible strategies, CNU hopes it adds knowledge that will support community efforts to build prosperity and well-being for millions of residents.

Building Local Strength

This report includes a description of the challenge ahead, profiles of communities who are innovating new solutions on the ground, and a summary of the tools identified to date that can help ensure more equitable outcomes for cities across the country. The resources section at the very end provides more detailed information on all the ideas, concepts, tools, and profiles listed throughout the report.

- Innovation in Action**

Eight profiles of a diverse set of communities are provided to highlight emerging approaches being used to seek more inclusive and equitable outcomes. Each profile demonstrates how new and old tools are combined in unique ways to meet the needs of each local context. The profiles were generated from research and interviews with developers, residents, and practitioners in each place.
- Tools for Implementation**

We daylight the tools and policies that work at small- and large-scales toward rebuilding holistic neighborhoods. Though not comprehensive, this list summarizes many of the tools used in the community profiles, illustrating how they can be adapted and used in combination.
- Moving Forward**

In lieu of next steps, CNU identifies ways in which local governments, practitioners, developers, and community leaders can begin to ensure efforts will lead to more inclusive development. These concepts come directly from our research, the knowledge and experience of our membership, interviews with community activists, and many of the Innovation in Action profiles.



Alone, these ideas will not automatically ensure that inclusive and equitable development will be the outcome, nor will they reverse the legacy of racism and exclusion reflected in our built environment and felt acutely by many residents to this day. Yet following this approach while engaging in the development process creates a better opportunity for achieving desired outcomes.

Successfully rebuilding neighborhoods and encouraging inclusive development requires equal collaboration and effort from residents and their local leaders. The case studies in this report show how sustained and meaningful engagement can impact the outcome of planning efforts. While the tools, policies, and strategies are replicable, every city and neighborhood is different. The combination of tools and the way they are applied locally will always be unique.

This report distills the lessons from ongoing projects into a flexible toolbox that can be combined in ways that meet the unique needs of individual communities. Using proven strategies in new ways and innovating on a small-scale are how many communities are Building Local Strength.



# Introduction

Even in the face of a renewed interest in urban living, neighborhoods in cities across the country continue to stagnate or decline, the result of more than a century of policies designed to concentrate poverty and restrict investments to areas where whiter, more affluent populations reside. These conditions persist in nearly every city—even those that are otherwise heralded as having undergone an urban rebirth.

While the middle-class and wealthy sought the privacy of new automobile-oriented suburbs, new communities were shaped by land-use regulations limiting density and encouraging segregation. Urban renewal developments and financing schemes such as redlining became mainstream solutions to racist and exclusionary pressures in urban environments. At the same time, in-city highways were routed through less-affluent parts of town. Together, these policies inflicted extraordinary and lasting damage on many urban neighborhoods.

As cities lost population, continued automobile orientation and parking requirements led to thousands of city buildings being demolished to provide surface parking lots for suburban commuters. This loss accelerated the decline of neighborhoods, increased displacement, and contributed to the abandonment and eventual demolition of even more buildings. Over time, vacant lots and buildings formed the backdrop to daily life in many urban neighborhoods. As tax revenues fell, public realm amenities were also neglected, including sidewalks, streetscapes, transit infrastructure, and parks. As a result of this series of events, in America's 50 largest metropolitan areas, 1,100 high-poverty census tracts lost an average of 40 percent of their population from 1970 to 2010.

## The Challenge

The fortunes of many urban communities began to turn in the last two decades, as demand grew for vibrant, dense, walkable neighborhoods, such as those found in the historic fabric of cities. More Americans of all ages are choosing city life, where mixed-use neighborhoods provide a strong sense of place, a high-quality public realm, diverse uses and architecture, choices in mobility, and more jobs in close proximity.

Yet many neighborhoods have been left out of this momentum. Some continue to lack investment, even in the face of an overall renewed interest in their region. In these communities, there is no shortage of affordable housing and potential commercial space, but the condition of these structures is often substandard, with buildings that have not been rehabilitated or brought up to safety codes in decades. The cost of rehabilitation may exceed the value of the building, leaving little economic incentive for maintenance or investment. Many residents lack access to quality housing and well-paying jobs. Others move to the suburbs where they are burdened by rising transportation costs.

In other neighborhoods, including many in the most economically dynamic cities in the country, development pressure is spilling over into long-neglected places, leading to displacement of residents that have endured for decades. It is essential that the benefits of development and investment are shared by residents of all incomes and tenure.

Both types of neighborhoods—the perpetually under resourced and the now gentrifying—were created through a complex interplay of federal and local policies, racism, classism, economic exclusion, cultural and market forces, and neglect over time.



CityWest, a HOPE VI project in Cincinnati, OH.  
Credit / Torti Gallas + Partners.

What are the strategies that help revitalize underserved communities in ways that minimize displacement and increase access to opportunity? This report begins to address that question by detailing a critical cross-section of the tools and strategies that are emerging in neighborhoods across the country, and by highlighting the organizations and developers seeking to deliver inclusive development by and for neighborhood residents. This is the start of ongoing research and commitment from CNU.

The solutions to be developed and identified are just as multifaceted, incremental, and long-term as the problems themselves. The profiles in this report show that both large- and small-scale strategies, combined with holistic approaches that look beyond housing, are needed if we are to reverse decades of decline due to racist and exclusionary policies.

## The Traditional Approach

For decades, the mainstream approach to revitalization centered on anti-poverty housing programs, fueled by centralized sources of funding and federal support, such as public housing and Housing Choice Vouchers, Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), and Community Development Block Grants. American cities and their residents benefit from thousands of subsidized units created through the programs that offer a critical safety net for families lacking resources to compete for market-rate housing. These large-scale programs remain tremendously important, yet they are not enough to pull neighborhoods out of poverty and decline.

While many of these approaches have focused almost solely on housing, what is often needed





Local radio stops by the Boogie Down Grind Café, a community-owned coffee shop in the Bronx, NY. Credit / Majora Carter.

is an effort to revitalize and strengthen the multitude of elements that create a holistic neighborhood, from locally-serving retail to open space. This approach includes an active public realm, streets that are designed for people, access to fresh food, and reliable transportation to employment opportunities.

In one sense, the problem is supply and funding: The amount of public housing has not risen for decades, and LIHTC, which provides about 90 percent of the nation’s affordable housing development, does not meet the needs of all low-income renters. Louisville, Kentucky, for example, has a population of nearly 620,000 and a 30,000 family waiting list for affordable housing. Additionally, these programs are vulnerable to changes in political will, as federal funding is out of the direct control of individual cities. New funding sources and new approaches are needed to supplement federal and state programs.

At the same time, an overreliance on large-scale programs means that local residents cannot participate directly in building better communities. They do not have the resources to use LIHTC, to build or maintain public housing, or receive big government grants. Influencing national policy is difficult even for city officials, let alone community members. Additionally, community inclusion and public participation efforts are often significantly lacking, resulting in many revitalization programs being carried out absent community input.

In a regulatory regime that inhibits small-scale development and other forms of wealth creation, a focus on affordable housing can sometimes lead to inequality. Notes C. Jeffrey Wright, the CEO of Urban Ministries, Inc., subsidized affordable housing “excludes the opportunity for wealth accumulation through appreciated real estate. I know that this has been the major factor in wealth inequality between African Americans and the majority community.”

Inclusive development is about building communities, not just housing. A holistic vision for community development is missing from many long-neglected neighborhoods. It’s hard to focus on the big picture when the problems are immediate and severe—yet without that vision, neighborhoods may be caught in long-term poverty cycles or waves of displacement. A community vision—addressing cultural, social, health, and economic concerns, formed through robust community participation—is a necessary part of a successful revitalization effort.

### Building Local Strength

Majora Carter, an urban revitalization strategist and community developer from the South Bronx, explains why no amount of accessible housing can compete with a compromised public realm: “Gentrification starts with telling the young people ‘you want to get as far as you can from that community,’” she says. “The key is to give people reasons to stay. Give them a stake in the community through property and sweat equity.”

Well-functioning neighborhoods provide access to parks, recreation, and open space; pedestrian infrastructure and modes of transit; and amenities like grocery stores and neighborhood-serving retail. These amenities should not be provided solely in affluent areas. Having them within a neighborhood can encourage talented young people to remain. “We aren’t retaining the talent that grows in our communities,” Carter explains. Residents of these neighborhoods want jobs, amenities, and the potential to gain equity in their neighborhood if property values rise.

Neighborhoods can actively encourage—or discourage—young adults to stay, return, gain employment, and raise families. Doing so can also inspire homegrown talent, context-specific solutions, and a local entrepreneurial spirit that creates and maintains continuous small-scale

improvements, which helps create and grow wealth within a neighborhood. This kind of self-directed, locally-driven neighborhood change can only happen when residents are given the tools, knowledge, and confidence to define a new trajectory.

Big funding is needed for major projects, such as rebuilding dilapidated housing or constructing multi-family buildings, but support of incremental small-scale efforts is essential for rebuilding whole neighborhoods. Small-scale development offers residents ownership and agency in the revitalization of their blocks, streets, and neighborhoods, providing an opportunity for success that many large-scale strategies lack. Integrating these two approaches can bring targeted investment in a way that reduces or mitigates displacement while creating greater opportunities for all residents, ultimately supporting long term inclusion and equity.

### Redevelopment With Many Hands

Neighborhoods tend to be most vibrant when they have formed incrementally and organically over time. Using that approach in revitalization efforts is critical to achieving growth that benefits the residents of disinvested neighborhoods. Incremental development allows for the revitalization of neighborhoods using many hands, with multiple owners, on a scale that does not overwhelm the current character and culture of a place. It also provides the opportunity for wealth to be created locally, among many players. In neighborhoods that have seen population and economic decline during the last 50 years, especially historically African American neighborhoods, incremental development can bring back the thriving local businesses that once defined neighborhood character in a way that supports—and does not replace—the existing neighborhood fabric.



There is no “silver bullet” to achieving that goal. The neighborhood profiles in this report reveal emerging and innovative approaches that combine small- and large-scale efforts while giving maximum agency to residents. These communities employ holistic visions of their neighborhoods, created by the residents, using a wide range of tools to improve quality of life, build wealth locally, and provide a foundation for affordable living. There are a number of lessons and approaches that can be gleaned from examining their ongoing evolution.

When it comes to addressing the systemic issues that have impacted urban neighborhoods in the 20th Century, CNU does not purport to have all of the answers. Residents, local leaders, and neighborhood advocates have a wealth of knowledge, ideas, and experiences that should be tapped into during this process. This report profiles communities and projects from around the U.S. that are trying to achieve these goals, and distills lessons into a toolbox that can be combined in ways that meet unique needs of individual communities. This is the start of an extraordinarily important conversation and CNU’s ongoing commitment to this work.

## The Westside Symposium

Aspects of the new urbanist body of work—including original language of The Charter and the work of our membership—have explored the issues of equity and inclusion for more than twenty years. As many of these issues have become more pressing, members across the country have begun to identify and develop innovative solutions to these very complex problems on a hyper-local scale.

Supported by the Chick-fil-A Foundation, CNU worked with the Westside Future Fund to explore equitable and inclusive development strategies that could be deployed in four historic Westside Atlanta neighborhoods suffering from decades of disinvestment. The symposium presented a

rare opportunity to convene national experts and local advocates to discuss the specifics of a single community—one that shares challenges with neighborhoods from coast to coast.

