

CREATING EQUITABLE, HEALTHY, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES:

Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development



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Cover photos

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Executive Summary

Communities across the country are integrating smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development approaches to design and build healthy, sustainable, and inclusive neighborhoods. Overburdened communities are using smart growth strategies to address longstanding environmental and health challenges and create new opportunities where they live. Regional and local planners are engaging low-income, minority, and tribal residents in decision-making and producing more enduring development that is better for people and the environment. Community groups, government agencies, and private and nonprofit partners are cleaning up and investing in existing neighborhoods, providing affordable housing and transportation options, and improving access to critical services and amenities.

This informational publication aims to build on past successes and offer other low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities approaches to shape development that responds to their needs and reflects their values. It identifies strategies that bring together smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development principles and that community-based organizations, local and regional decision-makers, developers, and others can use to build healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. These are places that provide clean air, water, and land; affordable and healthy homes; safe, reliable, and economical transportation options; and convenient access to jobs, schools, parks, shopping, and other daily necessities.

The strategies are grouped under seven common elements, or shared goals and principles that connect environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development. The fundamental overlap between these concepts is around how to plan and build neighborhoods to address environmental, health, and economic disparities and provide opportunities for low-income,

“A clean, green, healthy community is a better place to buy a home and raise a family; it’s more competitive in the race to attract new businesses; and it has the foundations it needs for prosperity.”

—Lisa P. Jackson
EPA Administrator

minority, tribal, and overburdened residents; therefore, all the approaches described relate to land use and community design. This document provides a brief introduction to each strategy, with a description of what it is, how it supports equitable and environmentally sustainable development, and examples of how it has been used. Local governments and community-based organizations can choose the approaches that best suit their needs and goals. Each of the seven common elements is illustrated by an in-depth case study highlighting a community’s experiences with these strategies.

The seven common elements, along with the strategies that fit under each one, are summarized on the following pages.

Strategies Linking Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development

Common Element #1: Facilitate Meaningful Community Engagement in Planning and Land Use Decisions

Meaningful community participation in land use planning and decision-making can produce development that meets the needs of a diverse group of residents, build broad support for projects, and lead to more effective public processes. Planners and community-based organizations can use interactive, customizable

strategies to engage low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened residents who face barriers to participation, are not traditionally involved in public processes, or are particularly affected by development proposals.

- **Conducting multilingual outreach** as part of planning and development decision-making is increasingly important with the growing number of U.S. residents whose primary language is not English. This approach results in policies and projects that better meet the needs of community members and have stronger public support.
- **Conducting community assessments** helps residents gather, analyze, and report information about current conditions and needs related to priority issues in their neighborhoods, such as street safety for pedestrians. These hands-on exercises can be facilitated by community-based organizations or local and regional planners.
- **Holding community planning and visioning workshops** helps groups of residents and organizations define a shared vision and goals for a site, neighborhood, city, town, or

Minimizing Displacement

Chapter 3 begins with a special section on tools, policies, and programs that can help to minimize displacement, an important issue that cuts across the seven common elements. Without advance planning and strong community engagement, revitalization efforts in low-income and overburdened neighborhoods have the potential to displace long-time residents due to rising rents and other costs of living. However, a wide range of tools and strategies can be used to involve community members in planning and visioning, provide affordable homes and transportation choices, support local businesses, and minimize displacement in other ways.

region, laying a foundation for subsequent land use policy and regulatory changes and investments.

Common Element #2: Promote Public Health and a Clean and Safe Environment

Designing and developing neighborhoods and buildings to protect air, water, land, and public health—particularly the health of overburdened populations—can reduce exposure to harmful contamination; prevent future pollution; and promote physical activity, reduced incidence of chronic disease, and other positive health outcomes among residents. This section provides land use planning and zoning-related approaches to address the potential environmental and health concerns from chemical plants, refineries, landfills, power plants, industrial livestock operations, and other facilities that are disproportionately located near low-income, minority, and tribal communities. It also discusses ways of cleaning up and reusing the contaminated sites left behind by those facilities, and methods for integrating healthy and sustainable elements into buildings and streets.

- Collaborative planning and zoning strategies can help **reduce exposure to facilities with potential environmental concerns**, mitigating the impacts of existing facilities on surrounding communities and siting and designing proposed facilities to avoid risks.
- Likewise, local and regional planning agencies, community-based organizations, and industry representatives can work together to design freight facilities and surrounding neighborhoods in ways that **reduce exposure to goods movement activities** and support health, environmental, and economic goals.
- **Clean and reuse contaminated properties**—specifically, brownfields and Superfund sites—in ways that support the community’s vision for its future. This can be critical to revitalize neighborhoods and increase access to needed amenities in established communities.

- Strategies that **promote green building** can reduce exposure to toxics and pollutants that have been linked to cancer, asthma, and other health problems. These strategies can also reduce energy and water costs, which are often a significant burden for low-income families.
- Local governments and community-based organizations can **build green streets** by carrying out relatively simple and low-cost projects, such as installing rain gardens; or by enacting comprehensive policy changes, such as updating street design standards.

Common Element #3: Strengthen Existing Communities

Many established communities—city downtowns, older suburban neighborhoods, and rural villages—are rich in culture, heritage, and social capital but lack economic opportunities for residents. Investing in these existing communities rather than in new developments on the outer fringes of metropolitan areas can improve quality of life for low-income and overburdened populations by bringing the new jobs, services, and amenities they need. This approach can also help address the health and safety risks presented by contaminated properties, abandoned buildings, and poorly designed streets, and can increase the tax base to support other local needs.