The March 15, 2018 symposium sought not only to generate actionable ideas needed to implement the Westside Land Use Framework Plan, but also to affirm the guiding concept of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Beloved Community,” relative to neighborhoods suffering from poverty and struggling with change (for more information on the Westside Symposium, see Appendix A).

The information gained during this symposium—and the research completed to date—resulted in a compilation of emerging practices from across the country, aimed at giving struggling neighborhoods nationwide tools to catalyze lasting change on their own terms.

## Report Roadmap

This report highlights communities, organizations, and developers seeking to deliver inclusive revitalization through creative melding of development tactics, policies, and programs. While this report is not intended as a comprehensive survey of all possible strategies, CNU hopes it will support community efforts to build prosperity and well-being for residents of neighborhoods that suffered from racist, exclusionary practices. It includes the following sections:

- [Innovation in Action](#) profiles eight communities where tools and strategies are combined in unique ways by government, developers, and community organizations at scales ranging from single buildings to multiple neighborhoods. In each case, local citizens and business owners are included in their own community revitalization on multiple levels. Many of these projects focus on change that produces visible, practical impacts.

- [Tools for Implementing Neighborhood Change](#) highlights 14 policies and tools that support and advance local development and can create more inclusive outcomes. Many, but not all, of these tools are from the traditional new urbanist toolbox and they are being used extensively in the Innovation in Action case studies highlighted in this report.
- [Moving Forward](#) identifies actions that cities and communities can take to support local and inclusive development in underserved communities.
- [Additional Resources](#) is a compendium of materials that provide a more in-depth look at the ideas contained in this report.

Neighborhood change, especially in areas with lower-income, underserved, or minority populations, is often perceived as mostly benefitting outside developers, speculators, and new residents. Although this has been the case in many locations, it does not have to be the guaranteed outcome. Given the right tools, including access to capital and meaningful ways to collaborate, residents can be empowered to influence neighborhood change and ultimately benefit from increased community investment.

This report is intended as a practical guide for residents, leaders, organizations, practitioners, and developers who seek inclusive revitalization. The case studies provide examples of best practices for investing in underserved neighborhoods while minimizing displacement of legacy residents and preserving neighborhood culture, traditions, affordability, and institutions. The case studies are representative of a toolbox we hope will grow over time.

Revitalization in distressed communities requires a multilayered approach to ensure access to opportunity increases for all residents. Urbanists can help by creating and stewarding partnerships with local institutions and organizations, ensuring that neighborhood planning efforts are holistic, just, and fair. Only through this approach will we be able to move beyond a legacy that has woven exclusivity into the development process.



# Building Local Strength

## Innovation in Action

Repeatedly during the 20th Century, land use and fiscal policies at all levels of government deliberately disadvantaged communities of color, increasing segregation and compounding the systemic racism that has plagued the U.S. since its founding. This disinvestment, stemming in part from the destruction of entire neighborhoods, continues to this day in many cities. In others, increased development pressure threatens legacy residents with displacement. Neighborhoods experiencing these traumas from either perspective demand more than a limited set of strategies; a wide range of flexible solutions needs to be identified that can be combined in new ways to address local conditions. These solutions are presented as replicable not because they are one-size-fits all, but rather because they can be applied in different ways and in combination with local knowledge to meet the needs of various neighborhood contexts.

Innovation in Action describes eight communities where practical, effective tools and strategies are emerging from local government, developers, and community organizations who are seeking more inclusive and equitable outcomes. The profiles reflect innovative approaches to achieving locally driven change—using tools described in detail in the next section. Innovation in Action highlights where and how community groups, policymakers, neighborhood and regional organizations, developers, and local philanthropies are making progress toward better futures for city neighborhoods.

Profiles include:

1. **Anacostia Neighborhood in Washington, District of Columbia.**
2. **Boston Edison and Fitzgerald Neighborhoods in Detroit, Michigan.**
3. **Grow DeSoto Market Place in DeSoto, Texas.**
4. **Jolene's First Cousin in Portland, Oregon.**
5. **Iberville Offsites in New Orleans, Louisiana.**
6. **Portland Neighborhood in Louisville, Kentucky.**
7. **Historic Westside in Atlanta, Georgia.**
8. **West Side Neighborhoods in South Bend, Indiana.**

These eight examples do not fully represent the depth and breadth of work that is occurring in hundreds of neighborhoods across the U.S., instead they were selected because they exemplify a wide range of emerging small- and large-scale approaches in the context of holistic neighborhood redevelopment. As this work is continually evolving, CNU hopes to collect and publicize more examples in the future.







Rendering of the 11th Street Bridge Park.  
Credit / OMA+OLIN.

**REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:**

- Develop an Equitable Development Plan to ensure the needs of legacy residents are addressed.
- Build a coalition of organizations with overlap in mission and service area to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Establish a Community Land Trust to maintain below-market-rate housing while allowing homeowners to gain equity as values rise.
- Focus on wealth building opportunities, not just affordable rental housing, which includes homeownership, workforce development, financial counseling, and small business development.

# Anacostia Neighborhood

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

## Summary:

Across the river from the rest of rapidly changing D.C., the historically African American neighborhood of Anacostia has seen decades of disinvestment. With a High Line-style investment on the way to connect the two sides of the river, an innovative public-private partnership is implementing a unique plan to maximize benefits to legacy residents and prevent displacement. The plan, part of an ongoing project, provides homeownership opportunities, direct social services, small business development, and affordable housing.

## Takeaway:

Support investment while anticipating and mitigating neighborhood change.

In Washington, D.C., the decommissioning of the 11th Street Bridge offered an opportunity to create an elevated linear park over the Anacostia River using the piers of the old bridge. The proposed bridge park, expected to break ground in 2020, would connect to bike and pedestrian trails on both sides of the river and provide a destination in a sector of the city lacking in amenities. Inspired by New York City’s High Line, the project posed a pressing challenge to planners: Anticipate and address the impacts of development that would likely accompany the bridge park.

The nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River collaborated with multiple partners to create an innovative Equitable Development Plan (EDP) focused on minimizing the displacement of residents within a mile radius of the bridge. Funded by The Kresge Foundation, JPB, and community development corporation LISC-DC, the plan was the result of a year’s worth of engagement with residents, business owners, government officials, and policy experts.

The EDP housing strategy calls for a tenants’ rights workshop and housing counseling services for residents. “Seventy-five percent of the residents on the east side of the bridge are renters,” says Vaughn Perry, equitable development manager at Building Bridges. Seed funding was provided to community groups to lead this effort.

Additionally, the Douglass Community Land Trust was established in 2018, controlled by a board made up of two-thirds community residents and one-third housing advisory experts. The Trust sets a strong standard for affordability—30 to 50 percent of the area median income. The Trust immediately began purchasing properties as the market heated up in anticipation of the development, helped by a \$5 million PRO Neighborhoods grant from JP Morgan Chase.

Eventually, the Trust will enable residents to purchase homes at subsidized rates. Buyers sign an agreement that, when they sell, 75 percent of the equity in the house will go back to the Trust, along with its original investment. For example, if a buyer pays \$200,000 for a \$400,000 house, and that house appreciates to \$500,000 upon its sale, the Land Trust would recover its \$200,000 plus \$75,000 in equity. The original buyer would get the remaining \$25,000 equity.

“The key is to balance permanent affordability and wealth creation,” says Perry. Homeowners are able to save money through a lower mortgage payment, and build equity in their homes. The Land Trust gains funds over time so it can continue to invest in properties and maintain them at or below market value.

Direct services, mentoring, and peer connection for homebuyers is another important aspect of the EDP. Manna, a D.C. nonprofit developer, has hosted a Home Buyer’s Club since February 2016, with 53 homes purchased or in the process of being purchased by participants in the program. “It was valuable to go to a formal place and have access to people with years of experience in financing and purchasing homes. The camaraderie was valuable also: you had people from all walks of life participating, with the common goal of owning their own home,” said Kara Johnson, a Home Buyer’s Club participant.

The small business enterprise arm of the EDP aims to serve local small business immediately on both sides of the bridge and surrounding impact area. One million dollars of the JP Morgan Chase grant will go to technical assistance and microloans to be provided to small businesses.

The Bridge Park team will use local contractors for construction, landscaping, and media support. Training and apprenticeship programs are underway to boost skills of residents who want new employment. Local nonprofits like Skyland Workforce help match residents and jobs while providing entrepreneurship training, construction apprenticeship programs, and mentoring. The increased foot traffic and development are expected to create new retail opportunities as well.

There are also benefits of the EDP that are harder to measure. It has built trust and goodwill in a community that has good reason for being suspicious of big plans. It has also catalyzed new programs to serve the community, including a partnership with Capital Area Asset Builders to create children’s savings accounts for 100 low- to moderate- income families identified by the local school district, matching their \$300 savings 5:1, then rolling the money into a college savings fund.

“This is a real opportunity to create a democratic space, a space that is inclusive for all types of people from around the city.”

Irfana Jetha Noorani,  
11th Street Bridge Park  
deputy director





Home renovated by Century Partners in Detroit's Fitzgerald neighborhood. Credit / Century Partners.

**REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:**

- Provide legacy residents with opportunities for wealth building, such as shared equity in redeveloped properties, including rehabbed rental homes.
- Invest in locally owned businesses by prioritizing contracts with construction, rehabilitation, and landscaping firms based in the city.
- Consolidate vacant land to maximize redevelopment impact while supporting existing residents by providing needed population density.

# Boston Edison and Fitzgerald Neighborhoods

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

**Summary:**

The story of Detroit’s comeback is iconic. Dramatic population loss and municipal financial struggles have resulted in widespread vacancy and blight, yet the city has seen an influx of millennials and entrepreneurs taking advantage of cheap real estate and low barriers to entry in recent years. A development team, in partnership with the city, is investing in neighborhoods in a way that supports legacy residents who have held onto their communities through the worst economic times.

**Takeaway:**

Prioritize legacy residents and residential development while improving the public realm.

In Detroit, a city that has seen stark population loss since 1950, city planners, nonprofits, and developers have been looking for ways to revitalize the hundreds of left-behind neighborhoods. Century Partners came to Detroit with more than \$1 million raised from family and friends to begin revitalization of Atkinson Street in the historic Boston Edison neighborhood. The team set up a property fund that allows neighbors to purchase equity in the homes Century Partners rents. Additionally, residents can sell properties to Century Partners for 80 percent cash and 20 percent investment in the company, retaining a level of ownership. This model is designed to minimize the tensions when new residents move into the neighborhood, because both old and new residents have a stake. “The residents are able to see their home values increase,” David Alade, co-founder and managing partner of Century Partners, says.

Alade, along with co-founders Kim Dowdell and Andrew Colom, has built a neighborhood revitalization strategy around the homeowners and residents who have held on through decades of decline. “We want to make sure that the people who never gave up on Detroit will benefit from any new investment in the city,” says Alade. Century Partners works through a real estate investment trust in which residents can hold shares paid by cash or asset contribution. The firm concentrates development in strategic locations that reduce vacancy and blight in neighborhoods with existing residents, “leading to materially better home values in [the] area,” explains Alade.

In the process of setting up their initial model, they found that many neighborhood residents had purchased nearby properties at low prices, keeping the lawn mowed and the house secured but unable to afford restoration—which often costs \$100,000 or more. As an additional strategy, Century Partners offered to purchase the properties for cash and equity, which rewards the owners for their work in maintaining the property and stabilizing the neighborhood.