- Approaches that encourage **fixing existing infrastructure first** prioritize the repair and maintenance of existing roads, bridges, buildings, and water and wastewater facilities over the building of new infrastructure in undeveloped places.
- **Reusing vacant and abandoned properties** as community amenities such as housing, commercial space, gardens, or temporary green spaces can remove blight and safety concerns, increase residents' access to needed services and opportunities, and spur additional investment in neighborhoods.
- **Redeveloping commercial corridors** by creating compact, mixed-use land use patterns and making streets safer for

pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users can improve opportunities for businesses and access for residents along these important thoroughfares.

Common Element #4: Provide Housing Choices

Offering an array of housing options by preserving and building affordable housing allows residents at all income levels to live near jobs, services, and public transit; helps to minimize displacement; and reduces transportation costs and air pollution from long commutes.

- **Preserving affordable housing** using tools like deed restrictions, housing trust funds, rehabilitation assistance, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits can maintain housing choices and access to opportunities for low- and moderate-income families in revitalizing areas and catalyze investment in struggling neighborhoods.
- **Creating new affordable housing** through approaches such as inclusionary zoning, updated land use regulations, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits is another way to expand housing choices for low- and moderate-income households, including in affluent communities that lack housing options for low-income earners, young people, and seniors.

Common Element #5: Provide Transportation Options

For many low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities, public transit and safe routes for walking and bicycling are critical links to regional employment and educational opportunities that help residents improve their lives. Providing equitable and affordable transportation options improves mobility and access to jobs, services, and other daily necessities for all residents, including those who do not own cars.

- **Providing access to public transportation** through inclusive schedule and route planning and thoughtful transit stop and street design connects people to regional jobs and services.

- **Implementing equitable transit-oriented development** provides affordable housing near transit, which can significantly lower the housing and transportation costs that claim a large share of the incomes of many low-income households.
- Local and regional agencies and community-based organizations can work together to **design safe streets for all users** by incorporating sidewalks, bike lanes, median islands, pedestrian signals, bus lanes, and other facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit users of all ages and abilities into new and existing streets.

Common Element #6: Improve Access to Opportunities and Daily Necessities

All residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, should have access to the basic ingredients for healthy, productive lives, including employment and educational opportunities; services such as health clinics and child care; and amenities such as grocery stores, safe streets, and parks and recreational facilities.

- Approaches to **promote diverse, community-centered schools** preserve or build schools that are near the families they serve. Community-centered schools allow students to walk or bicycle to school, which promotes physical activity; and provide important community anchors and gathering places.
- Programs that **create safe routes to school** improve children's health by providing education, enforcement, and infrastructure upgrades that make it possible for them to walk or bicycle to school.
- Planners and community-based organizations can **provide access to healthy food** by removing barriers in land use regulations, offering incentives and financing to retailers, connecting retailers with financing, and assisting with challenging issues such as assembling land for development.

- **Providing access to parks and green space** at all scales provides critical health, social, and environmental benefits for low-income and overburdened communities.

Common Element #7: Preserve and Build on the Features That Make a Community Distinctive

Authentic community planning and revitalization are anchored in the physical and cultural assets that make a place unique. As decision-makers and community stakeholders implement the policies and strategies described in this report, they should build on the distinctive characteristics of their neighborhoods. Preserving and strengthening the features that make a place special maintains what existing residents value about their homes, attracts new residents and visitors, and spurs economic development that is grounded in community identity.

- Community planning and historic preservation strategies can help to **preserve existing cultural features**.
- Tools such as design guidelines and neighborhood conservation districts can **create new development that strengthens local culture** by capturing the specific physical characteristics of development that determine the overall character of a neighborhood and applying them to new projects.

This publication demonstrates that smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development approaches can be an effective combination for responding to the challenges overburdened communities face, promoting development that is authentic and enduring, and laying the foundation for economic resilience. Taken together or in part, the strategies outlined here can help low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities shape development to respond to their needs and reflect their values. These strategies can also help local and regional planners and policy-makers make land use decisions that are equitable, healthy, and sustainable for all residents.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Communities across the country are integrating smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development approaches to design and build healthy, sustainable, and inclusive neighborhoods. Residents of Spartanburg, South Carolina, partnered with the local government, federal agencies, and industry stakeholders to create new housing, parks, businesses, and health clinics where brownfields, landfills, and abandoned buildings once existed. In New Orleans' Versailles neighborhood, the community came together after Hurricane Katrina to rebuild its main business corridor and strengthen the neighborhood's sense of place, which is anchored in Vietnamese culture. On the Ohkay Owingeh reservation in New Mexico, tribal leaders are implementing a Master Land Use Plan that creates affordable housing, preserves valuable water resources, and revives traditional Pueblo settlement patterns and historic plazas. Bethel New Life, a faith-based community development corporation on Chicago's West Side, formed a regional coalition to preserve transit service in the predominantly African-American neighborhood and led the construction of shops, child care facilities, an employment center, and energy-efficient and affordable homes around a train station.

These diverse communities and many others are finding that environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development can be an effective combination for promoting a clean and safe environment, a strong economy, and good quality of life for all residents. Overburdened¹ communities are using smart growth strategies to address long-standing environmental and

¹ In Plan EJ 2014, EPA's overarching strategy for advancing environmental justice, the Agency uses the term "overburdened" to describe the minority, low-income, tribal, and indigenous populations or communities in the United States that potentially experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks as a result of greater vulnerability to environmental hazards. This increased vulnerability may be attributable to an accumulation of negative and a lack of positive environmental, health, economic, or social conditions within these populations or communities.

Without the appropriate engagement and planning, the implementation of smart growth strategies in low-income and minority communities can displace existing residents due to rising rents and other costs of living. This unintended consequence has caused some environmental justice and equity proponents to question smart growth's inclusivity, and has contributed to a divide between smart growth and environmental justice. However, some communities have worked hard to bridge that divide, and have found that a wide range of tools and strategies can be used to engage community members in neighborhood planning and visioning, provide affordable homes and transportation choices, support local businesses, and minimize displacement in other ways. Many of them are described in this publication.



Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo's Master Land Use Plan strengthens the pueblo's cultural identity and protects its natural surroundings by maintaining its traditional commitment to environmentally sensitive design. *Photo courtesy of the San Juan Pueblo Office of the Governor.*

“For too long, environmental justice and smart growth have been viewed as separate, yet communities across the U.S. are showing that they are actually complementary. Bringing them together can help community-based organizations, local planners, and other stakeholders achieve healthy and sustainable communities for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status.”

—**Lisa Garcia**

Associate Assistant Administrator
for Environmental Justice, U.S. EPA

health challenges and create new opportunities where they live. Regional and local planners are engaging low-income, minority, and tribal residents in decision-making and producing more enduring development that is better for people and the environment. Community groups, government agencies, and private and nonprofit partners are cleaning up and investing in existing neighborhoods, providing affordable housing and transportation options, and improving access to critical services and amenities.

This informational publication aims to build on the successes described above and help other low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities shape development that responds to their needs and reflects their values. It identifies approaches that bring together smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development principles and can be used by community-based organizations, community development corporations, local and regional decision-makers, developers, and other stakeholders to build healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. These are places that provide clean air, water, and land; affordable and healthy homes; safe, reliable, and economical transportation options; and convenient access to jobs, schools, parks, shopping, and other daily necessities. This publication provides a menu of strategies and best practices for local policy-

makers and community leaders to consider. Each community can choose the approaches that best suit its needs and goals.

Core Concepts

Environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development goals and principles have fundamental areas of overlap. They all aim to create communities that are healthy, environmentally sustainable, and economically vibrant. They also seek to empower residents to shape development where they live. This section introduces the three concepts. The strategies and approaches described later in the publication draw on these three fields.

Environmental justice

The environmental justice movement emerged in the 1980s when minority, low-income, and tribal communities began to organize in response to disproportionate environmental and health impacts in their neighborhoods such as hazardous facility siting, industrial contamination, air pollution, and lead poisoning. In 1982, residents of poor, predominantly African-American Warren County, North Carolina, protested the siting of a landfill, focusing national attention on this issue and sparking action in other communities. Subsequently, empirical studies have shown that environmental burdens are disproportionately located in minority, low-income, and tribal communities.²

Environmental justice leaders strengthened the movement by securing the establishment of EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice and the signing of Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” in the early 1990s. The Executive Order instructed federal agencies to address disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects of their programs on low-income, minority, and

² Numerous studies on disproportionate environmental impacts have been conducted since the 1980s. For a compilation of scientific information on environmental justice and environmental health disparities, see “Environmental Justice and Disparities in Environmental Health” in the *American Journal of Public Health*, December 2011, Volume 101, S1.

tribal communities. It also created the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice to guide, support, and enhance federal environmental justice and community-based activities.³

EPA defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”⁴ “Fair treatment” means that no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental, or commercial operations and policies.⁵ Over the years, EPA and environmental justice organizations have expanded the concept of fair treatment to consider not only how burdens are distributed, but also how environmental and health benefits are shared.⁶ In other words, all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, should have the opportunity to enjoy the positive outcomes of environmentally related decisions and actions, such as cleaner air and water, improved health, and economic vitality. “Meaningful involvement” means that the public should have opportunities to participate in decisions that could affect their environment and their health, their contributions should be taken into account by regulatory agencies, and decision-makers should seek and facilitate the engagement of those potentially affected by their decisions.⁷ Building on its roots in the civil rights movement, the environmental justice movement seeks to empower communities to speak for themselves. EPA places

- 3 Clinton, William J., Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations,” February 11, 1994, *Federal Register* 59, No. 32: 7629.
- 4 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Justice. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej. Accessed 2010.
- 5 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Justice. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej. Accessed 2010.
- 6 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *EPA’s Action Development Process: Interim Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice during the Development of an Action*. 2010. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/policy/considering-ej-in-rulemaking-guide-07-2010.pdf.
- 7 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Justice. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej. Accessed 2010.



Portland, Oregon’s New Columbia neighborhood provides a range of housing opportunities for residents of various incomes. *Photo courtesy of the Housing Authority of Portland.*

particular emphasis on the public health and environmental conditions affecting minority, low-income, and tribal populations, as they frequently bear greater environmental harms and risks than the general population and often lack access to environmental benefits.⁸

Environmental justice is now being put into action by federal, tribal, state, and local government agencies and organizations. A key driver for EPA is Plan EJ 2014, the Agency’s overarching strategy for advancing environmental justice. The plan, which commemorates the 20th anniversary

- 8 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Symposium on the Science of Disproportionate Environmental Health Impacts. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/multimedia/albums/epa/disproportionate-impacts-symposium.html. Accessed 2011.

of Executive Order 12898, seeks to empower communities to improve their health and environments and establish partnerships between government agencies and other stakeholder groups.⁹ EPA and the White House Council on Environmental Quality have also reconvened the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice. As part of this effort, 17 federal agencies and White House offices are working with community stakeholders to develop and implement environmental justice strategies, strengthen community access to federal resources, and integrate environmental justice into programs, policies, and activities across the federal government.¹⁰