Based on initial success, Century Partners then expanded from Boston Edison into two other neighborhoods: The North End and East English Village. The properties they redevelop are sold as single-family homes or divided up and leased as apartments. Since 2015, Century Partners has developed nearly 70 units of housing in three neighborhoods just a short bike ride from downtown. They also invest locally when completing their rehabilitations, by hiring only Detroit-based contractors. They complete their holistic development approach by investing in green infrastructure,

recreation and open space, bioremediation, and urban agriculture.

**Scaling Success: FitzForward**

Based on the group’s success in Boston Edison, the North End, and East English Village, the City of Detroit partnered with Century Partners to expand their development activities with FitzForward, an initiative located about five miles northwest of downtown. This public-private partnership also includes The Platform, another community-oriented developer with extensive development experience in Detroit neighborhoods. The FitzForward plans leverage around \$14 million of public and private capital—including funds from Reimagining the Civic Commons, a partnership between the Kresge, Knight, JPB, and Rockefeller foundations, as well as the City’s Strategic Neighborhood Fund Initiative.

“We are pioneering a nuanced, tri-sector approach to neighborhood revitalization, including private, public and foundation support, grounded in the principles of community respect and collaboration,” says Alade. The FitzForward plans include developing a signature civic asset for the neighborhood, Ella Fitzgerald Park, which is the centerpiece of a greenway that will connect Greenlawn Avenue to Livernois Avenue through the neighborhood by reclaiming nearly 200 vacant lots. Additionally, planned residential development will include a mix of rental, market-rate, student, and affordable senior housing. The developer will provide buyers with mortgage counseling and facilitate financing commitments from local banks.

Philanthropic and Community Development Financial Institution funds are being invested to reinvigorate the commercial corridor that borders the neighborhood. Through a partnership with the Detroit Land Bank Authority, more than 100 dilapidated structures and two dozen vacant lots will be replaced with functional landscaping to support street-level stormwater management. Additionally, Century Partners is promoting urban homesteading to the community by allowing experienced local urban farmers to purchase a home and multiple vacant lots as a bundle rather than leasing vacant lots for urban gardens. Some homesteads are subsidized, providing valuable equity ownership for Detroiters and helping to address many of the pressing global concerns cities face around food access, transparency, and security.

This strategy is built on careful initiative scaling and public-private partnerships, in order to leverage the community’s financial commitment to Detroit neighborhoods and reinvest those funds into targeted redevelopment that builds back legacy resident equity.





The Grow DeSoto Market has transformed its parking lot into a pedestrian space.  
Credit / Monte Anderson.

#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- Make use of existing assets, even automobile-centric buildings, to bring urbanism to aging commercial corridors.
- Build the capacity of small business owners through mentorship, collaboration, and access to tools.
- Convert excess parking to active spaces through creative placemaking, landscaping, and retail uses.
- Work with local officials to reduce regulatory barriers to creative reuse projects, including zoning and building code changes and reduced parking requirements.

## The Grow DeSoto Market Place

DESOTO, TEXAS

### Summary:

Leaders of a largely African American suburb build upon a local entrepreneurial culture to retrofit a strip mall with mixed-use, startup businesses, and housing. The retrofit improves the public realm by activating a parking lot with restaurants. Workforce housing adds to the diversity of place, enabled by a few simple changes to land use regulations.

### Takeaway:

The creative reuse of a common suburban building type can increase diversity in the built environment and support local entrepreneurs.

DeSoto, Texas, a suburb of Dallas, consists mostly of 1970s style growth—big roads, little pedestrian activity. Mayor Curtistene McCowan and the DeSoto Economic Development Corporation (EDC) worked with a local developer to prove the benefits of good urban design would work in this context, envisioning a place where multiple local tenants could enliven 26,000 square feet of vacant commercial space in a centrally located strip mall, while uplifting and supporting local entrepreneurs.

Dallas-based developer Monte Anderson owned the property, which was vacant after the previous anchor tenant moved out. The space could have easily been leased to another big-box chain, but the city and EDC worked with Anderson to develop a new concept to bring urbanism where previously the automobile reigned. The Grow DeSoto Market Place divides the commercial space into 300-to-400 square foot micro-retail areas, with room for 60 local businesses, plus residential units and food truck dining in smaller buildings with outdoor seating.

To achieve the goal of supporting local entrepreneurship, the redevelopment team created a panel of judges, including the Mayor, to foster an environment where would-be tenants receive encouragement and feedback. “The tenants, many of whom are young, black, and new to business ownership, pitch their ideas to the incubator’s leaders,” reports the Dallas Morning News. “So far, there’s a bakery, a wine-and-painting shop, [a smoothie] restaurant, a clothing store, a skincare clinic, and dozens of other micro-businesses and professionals.”

DeSoto has become known for attracting an African American middle-class population and development that creates a walkable urban core and sense of place will continue to attract new residents and inspire young talent to stay, have families, and put down roots. Incremental urban transformations like the Grow DeSoto Market Place are steps toward that goal. Once the businesses are established and successful, they can move into larger locations in the city’s Hampton Road corridor redevelopment district. It serves as a launching pad for locally- and minority-owned businesses, creating wealth while providing unique opportunities that attract new residents to stabilize and grow the community.

The development of the property itself raised land-use issues that required out-of-the-box thinking. The site had too much parking for its new intended use, so portions of the existing parking were reclaimed for residential uses and food vendors. Although the market for residential is not the driver behind the

decision, project leaders determined that adding housing on-site was necessary in order to add to the vibrancy and urban feeling of the area. Additional residents help support the uses on-site, such as a health club and painting classes. Five fourplexes were built along the eastern portion of the site, using zoning variances from the city to allow residential development and eliminate the parking requirement. Small units built to be affordable to employees working in the businesses rent out for about \$700-\$800 a month. The project also obtained a zoning variance to allow food trailers and additional retail uses. Collaboration with city leaders meant the entire process took less than two years from purchase of the site to its opening in 2018.

The Grow DeSoto Market Place demonstrates that reuse of existing buildings doesn’t have to follow a prescribed formula. Converting a large, big-box style development on a five-lane arterial road—of which millions exist across the country—into a distinct, diverse destination using the principles of incremental development challenges the conventional reuse approach. While keeping the configuration of the existing building, the project created a connection to the street through the use of a pedestrianized area of the parking lot. This area utilizes crushed gravel instead of asphalt to be walkable and is lined with food trailers to activate the space. A pedestrian path and trees create a uniquely urban destination amid the highly paved character of the corridor.

**“When you support a small business, you are supporting a dream.”**

Jo Ashley Wilson,  
owner of Seven 1 Seven  
boutique in the  
Grow DeSoto Market Place

**“The energy is high. It’s a loving atmosphere. Everyone’s coming together, shopping, mingling, connecting, it’s amazing.”**

Jikimi Garrett,  
shopper





Rendering of Jolene's First Cousin.  
Credit / Guerrilla Development Company.

#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- Remove subsidy as a requirement in the affordable housing equation through creative financing of smaller projects.
- Engage the community that will be impacted by development to be transparent and gain support for the project.
- Utilize alternative living arrangements to maximize affordability, including Single Resident Occupancy housing.
- Create opportunities for small investments in real estate through crowdfunding and crowd investing.

## Jolene's First Cousin

PORTLAND, OREGON

### Summary:

Portland's incredible urban environment has been attracting new residents for decades, while its rising housing costs have drastically increased the population of "working homeless" in the city. A creative approach to combat this problem is being tested in the Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood where Single Resident Occupancy units are being added to mixed-use development that is funded through crowd investing, a decentralized financing mechanism that allows multiple smaller dollar investors to contribute to the project.

### Takeaway:

Creative finance and new housing types can start to solve a difficult affordability issue.

Portland's neighborhoods have become attractive to young and old alike, due to their local flavor, neighborhood-serving retail, and pedestrian- and bike-friendly infrastructure. As demand rises for Portland's brand of urban living, many neighborhoods are becoming unaffordable and new attainable housing has become increasingly rare. Like many cities on the West Coast, this trend has led to a drastic increase in homelessness.

Commercial real estate firm Guerrilla Development Company has focused on infill and adaptive reuse of buildings across the city for nearly two decades. Trained as an architect, CEO Kevin Cavanaugh is known for creative commercial and mixed-use projects with a nod to the historical context. After the recession of 2008, Cavanaugh wanted to change his business model. The loss he suffered personally led the developer to take a hard look at what constitutes "enough" and who has access to it.

Guerrilla Development drew up plans for a multi-use project in Portland's Creston-Kenilworth neighborhood to combine two market-rate rental lofts with street-facing retail and ten units of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing for the working homeless population. SROs—sometimes called dorm-style or monastic living—provide a small room for a single person, usually with a washbasin in-room, and shared facilities for bathing, dining, and lounging. SROs were popular in many large U.S. cities in the early 20th Century to house single working people in urban cores. Existing SROs are protected as vital affordable housing in many cities today—yet current regulations typically make new SROs illegal.

Integrated in the neighborhood as a two-story building, Jolene's First Cousin is not only distinguished for its market-rate and highly affordable housing mix, but also for its financing. Crowd investing, a form of crowdfunding, allows the public to buy equity in a real estate development project—and in this case, one that provides a social good. The crowd investing campaign for Jolene's First Cousin reached its goal of \$300,000 in three days, showing a strong market for this type of investing. Investors receive a five percent preferred return as well as the return of their principal and a percentage split of the proceeds after a refinancing event in the tenth year.

Jolene's First Cousin is now under construction, but the road to realizing the project was uncertain at the outset. The neighborhood is largely residential and Guerrilla Development anticipated pushback to the concept from residents. Taking this into account, representatives from the firm attended a community

meeting to discuss their plans in a transparent way, before opening the crowd investing platform. The community's reaction was positive, both because the project combined retail and market-rate housing to make the SRO component "more palatable" but also because neighborhood residents were excited about hosting a creative pilot project addressing the homeless issue.

Though the financing model is complex, entitlement proved to be relatively straightforward. Portland's progressive regulatory environment allows for this type of development in neighborhoods, which means that Guerrilla Development won't stop at Jolene's First Cousin. "There will be Jolene's Second, and Third, and Fourth ... We will nestle these projects into every major neighborhood in Portland. They will bring jobs, beautiful market-rate rental apartments, and housing for our homeless population, a handful of rooms at a time," says Anna Mackay, the company's director of business development.



Box + One, Guerrilla Development Company's first crowd invested building.  
Credit / Guerrilla Development Company.





#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- Map the availability of federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, combining these with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.
- Use funds to restore scattered-site houses that preserve the local character for legacy residents.
- Restore porches and stoops to contribute to traditional street life. Do not compromise on the aesthetic quality of the rehabilitation work.
- Adjust the size and pace of the project to match tax credit availability.
- Use green building techniques to cut future utility costs.

## Iberville Offsites

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

### Summary:

More than 100 houses were restored with beautiful architectural detail for affordable living on scattered sites across three struggling historic neighborhoods in New Orleans. The creative use of tax credits financed this scattered-site housing that sets a new aesthetic standard—one house at a time—using an architecture that reflects culture and community.

### Takeaway:

Beautiful, high-quality affordable housing is feasible using federal and state tax credits.

Iberville Offsites provides affordable housing for moderate-income families and strengthens a city still climbing back from Hurricane Katrina, which cost New Orleans nearly half its population at the end of 2005.

Despite huge numbers of blighted houses and vacant single-family lots remaining in the city, the “predominate redevelopment model is to build large apartment complexes or rehabilitate large schools or offices that can be easily adapted into a multiplex of units,” according to the Iberville Offsites team.

This project proves the viability of a model that rehabilitates scattered-site vernacular houses across multiple neighborhoods using state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC). The scattered site approach allows the developer to add or subtract units in a given year to match the available LIHTC funds, a strategy that is more difficult if the units are combined in a large building.