Smart growth

Smart growth describes a range of strategies for planning and building cities, suburbs, and small towns in ways that protect the environment and public health, support economic development, and strengthen communities. In 1996, the Smart Growth Network, a group of more than 30 national organizations representing a range of interests including land conservation; affordable housing; real estate; community development;

transportation; and local, state, and federal government, created 10 smart growth principles based on the experiences of communities around the country. The principles are:¹¹

- **Mix land uses.** Mixing housing, shops, offices, schools, and other compatible land uses in the same neighborhood makes it easy for residents to walk, bicycle, take public transportation, drive shorter distances, and reach different destinations conveniently and affordably.
- **Take advantage of compact building design.** Compact building design preserves open space and uses land and resources more efficiently. It creates neighborhoods that can easily be served by public transit, puts destinations close enough for people to walk between, and protects water quality by reducing the amount of paved surfaces and polluted runoff.
- **Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.** Providing an array of quality housing options in new developments and existing neighborhoods allows people of all income levels, household sizes, and stages of life to live near jobs, public transit, and services.
- **Create walkable neighborhoods.** Creating safe and inviting pedestrian spaces, mixing land uses, and building compactly make walking a viable transportation option, which can reduce transportation costs, encourage physical activity, and help to reduce obesity, diabetes, and other diseases.
- **Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place.** Development should represent the values and the unique history, culture, economy, and geography of a community. Preserving and building on community assets are key to long-term quality of life and economic vitality.

9 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Plan EJ 2014*. 2011. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/policy/plan-ej-2014/plan-ej-2011-09.pdf.

10 In 2011, the 17 federal agencies and White House offices participating in the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 12898. This MOU serves as a formal agreement to recommit to environmental justice through a collaborative and comprehensive effort. The agencies agreed to continue to identify and address environmental justice considerations in their programs, policies, and activities; provide environmental justice strategies and implementation progress reports; adopt an MOU charter; and identify areas of focus. To inform their work and engage communities, the agencies held listening sessions and stakeholder dialogues around the country, as well as a White House Forum on Environmental Justice which brought together administration officials, community leaders, and officials from state, local and tribal governments to discuss issues that are important to communities overburdened with pollution. The Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice has created a compendium of agency strategies, policies, guidance documents, and plans for implementing Executive Order 12898; the Environmental Justice Federal Interagency Directory with information about agency roles, organizational charts, and key contacts; and the Community-Based Federal Environmental Justice Guide, describing federal funding and technical assistance programs that can assist communities in reducing toxic exposures. These resources are available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency at "Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice," www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/interagency.

11 Smart Growth Network. Why Smart Growth? smartgrowth.org/why.php. Accessed 2010.

- **Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas.** Farmland, pastures, forests, and other natural and working lands support land-based economic activities that are critical for healthy regional and national economies. The vegetation in natural areas also helps to protect the environment and public health by filtering pollutants from the air and drinking water.
- **Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities.** Investing in existing communities helps to address environmental and health hazards like contaminated properties, brings new jobs and services for residents, and saves localities money by using the infrastructure already in place.
- **Provide a variety of transportation choices.** A balanced transportation system that incorporates many means of travel—including buses, rail, walking, biking, and private cars—provides more affordable options for getting around, reduces air pollution and associated health impacts, and increases mobility for citizens who do not drive.
- **Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.** By making development processes clear and by working with the private sector, municipalities can make smart growth economically viable and attractive to private investors and developers.
- **Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions.** Development can create great places to live, work, and play if it responds to a community's sense of how and where it wants to grow. Smart growth strategies involve residents, businesses, and all other stakeholders early and often to define and implement the community's vision and goals.

Equitable development strategies help low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.

These principles form the foundation for strategies that cities, suburbs, small towns, and rural areas can use to create efficient development that is environmentally and economically sustainable and provides more opportunities for all residents. Each community can adapt smart growth strategies and techniques to meet its needs. Smart growth development will look different in different places depending on each community's context and priorities.

Equitable development

There is no formal definition or set of principles to describe equitable development, but the term generally refers to a range of approaches for creating healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities where residents of all incomes, races, and ethnicities have access to the opportunities, services, and amenities they need to thrive. Equitable development strategies help low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities participate in and benefit from decisions that shape their neighborhoods and regions.¹²

The concept of equitable development draws on both environmental justice and smart growth. It emphasizes that all residents should be protected from environmental hazards and enjoy access to environmental, health, economic, and social necessities such as clean air and water, adequate infrastructure, job opportunities, and involvement in decision-making. To achieve this, equitable development approaches usually integrate people-focused strategies—efforts that support community residents—with place-focused

¹² PolicyLink. Equitable Development Toolkit. www.policylink.org/site/c.lklXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm. Accessed 2010.

strategies—efforts that stabilize and improve the neighborhood environment.¹³ Place-focused investments in housing, transportation, infrastructure, and pollution cleanup can reduce health and economic disparities, bring new opportunities, and improve quality of life. People-focused programs that assist with job training and placement, business development, education, health and wellness, and financial management can build the skills and wealth of residents and equip them to take part in revitalization and remain in their neighborhoods. Meaningful community participation and leadership are crucial components of equitable development.

In addition, equitable development typically calls for a regional perspective in order to reduce health and economic inequalities among localities and improve outcomes for low-income communities while building healthy metropolitan regions. Equitable development aims to ensure that everyone—regardless of where they live—can benefit from economic growth in the region, with affordable housing in safe and attractive neighborhoods, living-wage jobs, high-performing schools, public transit, and other essential services and amenities evenly available.¹⁴

Equitable development efforts not only aim to revitalize disadvantaged neighborhoods, but also to ensure that low-income residents have access to housing and job opportunities in more affluent communities, increasing the diversity and economic prosperity of the region as a whole.

“Healthy communities are not only environmentally healthy, they are also socially and economically strong. They offer employment and educational opportunities, safe and affordable homes, access to recreation, health care, and other needs of daily life, all close enough together that people can choose to safely walk, bike, or take transit instead of driving.”

—Lisa P. Jackson
EPA Administrator

Overlap between smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development

This publication highlights strategies and approaches that link smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development. In Chapter 3, these strategies and approaches are grouped under seven common themes that unite the three concepts. The fundamental overlap between smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development is how to plan and build neighborhoods to address environmental, health, and economic disparities and provide benefits and opportunities for low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened residents, so all the strategies described relate generally to land use and community design.

¹³ PolicyLink. Equitable Development Toolkit. www.policylink.org/site/c.lklXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm. Accessed 2010.

¹⁴ Glover Blackwell, Angela and Fox, Radhika K. *Regional Equity and Smart Growth: Opportunities for Advancing Social and Economic Justice in America*. Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities. 2004. www.fundersnetwork.org/files/learn/Regional_Equity_and_Smart_Growth_2nd_Ed.pdf.

Chapter 2: Challenges to Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities

Low-income, minority, and tribal communities face an array of challenges. Many continue to deal with the types of disproportionate environmental concerns and lack of access to decision-making that sparked the environmental justice movement decades ago. Others, whose neighborhoods have been cleared of contaminated sites and are attracting new development, are confronting rising costs of living and displacement. The challenges described in this chapter are wide-ranging, touching on issues of health, community engagement, economic resilience, and access to opportunities and services. However, they are all related to how communities are planned and developed. The next chapter provides smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development strategies and policies that can help address these challenges.

Environmental and Health Concerns

Facilities with potential environmental and health impacts

Low-income, minority, and tribal communities have historically borne a disproportionate share of environmental harms and risks and are more likely to live in areas that increase these risks.^{15,16} Because they often live where land is inexpensive, possess fewer economic resources, and have less access to decision-making, industries that discharge pollution might find it easier to locate near these populations than in other areas. As a result, many low-income, minority, and tribal communities live near chemical plants, smelters, refineries, landfills, hazardous waste sites, and other industrial facilities. In rural areas, low-income communities might also be close to mining, industrial livestock, and concentrated



Low-income, minority, and tribal populations are more likely to live in areas that increase their exposure to environmental and health risks. *Photo courtesy of EPA.*

animal feeding operations.¹⁷ Industrial facilities support local and regional economies and employ residents in permanent, living-wage positions, but they can also bring environmental and health concerns.

“All too often, low-income, minority and tribal Americans live in the shadows of the worst pollution, facing disproportionate health impacts and greater obstacles to economic growth in communities that cannot attract businesses and new jobs.”

—Lisa P. Jackson
EPA Administrator

15 Chavis, Benjamin F. and Lee, Charles. *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*. United Church of Christ. 1987. www.ucc.org/about-us/archives/pdfs/toxwrace87.pdf.

16 Bullard, Robert D.; Mohai, Paul; Saha, Robin; and Wright, Beverly. *Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty*. United Church of Christ. 2007. www.ucc.org/justice/pdfs/toxic20.pdf.

17 Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are agricultural operations where animals are kept and raised in confined situations. The animals, feed, by-products, and production operations are concentrated on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or seeking feed on open pastures or ranges.



If it is not designed and built with the needs of residents in mind, affordable housing can present health risks and might not be near transportation options, services, and amenities that residents need.

Photo courtesy of Seattle Housing Authority.

Industrial facilities are regulated under federal and state laws that reduce contamination, including EPA's rulemaking, permitting, and enforcement and compliance programs, but air and water pollution from these sources can still have health impacts. For instance, people who live near goods movement facilities—freight transportation locations such as seaports, rail yards, and warehouses—can be exposed to elevated levels of air toxics emitted by diesel-powered vehicles and equipment. These pollutants contribute to respiratory illness, heart disease, cancer, and premature death.¹⁸ Industrial facilities can also bring other impacts such as noise pollution and increased risk of injuries and fatalities from truck traffic.

Even when industrial facilities close down, they can continue to affect surrounding neighborhoods. They often leave behind contaminated sites that can pose health threats to nearby residents from polluted water and soil and present barriers to redevelopment.

These site-specific risks can be compounded by the fact that many minority communities live in regions that do not meet federal air or water

18 National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. *Reducing Air Emissions Associated with Goods Movement: Working Towards Environmental Justice*. 2009. www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/nejac/2009-goods-movement.pdf.

quality standards.^{19,20} Exposure to air pollutants²¹ as well as bacteria, parasites, and other contaminants in drinking water can cause disease and even death.²²

Unhealthy housing

Low-income, minority, and tribal populations are more likely to live in unhealthy housing with indoor air pollution, lead paint, asbestos, mold, and mildew.²³ Lead poisoning causes permanent brain damage that leads to impaired mental abilities, and high levels of exposure can cause seizures, behavioral disorders, and death. Mold and mildew can cause allergic reactions and exacerbate asthma. Asbestos is associated with cancer.²⁴ In low-income rural and tribal communities, the smoke from older wood-burning stoves can aggravate lung disease, cause asthma attacks, and increase susceptibility to respiratory infections.²⁵

Physical inactivity and chronic disease

Research indicates that low-income populations engage in less physical activity than the general population,²⁶ and some minorities are less likely than other groups to get enough daily physical activity.²⁷ These trends can be related in part to how communities and streets are designed,

19 American Lung Association. *State of Lung Disease in Diverse Communities*. 2010. www.lungusa.org/assets/documents/publications/lung-disease-data/solddc_2010.pdf.