The historic rehabilitation tax credits are tied to designated historic districts. LIHTC funding rules vary by state, but projects are selected through point systems that depend partly on location. Developer Neal Morris, founder of Redmellon Restoration and Development, looks for land costs of no more than \$20,000 per unit, a goal that is feasible in disinvested areas. Mapping and correlating the land costs and tax credits tells Morris where to develop. If the credits and cost criteria line up on the map, projects can pencil out in a context where they otherwise would be cost prohibitive.

Using this strategy, Iberville Offsites restored vernacular houses in stunning fashion across three New Orleans neighborhoods—Tremé, Central City,

and the Seventh Ward. Phase Two of this project renovated 46 residential units on 26 separate parcels for low-income and racially diverse long-time residents. The houses were in danger of being lost and represent irreplaceable assets. Their restoration helps to support walkable neighborhoods in one of America’s most distinctive urban places.

“It shows that it is possible to rehabilitate homes on a large enough scale that there is an immediate and significant economic impact and that creates affordable housing in the process,” says Morris.

All phases of the project renovated more than 100 houses as part of a federal Choice Neighborhoods program. This project was the offsite portion of the redevelopment of the former Iberville housing project, which was closed after Katrina.

“Historic preservation is too often seen as the domain of the affluent and white, but this project is relevant to the lives of a significant number of underprivileged people of color that are able to afford historic homes in neighborhoods where they would otherwise be out priced,” noted Eric Kronberg of Kronberg Wall Architecture, the firm responsible for designing Iberville Offsites.

Iberville Offsites uses green technologies like solar panels and innovative insulation, which further decrease the cost of living in these homes, while doing no harm to the historic integrity of the houses and meeting current accessibility standards.

As of 2016, New Orleans’s 391,000 population was still more than 50,000 short of pre-Katrina levels. The project does more than house moderate-income families and keep tons of construction materials out of the landfill. It reknits the cultural and social fabric of one of America’s great cities.



Before and after photographs of homes renovated as part of the Iberville Offsites project. Credit / Choice Neighborhoods.





Rehabbed shotgun houses in the Portland Neighborhood Credit / Portland Investment Initiative.

#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- Acquire inexpensive, dilapidated property to minimize acquisition costs and maximize community benefit.
- Allow neighborhood residents to realize permanent affordable housing through homeownership.
- Target rehab projects that raise neighborhood comp prices, allowing property owners to receive better mortgage rates.
- Use a “one building at a time” approach to repair the most dilapidated properties across multiple blocks.

## Portland Neighborhood

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

### Summary:

Plagued by vacancy and abandonment, the rich fabric of a historic urban neighborhood is being revived one building at a time through targeted rehabilitation that spreads investment across many blocks. In an area where property values have depreciated below bank-lending thresholds, this approach provides a path to permanent affordable housing through homeownership for existing and future residents.

### Takeaway:

Using a building-by-building approach cuts through financial barriers to revitalization.

The once-independent town of Portland, now incorporated into the city of Louisville, thrived as a working-class neighborhood, despite two major floods in 1937 and 1945. Portland’s workers lived in small “shotgun style” houses. By the 1960s, segregation policies concentrated Louisville’s African American population in the city’s west end. West Louisville was effectively excluded from the commerce of downtown by highway overpass construction—now known as the 9th Street Divide.

Disinvestment west of 9th has been an overwhelming problem in Louisville for decades. Gill Holland, the developer responsible for much of the reinvestment in a near-downtown neighborhood called NuLu, recently turned his attention toward Portland, noting the vast number of vacant or rundown single-family homes and commercial buildings was robbing existing residents of financial equity and keeping potential homeowners away from a neighborhood with a unique building stock. Without additional incoming residents to stabilize existing neighborhood investment and contribute to sustaining a market for new neighborhood businesses, Portland wouldn’t have the population density to change its economic trajectory.

Holland launched the Portland Investment Initiative (Pii) with a strategy to increase wealth locally through reinvestment across a large area. With an approach that they call “urban acupuncture,” Pii aims to have one project completed on each block west of Main Street, spreading the investment throughout the neighborhood. With the goal of turning around the most dilapidated properties to change the way residents view their own blocks, Pii employs an approach that is tactical, encouraging more incremental and organic investment throughout the area that won’t dramatically or immediately raise rents, limiting the chance of displacement.

Focusing primarily on vacant homes and buildings, the company can avoid displacement of Portland’s existing residents, while continuing to provide value for the neighborhood. With each project, Pii tackles the issue of the appraisal gap, which not only impacts existing homeowners, but also actively drives away potential new investment from Louisville’s growing population of young, would-be homeowners; a situation Holland describes as “economic redlining.” After purchasing, rehabilitating, and selling 14 previously vacant or dilapidated shotguns across Portland, the comparable price in the neighborhood is now closer to \$45,000.

Another driving force behind this revitalization strategy is to provide affordable rental housing while preparing tenants for homeownership, the rates of which currently hover around 30 percent. A single shotgun style house can cost \$10,000, but the property will require upwards of \$70,000 worth of rehabilitation work. Due to the appraisal gap, it would be impossible for Pii to sell the rehabilitated home for \$80,000. Instead, Pii rents these homes for \$650/month, which is less than the \$730/month for city-sponsored affordable housing—a program that has a waiting list of 30,000 families. After establishing a track record of successful rent payments, Pii works with local banks to turn the renters into homeowners, while ensuring a monthly mortgage payment that is less than the previous rent.

Pii has also invested in commercial properties with the same goals. In 2014, a warehouse purchased for \$250,000 was recently appraised for over \$6 million after \$5 million of investment—opening the market for new investment in what Pii calls “total neighborhood revitalization.” Corner stores, large warehouses, or small shotguns—Pii aims to improve the overall fabric of Portland one project at a time.

**“You need reasons for people from outside the community to come into the community and really start learning what it's all about.”**

Sherry Hurley Magnuson,  
owner of Farm to Fork  
cafe and catering service

**“Each person who is employed here, it helps sustain our community economically, because they live in the community.”**

Shawn Arvin,  
owner of Porkland  
BBQ restaurant





Rendering of the Westside Cottage Courts.  
Credit / Dhiru Thadani.

#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- Use gap financing to create more affordable housing.
- Give current homeowners in distressed neighborhoods relief from rising property taxes that result from increasing home values.
- Form partnerships between the city and nonprofits to work with communities to refurbish existing parks and build new ones at varying scales.
- Leverage corporate and philanthropic funding to permanently ensure housing is affordable for legacy residents.

## Historic Westside

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

### Summary:

Westside Future Fund (WFF) is a nonprofit formed by Atlanta’s public, private and philanthropic partners who are committed to helping Historic Westside neighborhoods revitalize and develop into a community Dr. King would be proud to call home. The organization’s focus is on four historically significant neighborhoods facing some of the greatest needs: English Avenue, Vine City, Ashview Heights, and the Atlanta University Center. WFF is leveraging their proximity to downtown, physical assets, and rich culture to achieve inclusive revitalization.

### Takeaway:

Take full advantage of catalytic investment opportunities through partnerships to stabilize and rehabilitate a neighborhood.

Atlanta’s Historic Westside has a history rich with achievement and activism. The area is home to five Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. lived there during the peak years of the Civil Rights Movement. The Historic Westside boasts many civic and cultural institutions important to the nation’s history.

Following the emancipation of African American slaves, these neighborhoods represented one of the limited options for residency. Like many cities across the country, redlining and other deliberate discriminatory practices in the 1960s and 1970s continued to segregate this thriving black community from the rest of downtown Atlanta, including the construction of a major freeway that now serves as the neighborhood’s eastern boundary. Severing the connections to downtown reduced the viability of these neighborhoods. Decades of disinvestment followed.

The Westside Atlanta Land Use Framework Plan, which was adopted by the city in 2017, is based on new urbanist principles and is one of many recent activities in Historic Westside that offer renewed hope for residents. A market study demonstrated the potential over the next five years for 150,000 square feet of retail and 3,250 residential units, including single-family houses, attached townhouses, condominium units, and rental apartments in mixed-use buildings. More than half of the units are proposed to be affordable—including 20 percent for residents with incomes from zero to 30 percent of area median income, subsidized by major public and private grants and donations.

This commitment to affordability becomes increasingly important as neighborhoods adjacent to the Historic Westside—including those along the Beltline—continue to see rising prices, including a recent 12 percent jump in a single year. To counteract the financial burden of rising land values on legacy residents, the Westside Future Fund is ensuring that as the community transforms, long-time residents who make up that very community aren’t pushed out. The Westside Future Fund’s Anti-Displacement Tax Fund, a resident-driven outcome of the plan, is proof of that commitment. Through philanthropic donations, the fund is bridging the difference between current and rising property taxes so that as they rise, residents can afford to stay in their homes. “The long-time homeowners are the first ones you need to help,” explains City Commissioner Tim Keane. In addition, WFF has been raising philanthropic money to buy and redevelop high-quality rental buildings.

The Westside Future Fund has identified and developed plans for four areas needing simultaneous

attention: safety and security, cradle-to-career education, health and wellness, and mixed-income communities. Philanthropic support for their work comes from many of Atlanta’s prominent corporate leaders, including Chick-fil-A Foundation, Home Depot Foundation, Delta Air Lines, SunTrust, Georgia Power, The Coca-Cola Company, Equifax, and Cox Enterprises.

WFF has also partnered with the City of Atlanta and national nonprofit organizations. Working with the City and the Trust for Public Land, WFF is supporting the building of a new park system by refurbishing the existing infrastructure and building new parks of varying scales, with a goal that every Westside resident be within two blocks of a green space. Most notably, the \$45 million, 16-acre Rodney Cook Sr. Park opened in May 2017, representing the largest investment in a public park in Historic Westside in more than 50 years. The park is designed to mitigate flooding in Vine City, honor Civil Rights and Native American leaders, and provide amenities such as an amphitheater, picnic pavilion, playground, performance plaza, and public art.

Through the support of several cross-sector partners, the revitalization of the Historic Westside has benefited from several catalytic investments including a \$30 million HUD Choice Neighborhood Grant delivered to the City of Atlanta to support the development of additional affordable housing. In 2013, the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation also made a lead investment of \$15 million as part of the Westside Neighborhood Prosperity Fund, followed by an additional \$15 million commitment in 2017. The funds are helping to improve Westside neighborhoods, and training hundreds of residents in career-path jobs via Westside Works, which resulted in more than \$12.1 million in wages earned by program graduates as calculated in 2018 by WFF. Additionally, the Chick-fil-A Foundation has contributed more than \$40 million in funding to Westside organizations. In 2019, Chick-fil-A raised more than \$5 million through the Beloved Benefit which will be donated to Westside-based nonprofit partners including the At-Promise Youth Center, Grove Park Foundation, Westside Works, City of Refuge and Westside Future Fund.

“I’m glad to be part of the improvements. This community has been forgotten for a long time, but changes and improvements are coming.”

Linda Adams,  
Historic Westside  
resident





Western Avenue in South Bend, IN, part of the city's West Side Main Streets Initiative. Credit / City of South Bend.

#### REPLICABLE STRATEGIES:

- In city neighborhoods with continued vacancy and disinvestment, a “complete streets” approach can help to break the cycle of decline.
- Facade improvement and home maintenance programs encourage local business owners and residents to have “skin in the game” by investing in their own neighborhood revival.
- Zoning updates and policy reforms, like reducing minimum parking requirements, can enable projects to move forward that were stymied in the past.