20 Quintero-Somains, Adrianna and Quirindongo, Mayra. *Hidden Danger: Environmental Health Threats in the Latino Community*. Natural Resources Defense Council. 2004. www.nrdc.org/health/effects/latino/english/contents.asp.

21 American Lung Association. *State of Lung Disease in Diverse Communities*. 2010. www.lungusa.org/assets/documents/publications/lung-disease-data/solddc_2010.pdf.

22 Quintero-Somains, Adrianna and Quirindongo, Mayra. *Hidden Danger: Environmental Health Threats in the Latino Community*. Natural Resources Defense Council. 2004. www.nrdc.org/health/effects/latino/english/contents.asp.

23 Alliance for Healthy Homes. *Disparities in Risk*. www.afhh.org/chil_ar/chil_ar_disparities.htm. Accessed 2010.

24 American Lung Association. *State of Lung Disease in Diverse Communities*. 2010. www.lungusa.org/assets/documents/publications/lung-disease-data/solddc_2010.pdf.

25 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Burn Wise: Consumers—Health Effects*. Accessed 2011. www.epa.gov/burnwise/healtheffects.html.

26 Active Living by Design. *Low Income Populations and Physical Activity*. 2012. www.healthtrust.org/pdf/PhysicalActivityforLowIncomePopulations-TheHealthTrust.pdf.

27 PolicyLink and the Prevention Institute. *The Transportation Prescription*. 2010. www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=IkIXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=7290885.

which has a direct effect on residents' ability to be active. Many underserved neighborhoods do not have sidewalks, crosswalks, street lights, parks, or recreational facilities. They often lack stores, schools, and other daily necessities within walking distance of homes. Vacant buildings, crime, and other factors that make residents feel unsafe can prevent them from walking or bicycling or allowing their children to play outside or walk or bike to school.

The links between physical activity and health are well established. A sedentary lifestyle can contribute to obesity, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes—illnesses that disproportionately affect minority communities.^{28,29,30}

Inadequate nutrition

Low-income, minority, and tribal populations sometimes have difficulty maintaining well-balanced diets, partly because of inadequate access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food and easy access to cheap fast food. Many underserved neighborhoods lack supermarkets, compelling residents without transportation options to shop at convenience stores with high prices and a limited selection of nutritious foods. If residents are able to travel to grocery stores, they often must make lengthy and costly trips.³¹ In rural communities without public transportation, getting to stores with healthy food can be even more difficult.

The links between physical activity and health are well established. A sedentary lifestyle can contribute to obesity, heart disease, and Type 2 diabetes—illnesses that disproportionately affect minority communities.

Cumulative health impacts

The many physical, chemical, biological, social, and cultural factors overburdened populations face can combine to increase their exposure to environmental toxins, make them more susceptible to these toxins, and reduce their ability to recover from exposure. These factors can include pre-existing health conditions, lack of access to health care and insurance, poor nutrition, lack of information about environmental and health issues, lack of exercise, and many others.^{32,33}

Disinvestment in Established Communities

Dispersed development patterns

After World War II, development in the United States spread from cities and older suburbs to the fringes of metropolitan areas and beyond. This trend was promoted by public policies that encouraged building new homes and roads rather than investing in existing communities, and was fueled by a variety of economic and cultural factors. As these far-flung developments expanded, the populations of central cities and towns decreased, with growing concentrations of low-income and minority residents. Transportation and water infrastructure often was not adequately maintained and

28 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Obesity Data/Statistics. minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=550. Accessed 2011.

29 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Heart Disease Data/Statistics. minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=127. Accessed 2011.

30 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Diabetes Data/Statistics. minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62. Accessed 2011.

31 U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service. *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences*. 2009. [webarchives.cdlib.org/wayback.public/UERS_ag_1/20111128200143/http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/](http://webarchives.cdlib.org/wayback/public/UERS_ag_1/20111128200143/http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AP/AP036/).

32 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *EPA's Action Development Process: Interim Guidance on Considering Environmental Justice During the Development of an Action*. 2010. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/policy/considering-ej-in-rulemaking-guide-07-2010.pdf.

33 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Symposium on the Science of Disproportionate Environmental Health Impacts. www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/multimedia/albums/epa/disproportionate-impacts-symposium.html. Accessed 2011.

municipal services were reduced. The number of brownfields and other contaminated and vacant sites increased. Facing falling property values, some residents abandoned their homes and housing stock deteriorated. Businesses also began moving to the edges of metropolitan regions, making it harder for the residents of disinvested neighborhoods to find work and earn a living. Jobs in the suburbs were often inaccessible because public transportation did not connect urban and suburban areas.³⁴ At the same time, exclusionary zoning practices in some newer neighborhoods limited the construction of small, multifamily, and rental homes, making these places unaffordable to lower-income residents. Additionally, redlining³⁵ and racially exclusionary covenants³⁶ were used to deny mortgage loans and other resources to minorities and low-income people to keep them out of more affluent, predominantly white neighborhoods. These federal, local, and private-sector policies increased residential segregation by race, ethnicity, and economic status. Low-income and minority families looking to move closer to their jobs, high-quality schools, and other resources can still face unintentionally and deliberately discriminatory housing policies and practices in more affluent communities.