## West Side Neighborhoods

SOUTH BEND, INDIANA

### Summary:

The redevelopment and revitalization of South Bend’s west side is an ambitious attempt to address one of urban America’s biggest problems: Cities that have large swaths of vacancy and disinvestment. As has been shown in recent years, these neighborhoods are not coming back through private-sector efforts alone. South Bend uses a suite of revitalization tools focused on improving the public realm, spurring local business investments, and consolidating vacant properties for redevelopment.

### Takeaway:

City investment in the public realm can lead to investment by local property owners.

South Bend, like other Rust Belt cities, suffered population loss and economic hardship for five decades, in the face of the steady loss of its manufacturing base. In the past ten years, the City has employed multiple design and economic strategies to turn this decline around, focusing on a “Smart Streets” initiative, which is credited with helping to bring over \$90 million in new development downtown. Getting downtown back on its feet economically was a necessary step to helping the city’s struggling neighborhoods that have seen decades of disinvestment. The City addressed both downtown and neighborhood revitalization simultaneously.

Historically African American, but now with a significant Latinx population, the west side’s biggest problem is not gentrification, but continued vacancy and disinvestment. The ambitious West Side Main Streets Initiative focused on investing in two four-mile-long corridors—Lincolnway West and Western Avenue—to reestablish walkability, combat blight, and incentivize small business development in the adjoining neighborhoods.

The “complete streets” approach provides an instant boost in accessibility and civic pride to west side neighborhoods. The city used restriping, bike lanes, on-street parking, trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and new bus shelters to create an active public realm and pedestrian-friendly environment, offering visible evidence that the city is investing in the community. Additionally, a facade-improvement program was launched that has since leveraged \$600,000 in private investment to improve 28 small and local businesses owned by legacy residents. The matching grants require the local business owners to become invested in the rebirth of the neighborhoods.

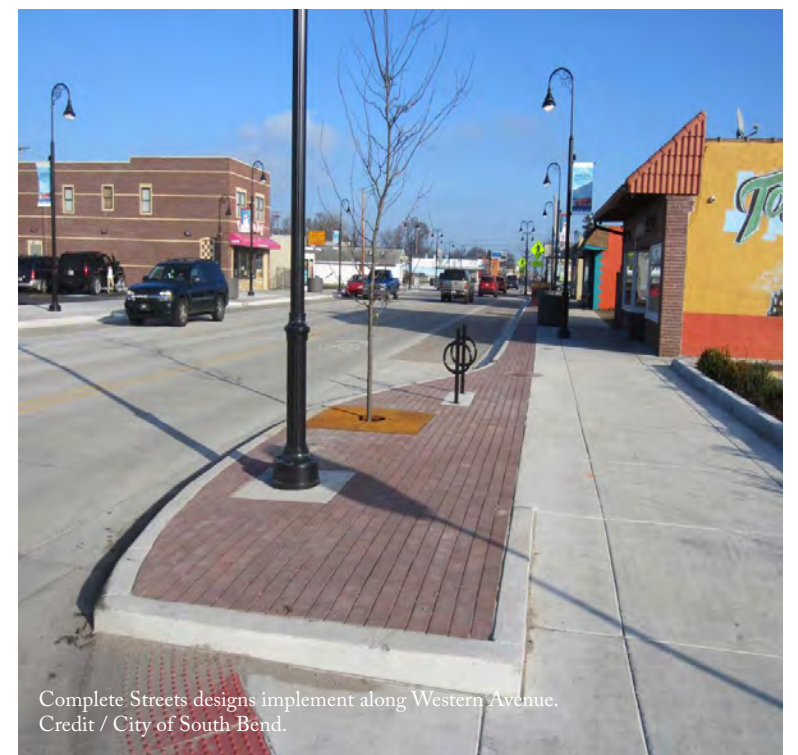
The city also made zoning changes designed to spur redevelopment throughout the west side neighborhoods. The most effective has been to remove minimum parking requirements in commercial areas, according to Tim Corcoran, Director of Planning. “Immediately when we made that change, some businesses were able to do some things that they couldn’t before. One owner was able to move forward with a banquet hall, for example.” Simultaneously, the city put in place some basic form-based coding standards that are not overly prescriptive, but ensure that new buildings will be built to the right-of-way to create a main street environment.

“Everything we do is with a Complete Streets mentality,” Corcoran says. “The planning department works closely with public works in designing streetscapes. We are taking a half-acre of pavement

out of an intersection this summer without reducing capacity. We are creating land and a development parcel that didn’t exist before.”

Vacant properties have also been a significant issue for west side residents. To address this, the city recently demolished hundreds of unsalvageable properties and worked with homeowners to repair others in its “1,000 houses in 1,000 days” initiative. After dealing with the backlog of demolition, the focus now is on rehabilitation with a targeted home repair program.

The city is in the early stages of trying to get new and different types of housing development on the west side. A market study shows that the city’s south and west sides can absorb between 180 and 230 new “missing middle” housing types annually. On the west side, that is most likely to occur near downtown first. A pilot project is planned to address this need, including six blocks of mostly vacant parcels between Sherman Avenue and Harrison Street, to create new public open space and a mix of housing types.



Complete Streets designs implement along Western Avenue. Credit / City of South Bend.



# Tools for Implementing Neighborhood Change

The profiles in the previous section demonstrate how more equitable outcomes are being sought through innovative combinations of policies and tools, on both small- and large-scales, to revitalize neighborhoods in a holistic way. In this section, we highlight 14 of the tools and tactics from the profiles that can be used to promote more equitable outcomes, recognizing there are many more solutions that need to be developed to guarantee success.

Advocates for more inclusive outcomes must recognize that design solutions alone will not solve the problems faced by neighborhoods across the country. Working to pair these design and policy tools with strategies that retain legacy residents and businesses, as well as relying on local knowledge and data sources, are cross-cutting practices that must inform the use of these tools.

Some of these tools and tactics have been used by CNU members for decades, while others are more recent additions to the new urbanism toolkit. Many promote better urbanism and more equitable outcomes at the same time by reducing the costs of development, diversifying opportunities for business and home ownership, and building wealth locally.

These tools also help community groups, developers, city leadership, and other organizations bring investment to

neighborhoods that have lacked it—and do so in ways that benefit existing residents while minimizing displacement. Their value lies in being adaptable; they can be used alone or in any combination; they are building blocks for creating solutions that meet local context:

- Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units
- Acquire and Aggregate Vacant Land
- Finance through Crowdfunding
- Provide Opportunities for Ownership
- Respect Local History
- Adopt Inclusionary Zoning
- Promote Incremental Development
- Leverage Local Data
- Build “Missing Middle” Housing
- Recalibrate Parking Requirements
- Create an Active and Beautiful Public Realm
- Create a Philanthropic Fund
- Utilize Opportunity Zones
- Use Tactical Urbanism



## Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units.

Housing options in this country are often presented as either of two extremes: neighborhoods of solely single-family homes or large multifamily apartment complexes. This dichotomy not only fails to meet the need of all residents, it also contributes to a lack of affordability in low-density neighborhoods and a concentration of poverty in others. Accessory Dwellings Units (ADUs) add an additional residential unit to houses, either as an addition to the main house or detached like a carriage house or garage. They are often the least expensive increment of new housing in a neighborhood, providing density in a way that doesn't add height, maintaining the neighborhood character of single-family residential areas.

ADUs serve an important role in maintaining affordability and providing opportunities for local wealth creation. They can be built by nonprofessional developers, they can house residents in various stages of life, help accommodate a range of family structures, or be rented out to serve as a revenue stream for homeowners to help pay the mortgage or taxes. However, many zoning codes have rules that make ADUs difficult or illegal, dating back to a restrictive 20th Century view of what single-family neighborhoods should be. Legalizing ADUs in more neighborhoods zoned for single-family only development, in addition to streamlining development and permitting processes for their construction, would unlock the potential for more affordability, housing diversity, and household revenue generation.

## Acquire and Aggregate Land.

When properties become vacant, tax-delinquent, and fall into public hands, local governments are presented with a unique opportunity. They can assemble parcels and partner with private developers, community development corporations, or values-driven organizations to create development or public space that serves and encourages neighborhood revitalization efforts and maximizes the impact of investment in underutilized properties.

Acquiring and consolidating land for neighborhood-focused development is often easier in economically distressed communities, where creative approaches to land planning

and affordable housing are needed most. One mechanism for this is the creation of a land bank to allow problem properties to be maintained by a government or nonprofit entity until they can be transferred to a responsible owner. This tactic can also allow a local government to coordinate the development of multiple properties to serve as an anchor project, provide maintained open space for residents, or build functional space for green infrastructure. Another outcome of land assembly can be the development of a community land trust, which allows community stewardship of land and is often used to ensure long-term housing affordability.



# Finance through Crowdfunding and Crowd Investing

Access to capital can be one of the major barriers facing small or neighborhood-serving projects. Developers have noted that it is sometimes easier to secure a loan for a multi-million-dollar project than one that only requires a few hundred thousand, leaving many small projects—or small developers—unfunded. Crowdfunding, the practice of raising small amounts of money from a large number of people, has changed the real estate financing game by allowing large numbers of people to support a project or cause that banks may not be willing to back.

Crowd investing is a form of crowdfunding that is based on creating equity for investors who are able to contribute small amounts to a project. This practice allows residents and advocates to invest small sums in a real estate project and receive returns on their investment. Small investors—with as little as \$100—can invest in projects in their own neighborhoods or in businesses that are community-serving. This practice can make real estate investment opportunities more accessible, diversifying real estate projects, and providing more opportunities for building wealth locally.

## Provide Opportunities for Ownership.

Any new investment in neighborhoods that have experienced decline will almost certainly raise property values in the commercial and residential markets. Though there are multiple tools needed to help ensure this process minimally impacts legacy businesses and residents, one significant way is to provide increased opportunities for home and businesses ownership amongst long-time residents.

Community Land Trusts allow individuals to purchase a home, often with no money down, at less than typical market value, while a nonprofit organization maintains ownership over the land. This allows the organization to ensure the housing remains affordable in perpetuity while providing the homeowners with the opportunity

to build and benefit from equity over time. Community-oriented developers are also creating new paths towards local ownership and wealth, such as creating opportunities for neighbors to purchase equity in locally-developed properties.

Additionally, programs where long-time residents are trained and mentored to become small developers allow for active participation in the revitalization process. Diversifying the real estate developer market through local incremental development programs provides a major opportunity for improvements to the neighborhood, local wealth creation, and a more economically resilient neighborhood, where investment has often been lacking.



Home under renovation in Detroit's Fitzgerald neighborhood. Credit / Century Partners.



Former U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell tours the A.G. Gaston Motel in Birmingham, AL. Credit / U.S. Department of the Interior.

## Respect Local History.

Neighborhoods that have seen decades of disinvestment often have well-preserved historic commercial corridors, due to lack of market pressures that may have led to demolition in other circumstances. Preservation of these resources can be important to ensuring that small, flexible, affordable commercial space is accessible to local entrepreneurs, developers, and business owners. Additionally, many significant neighborhood buildings can serve as catalysts for revitalization efforts if they are restored and rehabilitated. These structures can be community anchors or sites that reflect significant achievements. Federal and state historic tax credits can help make preservation and reuse of

these community assets financially feasible.

In other instances, the history and culture of many neighborhoods of color has been destroyed by displacement, development pressures, and urban renewal projects. Local culture in these contexts may not be tied to historic buildings, but is no less important. Sites of significance may be cultural institutions, public gathering spaces, or traditions such as block parties and festivals. Protecting space for local cultural context to flourish is vital to successful equitable development outcomes.

## Adopt Inclusionary Zoning.

Inclusionary zoning integrates affordability into otherwise market-rate planned development, typically requiring 10-20 percent of the units of a project of a minimum size meet affordability standards for a period ranging from 30 to 99 years. Such laws have been adopted by about 500 jurisdictions in the U.S. and can ensure new projects provide housing options serving a range of incomes.

However, the administrative costs created for both municipalities and developers to ensure that the standards are met can make the process onerous for small developers, who often lack the resources to make such commitments and deal with the bureaucracy on an ongoing basis. It can also increase the overall cost of a project for larger developers, leading to an increase in the end rental or sale price of the market units. For that reason, inclusionary zoning laws work best if they exclude small projects.



## Promote Incremental Development.

Neighborhoods that have experienced decades of disinvestment sometimes seek large projects to help reverse the trajectory of decline. Yet small, incremental development—mimicking the way in which the neighborhood was formed originally—can often make a bigger impact much more quickly.

Incremental development promotes a slower pace of change by engaging more people, including local residents, in the real estate development process. This can encourage considerably more, small projects, building resilience into a neighborhood. This concept has a number of benefits for more equitable outcomes, including: a longer time frame for change means that the

pace is one that residents can manage; smaller projects often include more affordable housing mixed with neighborhood-serving commercial; and getting residents involved with real estate development builds wealth locally.

With a little training, residents can help revitalize their own communities by fixing up vacant or deteriorating structures, building housing, or small mixed-use buildings. A number of policy and regulatory changes, such as more flexible zoning and reduced parking requirements in addition to more robust financing opportunities, may be needed to create a friendlier environment for small-scale builders.

## Leverage Local Data.

Interventions have often been driven by experts in fields ranging from historic preservation to planning and architecture. Plans have been drawn up and implemented without exploration or understanding of local knowledge that often conflicts with “expert” opinion.

In recent years, technological innovations have provided an opportunity for planners and other advocates to digitize this knowledge, including how residents experience or view their communities. Story-mapping, which can be presented through multiple platforms, allows residents to communicate and catalogue assets, stories, experiences, and ideas in a visual representation. Residents can establish—or change—a narrative associated with their neighborhood. Story maps can show the complex intersections between multiple issues, including

transportation, housing, and education. Tools to accomplish this include mobile GIS, crowdsource mapping, cognitive mapping, and scale mapping.

Data gathering such as story-mapping should be combined with other community-driven research methods, which can engage community members in the process of problem solving and move them towards sustained action. Building community research into local efforts opens the door for residents to engage, have their voices heard, and ultimately champion strategies needed for long-term change.

Other techniques include equity impact assessments, community-based design, and ongoing feedback loops to ensure the continuity of community input are key to the success of story mapping and other community driven data tools.



Cottage Square in Ocean Springs, MS.  
Credit / Harry Connolly.

## Build “Missing Middle” Housing.

For many decades, two building types dominated the housing industry: single-family homes and large multifamily complexes. These typologies were intended to serve the demands of conventional suburbia, but often failed to meet the needs of all residents. The term “missing middle” housing refers to a range of housing types between those extremes, including townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottage courts, accessory dwelling units, stacked flats, and small apartment buildings. All of these are building types that have long existed in the fabric of cities, serving residents in all stages of life as well as a range of family structures.

Missing middle offers a way to provide new housing without increasing the height and perceived density of a neighborhood, which means more options in type and price point

for neighborhood residents. It also offers an opportunity for families to build wealth by putting portions of their property on the rental market for additional income.

Missing middle housing forms the backbone of walkable urban neighborhoods, yet is often illegal to build due to existing zoning laws that were designed to restrict where people of various backgrounds could live. Codes that allow up to four units on a single lot, or allow cottage courts or townhouses in residential areas, are examples of regulations that open the door to the missing middle. The increased density provided by missing middle housing supports services such as transit and neighborhood retail, which benefit all residents.



# Recalibrate Parking Requirements.

In many cities, parking requirements can preclude or inhibit small-scale building reuse projects, which can help transform underserved neighborhoods. Many modern requirements drastically overestimate the number of spaces needed for projects that are small, dense, and neighborhood-serving. For example, the rehabilitation of a house into three flats might require three to six parking spaces to be provided on site, an impossible endeavor for a small developer with a single lot. Parking additions along commercial corridors can also disrupt sidewalk space, degrading the pedestrian environment.

# Create an Active and Beautiful Public Realm.

Streets, parks, and public spaces are community-shaping assets. They are how residents, visitors, business owners, and potential investors experience a place. A damaged public realm, including dilapidated pedestrian infrastructure and parks, signal to residents and visitors that they, and their neighborhood, are not valued.

Streetscape improvements such as sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping can improve walkability in neighborhoods that have lacked investment, signaling to residents that their experience of the public realm is valued. Parks and open space can also serve community residents in a number of ways, providing gathering space, recreational opportunities, or access to the natural world.

Likewise, vacant or dilapidated storefronts can contribute to a poor pedestrian experience, keeping new investment at bay, and harming existing legacy businesses.

Parking requirements can also hinder building reuse projects, which often have the biggest impact along the commercial corridors of urban neighborhoods. Better balancing parking supply and demand is essential to achieving inclusive development. Reducing or eliminating that barrier for smaller projects can make a big difference in who can enter the real estate development market and what kind of projects get built in revitalizing neighborhoods.

Facade improvements for businesses can significantly improve the public realm and are an important complement to street makeovers, especially if there are matching grants that allow businesses to personally invest in the neighborhood. The costs need not be high for these projects to work, and they can represent the first aesthetic improvements that a neighborhood has seen in decades.

Nearly every example in this report emphasizes the importance of well-designed public realm, new parks and public spaces. Design interventions in the public realm can inspire residents to stay and attract investment. However, policies are needed to protect residents and businesses, or neighborhood change will almost certainly have a negative impact.



The Urban Beach at Campus Martius Park, Detroit, MI.  
Credit / Sean Marshall.

# Create a Philanthropic Fund or Revolving Loan Fund.

In many neighborhoods that have experienced decades of disinvestment, significant financial resources are needed to assist the work of community development corporations and other values-driven developers, who often operate on a loss. Philanthropic funds, created through corporate or foundation support, can provide financing directly to real estate development or deliver aid directly to residents through tax abatement funds, facade improvement programs for businesses, and home improvement programs for homeowners. Philanthropic funds can also support nonprofits that provide housing, social, educational, or health support within

communities. When private funding is used, projects can be agile because formal political approval is not required.

Nonprofit organizations use revolving loan funds to facilitate real estate development, including historic preservation projects, in places where the market may not provide the return needed for traditional financing mechanisms. Revolving loan funds can also contribute capital to projects that would not qualify for traditional financing. They can be used to stabilize a neighborhood through a scattered-site approach or an anchor development.



## Utilize Opportunity Zones.

Many previous federal revitalization programs, while successful in certain aspects, failed to impact the breadth of communities they were designed to reach. To bring investment to more low-income areas, the federal government developed a market-based tax incentive launched in 2018 to provide patient capital to more local projects. Based on 2010 census data, some 8,700 low-income census tracts became Qualified Opportunity Zones (QOZs), where investment in Opportunity Funds could support local companies, building developments, or infrastructure projects in return for tax deferral, reduction, or elimination over time.

Though there is still uncertainty in the transparency of the funds, the potential exists for between six and nine trillion dollars of unrealized capital gains to be unleashed in construction and reinvestment on communities across the country, creating a great opportunity for local governments and residents to work together to plan for and maximize the impact. Because QOZs are in so many different types of places, work must be done now to ensure that the waves of investment baked into the QOZ timeline don't negatively impact legacy residents and businesses. Communities that have experienced disinvestment are beginning to plan and build capacity for stewarding this change.



Residents of Chicago's Chatham neighborhood enjoy the parklets set up by the Dining on the Five initiative.  
Credit / Congress for the New Urbanism.



Residents of Denver's West Colfax neighborhood reimagine the Colfax and Federal interchange as part of a restored street network.  
Credit / Over the Colfax Clover.

## Use Tactical Urbanism.

Between the planning and implementation phases of major public improvements, there is an opportunity to test ideas in a temporary way, both to demonstrate the power of public realm improvements and also to inspire support for long-term change among residents, policy makers, and funders. Known as tactical urbanism, these interventions can include bicycle lanes, public spaces, traffic calming, colorful crosswalks, and pop-up parks. Temporary in nature, they can range from a day to a month and even a year.

Tactical urbanism gets planning off of the computer screen and into a community. It engages residents in not only the planning process, but the designing and building process as well. It's a mechanism that works well for inspiring support and demand for community-informed projects. Residents can sweep a sidewalk, hammer a temporary bench together, or create a bicycle lane with paint to highlight what they value and demonstrate to others the importance of a strong public realm. The end results help residents experience how their neighborhood might be different.



Capitol Avenue is redesigned as a street for pedestrians during 'Convert Capitol Avenue Week' in Lansing, MI.  
Credit / Michigan Municipal League.



# Conclusion: Moving Forward

Reversing the legacy of racist policies, segregation in the built environment, and an inequity in the way neighborhoods have seen investment is a central challenge for urbanists. For many neighborhoods that have experienced disinvestment over generations, attracting any new investment can be an uphill battle. Others are slowly revitalizing, yet legacy residents face displacement when property values rise.

Inclusive development requires locally generated solutions that meet a city's specific context, incremental development that allows for gradual change, and a holistic vision to guide policy and public investment. In all of this work, meaningful community partnerships and engagement are vital to bring local knowledge to bear on problems that have at times seemed insurmountable.

Building Local Strength is the first step for CNU, understanding where inclusive development is happening and highlighting the innovative local actors in this field. More research into why these outcomes are not guaranteed will help CNU, along with a coalition of partners, develop the necessary policies and tools to make inclusive development more easily attainable. CNU is committed to continuing this work. We recognize that equitable access to the benefits of good urban design is essential to the well-being of current and future residents.

Building Local Strength is a practical document for local governments, practitioners, developers, and community leaders who want to understand what they might do to promote

more inclusive and equitable outcomes. We recommend that communities interested in ensuring more equitable outcomes keep the following in mind:

## Prioritize Legacy Residents

Revitalization efforts must prioritize the needs of the residents who kept many urban neighborhoods afloat during decades of targeted disinvestment. An assessment of what would benefit—or harm—these residents should be incorporated into new policies, requirements, or funding strategies. Efforts should be made to understand and mitigate any negative impacts.

## Increase Availability of Financing

Create new capital funds and/or make financing more readily available to small local builders, property owners, and citizens to diversify the pool of people who benefit from these wealth-creation strategies. Many developers have lamented it is often easier to get a \$5 million loan than \$100,000. If one key to success is to develop homegrown talent whereby residents rebuild and revitalize their own neighborhoods, creating small loan programs and increasing access to smaller increments of capital is essential.

## Incorporate Employment Strategies

Training residents for jobs and encouraging business owners to hire locally can achieve multiple community benefits by supporting the local economy, increasing opportunities

for residents, and boosting local involvement. In cities with large numbers of vacant historic buildings, a lack of skilled workers can delay rehabilitation efforts. Expanding programs that apprentice building trades helps both the workforce and the potential for revitalization.