Disinvestment and spread-out development patterns have affected rural and tribal communities as well. In many rural areas, the decline of agriculture and manufacturing has led to unemployment and poverty. As young people move away, populations age, and employers choose to locate elsewhere, small towns and rural places have struggled to identify their competitive advantages and attract new economic development. In rural places

close to metropolitan regions, farmland and natural lands have been lost to development, threatening resource-dependent economies and the rural character residents value. Dispersed and unplanned development on tribal lands can endanger the natural resources indigenous peoples need for hunting, fishing, planting, and other traditional practices.

Neighborhoods without essential goods and services

As described above, disinvestment in many cities, older suburbs, and rural areas has left residents without the goods and services they need to thrive, including accessible and affordable transportation options, parks and other recreational facilities, good schools, health clinics, grocery stores, and other places to buy healthy food. Some very low-income rural and tribal communities lack basic necessities such as safe and adequate drinking water, wastewater, housing, and transportation infrastructure, making it difficult to meet essential needs and even more challenging to improve the economic situations of residents.

The lack of transportation options in many communities is a particular challenge. Low-income and minority populations are less likely to own cars, and their neighborhoods might not be served by efficient, reliable public transportation. They often lack sidewalks and bicycle paths to connect

34 Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. 1987. Oxford University Press.

35 "Redlining" refers to the practice of denying or increasing the cost of goods and services such as mortgage and business loans, other financial services, insurance, and retail to residents of particular areas, which were often racially determined. The term originally described the practice of drawing red lines on a map to delineate areas where banks and businesses would not invest.

36 Racially exclusionary covenants restricted the sale or occupation of property on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, or social class. They were used to prohibit buyers of property from reselling, leasing, or transferring it to members of a given race, ethnicity, or religion as specified in the title deed.



Streets without facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists make it harder and more dangerous for people without cars to get around. *Photo courtesy of EPA.*

them to local destinations and transit stops. Those who do walk can face disproportionate safety risks due to poorly designed streets, neglected road maintenance, inadequate lighting, and minimal traffic enforcement.³⁷

Because low-income families have fewer transportation options and farther to travel to reach jobs and services, they typically spend a higher than average percentage of their incomes on transportation. While the average U.S. family spends about 18 percent of after-tax income on transportation, low-wage households living far from employment centers spend 37 percent of their incomes on transportation,³⁸ and very low-income households can spend 55 percent or more.³⁹ In contrast, families living in neighborhoods well-served by public transportation spend an average of 9 percent.⁴⁰

Displacement

When neighborhood revitalization occurs, it can bring unintended adverse consequences for low-income residents if it does not involve careful planning and strong community engagement. New investments in infrastructure, public transportation, and businesses can make surrounding real estate more desirable, raising property values and spurring the conversion of affordable housing to higher-end units. These trends can result in the displacement of existing residents and businesses and can particularly affect renters. Leaving a neighborhood can mean not just leaving a home, but often social networks and community culture as well. Low-income residents who are not displaced can still be affected as they can face significantly increased costs of living.

Community Engagement, Empowerment, and Capacity

Many factors can prevent low-income, minority, and tribal populations from participating in public decision-making. A lack of transparency or willingness of government agencies to engage the community early in planning can make it more difficult for residents to influence development decisions. Even with open dialogue and transparency, other limitations might exist. These include educational and language differences, a lack of access to the Internet and other information sources, a lack of time for meetings and review of documents, and a lack of trust between decision-makers and community stakeholders. Community-based and neighborhood organizations often lack the ability to track and influence all the issues affecting their constituents. They might not have access to scientific, technical, or legal resources, or capacity to monitor funding sources or apply for grants or other assistance. Some government agencies are overcoming these barriers by translating publications and websites, holding meetings in various locations and at different times of day and night, and forming stronger partnerships with community-based organizations. However, many policy-makers still need guidance on how to work most effectively with low-income, minority, and tribal populations and the social service entities, faith-based organizations, and environmental justice groups that serve them.

37 PolicyLink and the Prevention Institute. *The Transportation Prescription*. 2010. www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=IkIXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=7290885.

38 PolicyLink and the Prevention Institute. *The Transportation Prescription*. 2010. www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=IkIXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=7290885.

39 Center for Transit-Oriented Development. *Mixed-Income Housing Near Transit*. 2009. www.reconnectingamerica.org/public/display_asset/091030ra201mixedhousefinal.

40 PolicyLink and the Prevention Institute. *The Transportation Prescription*. 2010. www.policylink.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=IkIXLbMNJrE&b=5136581&ct=7290885.

Climate Change Challenges in Low-Income and Overburdened Communities

The changing climate will present many challenges to communities, including hotter days and nights, more frequent heat waves, more and stronger storms, rising sea levels, and higher storm surges that cause more flooding. Effects will vary in different regions of the United States. Many of these effects are already being seen.⁴¹

Low-income and overburdened communities are particularly vulnerable to the projected impacts of climate change. These include health effects such as increased rates of asthma and other respiratory problems due to greater concentrations of local and regional air pollutants,⁴² heat stress and heat exhaustion, and weather-related injury and death. Low-income households are less likely to have air conditioning in their homes and often live in neighborhoods without safe and convenient places to cool down, putting them at higher risk of heat stress, heat exhaustion, and even death.⁴³ More extreme temperatures and unpredictable energy prices can also raise energy costs for low-income families, who already spend a greater average share of their household incomes on energy than higher-income households.⁴⁴ The homes of low-income residents are more vulnerable to violent weather, such as hurricanes and severe storms, because they are often not constructed to resist it or are not covered by insurance. If their homes are destroyed, they might not be able to afford to rebuild or move to a safer location. Flood damage to affordable housing stock might leave low-income people with fewer housing choices. For example, Cedar Falls, Iowa lost a significant number of affordable homes during the severe flooding of the Mississippi River in 2008.⁴⁵ Many of these homes were located in the river's floodplain.