## Identify Essential Policies to Support Inclusive Development

The policy framework of this report includes a suite of tools to encourage local, small-scale, and incremental development. These tools include recalibrating parking requirements, legalizing missing middle housing and accessory dwelling units, and making renovation and reuse easier. Such policies are critical to inclusive redevelopment and they require a close examination of barriers within existing land use regulations. Small-scale development is a foundation of local resilience, and should be made easier and more likely.

## Make Planning Practices Easy to Understand

Local residents often have a good sense of what is needed in their communities, but lack the technical vocabulary or understanding of how policy changes could assist in achieving their goals. Trainings or forums dedicated to the basics of zoning, street design, housing, and other community design and development concepts can break down this barrier. Conversations that occur outside of formal planning processes enable residents to drive the discussion and sometimes bring up off-topic but easy-to-fix issues. Addressing these concerns helps build community trust.



Pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor in Durham, NC.  
Credit / Orlando Contreras López





Chicago street art.  
Credit / Brian Lauer.

### Emphasize Good Design in Every Community

The physical design of buildings, streetscapes, and the public realm deeply influences residents’ view of their community and its worth. Good design shouldn’t be an asset provided only to the affluent. Prioritizing human-scaled, architecturally diverse commercial corridors, well-designed public buildings and spaces, and visually interesting housing choices allows underserved neighborhoods to cultivate, maintain, and preserve a pride of place.

### Empower and Engage Civic Institutions

The nucleus of any neighborhood is the local civic infrastructure that provides community, connects individuals with a shared purpose, and provides a platform for organized problem-solving. Institutions like community centers,

churches, schools, and block clubs should be engaged in planning efforts and also supported as vital local resources that are given the space to thrive. Preservation of these assets in underserved communities is especially important.

### Leverage Infrastructure Investments

Street improvements, civic spaces, parks, rain gardens, and high-speed Internet all represent infrastructure investments that benefit communities of all income levels. They serve all residents while also increasing the likelihood of private investment. Streets and public spaces, which are the most visible parts of a neighborhood, are particularly important. Cities should prioritize infrastructure improvements in underserved neighborhoods.

### View Vacancies as Assets

In many cities with decades-long disinvestment patterns, vacant buildings and lots abound. While they remain vacant, they continue to reinforce the cycle. However, through careful consolidation using techniques such as land-banking, municipalities and community-focused developers can make strategic use of these properties for the public good by providing new development opportunities or improved public space.

### Improve the Public Realm

Neighborhood centers and main streets are where residents gather, have casual interactions, and develop the foundation for community. Like the importance of providing good design generally, making these spaces more visibly cared for can be an inexpensive intervention giving long-time residents reason to stay and invest in the future of the community.

### Identify Strategic Partnerships

Municipalities should assess the local landscape of partners and leverage these assets. Local philanthropies as well as community-oriented developers often are willing to work directly with city leaders to maximize the impact of revitalization efforts.

### Understand Existing Opportunities

Neighborhoods contain many areas of opportunity, which should be identified and leveraged. Major intersections could be ideal for new public space investment, a commercial corridor could be made more pedestrian friendly, or brownfields could be turned into a community-serving asset. Understanding opportunity areas is a critical step in formulating and ensuring scarce resources are utilized in the most cost-effective way.

### Plan for the Whole Neighborhood

Make sure critical steps are included in revitalization by creating a plan for an entire neighborhood with broad public partnerships and participation. Neighborhoods are more than the sum of their parts. Investments that are made in several needed areas, in order of priority, are more effective than piecemeal efforts.

Neighborhoods that have experienced trauma, inflicted in part by racist and exclusionary planning and financing practices, need more than a limited set of tools to thrive in the 21st Century. They need flexible solutions that inspire innovation and growth; ideas that can evolve as cities follow a path toward more inclusive outcomes over the coming decades.

Communities themselves will be incubators for these new ideas and serve as proving grounds for approaches that are neighborhood-led and resident-driven. Progress will require efforts that are both large and small, as well as ongoing discourse and feedback with and amongst community members.



# Resources

The resources below include basic overviews, toolkits, and case studies organized according to topic. This report references many of the resource in depth elsewhere, but they are gathered here together alongside additional material for those interested in further reading.

## General

### [EPA Smart Growth Report: Attracting Infill Development in Distressed Communities](#)

This report documents 30 strategies disinvested communities can employ to make infill development more feasible in their neighborhoods. The report is organized to help communities outline a strategic plan for infill development based on local contexts.

### [EPA Smart Growth Report: Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities](#)

This second EPA report offers a set of interrelated strategies to advance equitable development, smart growth, and environmental justice for communities that have historically suffered from disinvestment. Topics include affordable housing, infrastructure, and transit. Case studies from Spartanburg, South Carolina, Chicago, Illinois, and the Ohkay Owingeh reservation in New Mexico demonstrate an effective combination of approaches for promoting a clean and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents.

### [Piecing It Together: A Framing Playbook for Affordable Housing Advocates](#)

Enterprise Community Partners and the FrameWorks Institute have produced a set of practical recommendations for communication and messaging around affordable housing. Their

research and analysis suggests that affordable housing advocates should present their case through the values of fairness across place and regional interdependence. The playbook includes sample tweets, messages, and other communication strategies that advocates can use and tailor to their situation.

### [PolicyLink: Equitable Development Toolkit](#)

PolicyLink, a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity, has developed a set of 27 tools to combat segregation, divestment, and displacement and promote equitable revitalization. The toolkit is organized into four broad categories: affordable housing, economic opportunity, health equity and place, and land use and environment.

### [The Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge \(SPARCC\)](#)

SPARCC works with local collaborators in six regions across the United States to ensure that new investments into a community lead to equitable and healthy opportunities for everyone. The initiative’s website offer tools and resources drawn from its work in Atlanta, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, Memphis, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

## Accessory Dwelling Units

### [accessorydwellings.org](#)

A self-proclaimed ‘one-stop source’ about everything ADU, this website contains practical information for the construction of ADUs including designs, permitting, financing, and a [database](#) of regulations covering ADUs on a city-by-city basis.

### [Accessory Dwelling Units: Case Study](#)

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development prepared this 2008 case study that documents different types of ADUs, their benefits, and examples of ADU ordinances and programs.

## Community-Engaged Design

### [Hester Street Collaborative](#)

Hester Street Collaborative is an urban planning, design and development nonprofit that works to ensure neighborhoods are shaped by the people who live in them. The organization combines technical planning, design and development expertise with deep, meaningful community engagement to ensure that plans and projects directly address community-identified needs and priorities. A list of their projects and the community-based approaches they have undertaken can be found [here](#).

## Community Land Trusts and Community Development Corporations

### [Anacostia Community Land Trust](#)

As part of their [equitable development plan](#), the nonprofit Building Bridges Across the River and the community developer LISC-DC have been working to establish a community land trust for the Anacostia neighborhood. In 2017, they invited community land trust expert Tony Pickett to provide an [overview](#) of this popular housing tool.

### [Community-wealth.org: Community Development Corporations Overview](#)

This resource houses an up-to-date collection of best practices, research, case studies, policy guides, and sources of funding for operating a community development corporation. The webpage also features 18 exemplary community development corporations and the results they have achieved in the realm of affordable housing.

### [How to Start a Community Land Trust](#)

This article offers a comprehensive outline on the subject. A video by BRIC-TV in Brooklyn asks [What Is a Community Land Trust](#) and discusses issues around setting one up.

### [Newburgh Community Land Bank](#)

This nonprofit organization based in Newburgh, NY works to acquire titles to vacant and abandoned properties and transfer these properties to new owners who support community needs and priorities. The organization’s House to Home program offers affordable first-time homeownership opportunities for City of Newburgh residents who earn under a specific income threshold.

## ‘Complete Streets’

### [National Complete Streets Coalition](#)

A subset of Smart Growth America, the National Complete Streets Coalition offers technical assistance and workshops that help municipalities and communities create streets that accomodate all users. Much of their work focuses on promoting [local economies](#) and [neighborhood revitalization](#).



[Smart Streets South Bend](#)

The project webpage for South Bend’s ‘complete streets’ approach to the revitalization of its downtown. This page offers a public face for the on-going status of the initiative and includes both project documents and presentations that explain to the community the effect the program will have.

**Crowdfunded Real Estate Investments**

[Small Change](#)

Small Change opens up the traditional investing process to everyday people, allowing them to invest in projects that align with their goals. This platform only lists projects that meet its Small Change metrics, which include walkability, vibrant street life, affordable housing, and serving an underserved community. Builders who may otherwise have difficulty securing traditional investments can raise the funds they need to undertake projects, while investors can direct their money to projects that improve communities.

**Elimination of Off-street Parking Requirements**

[Parking and the City](#)

In this 2018 book, Donald Shoup and his collaborators recommend parking reforms that can lower housing costs, promote the local economy, and reduce the reliance on cost-prohibitive automobile transit. The first section of the book (23 chapters in total) are dedicated to the elimination of off-street parking requirements and its impact on urbanism.

[Searching for the Right Spot: Minimum Parking Requirements and Housing Affordability in New York City](#)

NYU’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy has released this policy paper that researches the effect parking requirements have on housing affordability and the amount of parking developers choose to build when there are not minimum requirements.

[Strong Towns: End Parking Minimums](#)

Nonprofit Strong Towns has assembled a number of resources and publications that cover the elimination of off-street parking requirements. This includes a map that tracks the progress of parking minimum removals across the country as well as strategies to help eliminate off-street parking requirements in your town.

**Financial Equity through Ownership**

[Fitz Forward](#)

The Fitz Forward Neighborhood Revitalization project represents a joint venture between Detroit-based development firms Century Partners and the Platform in cooperation with the City of Detroit. Started in the spring of 2018, this project aims to revitalize more than 300 parcels of land within Detroit’s Fitzgerald neighborhood through a combination of public and private investment. In order to create housing that is accessible and affordable for the current community and give them an equity stake, the program proposes to rehab existing housing with primarily reclaimed local material and an engaged non-professional workforce.

[Fitzgerald Revitalization Project](#)

The Fitzgerald Revitalization Project is the City of Detroit’s initiative to transform the Fitzgerald neighborhood by addressing publicly owned vacant lots and houses. As part of the initiative, the city offers residents financial resources such as 0% interest loans from \$5,000 to \$25,000 to invest in and repair their homes and returns vacant, abandoned, and foreclosed properties to productive use through sale by the Detroit Land Bank.

[Westside Future Fund Anti-Displacement Tax Fund](#)

Administered by the Westside Future Fund and sourced from philanthropic donations, this program is designed to help ensure current homeowners are not displaced due to rising property taxes. The program is setup so that eligible homeowners receive funds to pay the difference in property taxes year-to-year.

**Historic Preservation and Retention of Existing Affordable Units**

[Columbia Pike Neighborhoods Area Plan](#)

This plan for the Columbia Pike district of Arlington, VA covers the city’s vision and policies for the preservation of existing affordable units (pp. 4.11-4.15) and historic preservation of the corridor’s 20th century garden apartments (pp. 4.18-4.20).

**Inclusionary Zoning**

[CityLab University: Inclusionary Zoning](#)

CityLab, famous for their reporting, analysis, and storytelling involving everything urban, has created a primer for inclusionary zoning that explains how it works financially and socially. The primer includes a number of case studies, toolkits, and opinions on the subject.

**Incremental Development**

[CNU Small Scale Developers & Builders](#)

The Congress for the New Urbanism has collected a number of resources, toolkits, and case studies for developers looking to acquire the expertise necessary to build incrementally. This includes informational videos and open-source material that help developers analyze and maximize potential sites.

[Incremental Development Alliance](#)

The Incremental Development Alliance began in 2015 as a collaboration between John Anderson, Monte Anderson, and Jim Kumon. The Alliance offers training, boot camps, and workshops for aspiring small developers based on the experiences of its founding members. This [presentation](#) by Matthew Petty of the Infill Group and Incremental Development Alliance provides an introduction into the basics of the Alliance’s principles for small developers.



[Jumpstart Germantown](#)

This initiative originally started as a program to revitalize the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia by connecting novice developers who wanted to invest in their community with more experienced real estate professionals. In addition, Jumpstart now offers a [how-to guide](#) to replicate their program in other cities and an [online training guide](#) for aspiring developers.

[Small Developers and Builders](#)

Boasting over 5,000 members, the Facebook group Small Developers and Builders provides a forum for developers to share questions and resources concerning operational issues, business models, and design solutions.

**‘Missing Middle’ Housing**

[missingmiddlehousing.com](#)

This website, operated by Opticos Design, Inc., offers a number of resources including case studies that demonstrate the benefits of building ‘missing middle’ housing and how to create [form-based codes](#) that encourage the construction of this type of residential property.

**Pink Zones**

[The Project for Lean Urbanism](#)

The Project for Lean Urbanism is a movement that encompasses a wide range of practitioners, activists, and municipalities seeking to remove barriers to building on a smaller scale. [Pink zones](#), designated areas where bureaucratic red tape is lightened to promote small-scale building, are one of the

project’s tools to accomplish this. To choose an area to be Pink Zoned, communities undertake a ‘[lean scan](#)’ that identifies underutilized or latent assets already present.

**Racial Equity Impact Assessments**

[Race Forward](#)

Race Forward offers a toolkit for Racial Equity Impact Assessments (REIA), which systematically examine of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision. The toolkit offers 10 steps to anticipate, assess and prevent potential adverse consequences of proposed actions on different racial groups. While relatively new in the United States, REIAs have been adopted by St. Paul, MN, Seattle, WA, King County, WA and the state of Connecticut and Iowa as a means to reduce, eliminate and prevent racial discrimination and inequities.

**Right-to-Return Programs**

[The City of Portland](#)

Right-to-Return programs offer down payment assistance to first-time homeowners who were displaced, or at risk of displacement, because of urban renewal projects. The City of Portland has been one of the first cities in the United States to implement such a program. The policy establishes a process that gives priority to people who were forced out of inner North and Northeast Portland in past decades, an issue that disproportionately affected minority races in Portland. Last year, the city allocated funds to program to subsidize 65 mortgages.

**Story-mapping**

[Engaging Communities Around Opportunity Through Story Mapping](#)

The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education has produced a guide with approaches to story-mapping, or the process of mapping a community’s valued places, people and resources. This method of collecting community-driven data asks residents to provide their stories to create a map that narrates the community from their perspective. Story mapping enables residents to characterize opportunities and challenges in their communities in ways that they understand and experience. From these perspectives, community-based organizations, planners or other practitioners can better understand how their work relates to a community’s wants and needs. The guide offers a step-by-step practical approach for implementing effective story-mapping.

[Streetwyze](#)

The Streetwyze is a navigation app that uses community engagement strategies and participatory mapping to address social inequalities in the built environment and identify community assets. With input from the community, the app helps bridge the gap between local and professional knowledge, leading to a planning process that can help address resident needs. Although the app is still in beta-testing, its developers have released a [toolkit](#) to prepare users for its public release.

**Tactical Urbanism**

[Dining on the Five](#)

[A tactical project turned annual event](#), Dining on the Five created tactical public spaces set up along

Chicago’s 75th Street in Chatham. With \$5,000 from the the Driehaus Foundation and the Greater Chatham Initiative, parklets and outdoor sidewalk seating were installed outside local businesses as a first step toward the repair of building facades to create a ‘complete street’. The weeklong event has now taken place two years in a row.

[Tactical Urbanist’s Guide to Getting It Done](#)

Tactical Urbanism uses short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions in the built environment to catalyze long-term change. The Tactical Urbanist’s Guide to Getting It Done describes the practical steps for starting and implementing tactical projects.

**Zoning and Code Reform**

[The Project for Code Reform](#)

CNU’s Project for Code Reform offers communities a path to reforming zoning incrementally to all for Missing Middle housing and small-scale development in holistic neighborhoods. In partnership with the Michigan Municipal League, CNU has published [Enabling Better Places: Users’ Guide to Zoning Reform](#), a step-by-step guide to reforming zoning incrementally to allow for small-scale development of neighborhoods.



# Tools Matrix

	Washington, DC	Detroit, MI	DeSoto, TX	Portland, OR	New Orleans, LA	Louisville, KY	Atlanta, GA	South Bend, IN
Legalize Accessory Dwelling Units							●	
Acquire and Agregate Vacant Land		●					●	●
Finance through Crowdfunding				●				
Provide Opportunities for Ownership	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Respect Local History		●			●	●		
Adopt Inclusionary Zoning	●						● *	
Promote Incremental Development		●	●	●	●	●		●
Leverage Local Data	●				●		●	
Build "Missing Middle" Housing		●	●	●			●	●
Recalibrate Parking Requirements			●				●	●
Create an Active and Beautiful Public Realm	●	●					●	●
Create a Philanthropic Fund	●	●					●	
Utilize Opportunity Zones	●	●		●	●	●	●	
Use Tactical Urbanism								●

\* Applies to Beltline Overlay District only



# CNU's Commitment to the Challenge

Since 1996, the Charter of the New Urbanism has recognized that “physical solutions by themselves will not solve social and economic problems, but neither can economic vitality, community stability, and environmental health be sustained without a coherent and supportive physical framework.” For more than two decades, CNU has been working at the building, block, neighborhood, city, and regional scales to create more inclusive and equitable communities. Early momentum came in the mid-1990s from a partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create design guidelines for the HOPE VI program, to rehabilitate the nation's most deteriorated and isolated public housing facilities into mixed-income neighborhoods that integrate with the broader community.

More recently, CNU has advocated to remove the elevated urban freeways that tore established neighborhoods apart, a true opportunity to reverse decades of community disinvestment and repair neighborhood segregation. Now, CNU is using its expertise to develop transportation and land use strategies for cities through its Legacy Projects, which provide design assistance in underserved communities. Each expert-led Legacy Project is aimed at empowering local leaders, advocates, and residents in underserved communities to implement New Urbanist principles that help people and businesses thrive. CNU will continue to focus its Legacy Projects around those communities too often excluded from structurally unfair economic investment and the conventional planning process.

All of this work is reflected within CNU's inclusion statement, initiated by the National Board of Directors to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in March 2016, and formally adopted in September 2018:

*We—the National Board of the Congress for the New Urbanism—challenge, encourage, and support all members of the New Urbanist movement to reaffirm the Charter's commitment to building great places for all people, regardless of background, race, income, or ability, and to create a more inclusive, engaged movement. Drawing on our movement's tradition of excellence in community design and (re) development, New Urbanists shall further develop, evolve, and implement strategies and solutions for providing attainable housing, designing and financing diverse neighborhoods, and ultimately building a just place.*

*The promise of the Charter—to build and make economically viable, stable, and environmentally healthy communities within a coherent physical framework—can only be fulfilled by identifying and confronting exclusionary policies, practices, and behaviors; empowering those who have been most affected; and committing ourselves to accelerating actions and strategies that foster more inclusive communities.*

# The Westside Symposium

## The Historic Westside Atlanta Symposium

The symposium took place on March 15, 2018 at the historic campus of Spelman College, located in the Westside Future Fund's target impact area, and convened nationally-recognized leaders for a day of presentations, information sharing, and peer-to-peer dialogue to offer actionable ideas and alternatives to traditional practices of equitable development. Local area experts also helped contextualize the symposium in Westside Future Fund's work.

As the nonprofit community quarterback stewarding the equitable revitalization of Atlanta's Historic Westside, the symposium provided Westside Future Fund an opportunity to build on the Westside Land Use Action Plan, which was adopted in December 2017 by the City of Atlanta and now serves as the guide for future redevelopment of the Westside Future Fund's four target neighborhoods. The plan was a collaborative effort made up of community residents, business owners, employees, faith-based groups, academic institutions, nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies.

The symposium had three objectives:

- To create momentum in the Westside Atlanta community between residents and local civic organizations around implementation and small-scale change.
- To encourage stronger relationships and build trust between the community and outside organizations.
- To provide a platform for learning and open dialogue around affordable and innovative housing solutions, green building and green infrastructure, and equitable development.

The symposium included the following speakers and topics:

## Welcome and Introductions

- Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell, President, Spelman College
- John Ahmann, President and CEO, Westside Future Fund
- Tim Keane, Commissioner of City of Planning, City of Atlanta
- Dan Cathy, CEO, Chick-fil-A
- Lynn Richards, President and CEO, Congress for the New Urbanism

## Keynote Address

- Majora Carter, Urban Revitalization Strategy Consultant, Real Estate Developer, Majora Carter Group, LLC

## Inclusive and Equitable Development

- Doug Hooker, Executive Director, Atlanta Regional Commission
- Mamie Lee Moore, Community Leader and Activist, Westside, Atlanta
- David Alade, Co-Founder and Managing Partner, Century Partners, Detroit, Michigan
- Dr. Antwi Akom Ph.D., CEO and Co-Founder Streetwyze; Distinguished Professor and Founding Director of the Social Innovation Lab UCSF and SFSU



**Innovative Housing Solutions**

- Eli Spevak, Principal, Orange Splot, LLC, Portland, Oregon
- Eric Kronberg, AIA, LEED-AP, Principal, Kronberg Wall Architecture, Atlanta, Georgia
- Noel Khalil, Co-Founder and Partner, Columbia Ventures, LLC

**Historic Preservation in Traditionally African-American Communities**

- Irvin Henderson, Owner, Henderson and Company; Former Chair, Board of Directors, National Trust Community Investment Corporation
- Dr. Calinda Lee, Vice President of Historical Interpretation and Community Partnerships, Atlanta History Center
- Sheffield Hale, President and CEO, Atlanta History Center
- Dr. Candy Tate, Assistant Director, The Center for Creativity & Arts at Emory University

**“Revitalization on the Westside is important to me because it gives us the resources and opportunities to tackle 21st Century issues while preserving as well as making history here in Atlanta.”**

**Jaron Smith, ASAProduce,  
urban farmer seeking to eliminate food deserts  
in the Historic Westside of Atlanta, Georgia**

# About CNU

**Members of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) help create vibrant and walkable cities, towns, and neighborhoods where people have diverse choices for how they live, work, shop, and get around. People want to live in well-designed places that are unique and authentic. CNU’s mission is to help people build those places.**

With nineteen local and state chapters and headquartered in Washington, D.C., CNU works to unite the New Urbanist movement. Our projects and campaigns serve to empower our members’ efforts, identify policy opportunities, spread great ideas and innovative work to a national audience, and catalyze new strategies for implementing policy through design approaches.

All new urbanists share the conviction that our physical environment has a direct impact on our chances for happy, prosperous lives. Our movement includes professionals, leaders, advocates, citizens, and other like-minded organizations working to identify and address the range of issues impeding the development and redevelopment of well-designed neighborhoods, public places, commercial corridors, and rural environments.

CNU works to unite that movement as a connector, convener, alliance builder, and teaching platform. Our staff, members, partners, and allies are the international thought leaders on building better places, and CNU helps bring them together. CNU is committed to ensuring that the benefits of good urbanism are available to all through our work on equity and inclusion.

CNU is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Washington, D.C.