41 U.S. Global Change Research Program. *Global Climate Change Impacts in the United States*. 2009. www.globalchange.gov/what-we-do/assessment/previous-assessments/global-climate-change-impacts-in-the-us-2009.

42 Interagency Working Group on Climate Change and Health. *A Human Health Perspective on Climate Change*. Environmental Health Perspectives and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. 2010. www.niehs.nih.gov/health/assets/docs_a_e/climatereport2010.pdf.

43 For a discussion of the characteristics of neighborhoods that suffered particularly high levels of heat-related deaths in the 1995 Chicago heat wave, see Browning, Christopher, et al. "Neighborhood Social Processes, Physical Conditions, and Disaster-Related Mortality: The Case of the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *American Sociological Review*, 2006, Vol. 71 (August: 661–678). health.bsd.uchicago.edu/FileStore/BrowningWallaceFeinbergCagney_ASR_Aug%2006.pdf.

44 Applied Public Policy Research Institute for Study and Evaluation. *LIHEAP Energy Burden Evaluation Study: Final Report*. 2005.

45 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Smart Growth Technical Assistance in Iowa. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/iowa_techasst.htm#cedarfalls. Accessed 2011.

Chapter 3: Strategies Linking Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development

A wide variety of strategies and approaches link smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development to respond to the challenges overburdened communities face, promote growth that is equitable and environmentally sustainable, and lay the foundation for economic resilience. This chapter describes approaches that communities across the country have used successfully. Since land use planning is a local responsibility, this publication provides a menu of strategies that can be implemented by municipal and regional decision-makers, community-based organizations, private-sector stakeholders, or partnerships between them. In some cases, state, federal, or philanthropic support can be helpful. Each community should implement the approaches that best suit its needs and achieve local goals.

The strategies are grouped under seven common elements, or shared goals and principles that connect environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development. This document provides a brief introduction to each strategy that describes what it is, how it supports equitable and environmentally sustainable development, potential barriers to implementation by low-income or overburdened communities, and examples of how it has been used. Each section includes an in-depth case study highlighting a community's experiences with these strategies. Further resources related to these strategies are listed in the Resource Guide at the end of this document.



Fruitvale Village, in a predominantly Latino neighborhood of East Oakland, California, is a vibrant community gathering place that provides services and amenities to residents and celebrates local culture. *Photo courtesy of the Unity Council.*

SEVEN COMMON ELEMENTS OF SMART GROWTH, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

- Facilitate Meaningful Community Engagement in Planning and Land Use Decisions
- Promote Public Health and a Clean and Safe Environment
- Strengthen Existing Communities
- Provide Housing Choices
- Provide Transportation Options
- Improve Access to Opportunities and Daily Necessities
- Preserve and Build on the Features That Make a Community Distinctive

Minimizing Displacement: An Early Priority in Revitalization

Too often, revitalization efforts in low-income or overburdened neighborhoods end up displacing long-time residents. To address this unintended impact, municipalities and community organizations are using strategies that draw needed resources and amenities into established neighborhoods while helping existing residents and the commercial, service, and cultural establishments they value remain there. A proactive and comprehensive approach to minimizing displacement encompasses affordable housing, commercial stabilization, economic and workforce development, supportive land use policies, and community



The Fruitvale Main Street program, led by the Unity Council, a community development corporation, promotes the annual Día de los Muertos celebration.
Photo courtesy of the Unity Council.

engagement. Affordable housing strategies are discussed later in this chapter.

To increase the likelihood of success, local governments and community-based organizations should initiate efforts to mitigate displacement as soon as revitalization planning begins rather than waiting until projects are underway. A community assessment is one way to start. Planners can use demographic data to understand who lives and works in a neighborhood and how this may change over time. Key indicators measured at the Census block or block group level, such as rent as a percentage of household income and combined housing and transportation costs, can help identify residents that are particularly vulnerable to displacement. The government of the District of Columbia mapped and scored median household incomes, median home values, projected rise in home values, the proportion of renters to homeowners, and the proximity to subway stations for small neighborhood areas throughout the city. Planners aggregated the scores to produce an indicator of pressure on housing affordability for each location, which will inform future policy-making.

Land use policies

Municipalities and their community partners can mitigate displacement by making sure that supportive land use and development regulations are in place. First, they can work together to map out important commercial, industrial, service, and cultural sites; determine how these land uses fit into the zoning plan; and identify needed updates. For instance, if the community wants to protect local businesses, the municipality could create a special use district to encourage small, neighborhood-serving businesses or permit developers to build at greater densities in commercial districts if they provide retail space set-asides or other benefits for locally owned businesses. In San Francisco, where production, distribution, and repair-related industries provide over 10 percent of the city's total employment, the municipality has updated the zoning code to retain those businesses in the redeveloping eastern neighborhoods, where rising property

values were displacing traditional industrial uses.^{46,47} As discussed in the housing section, ordinances that allow inclusionary zoning, mixed-use and transit-oriented development, multifamily housing, and smaller lot sizes can help residents afford housing and transportation costs and reduce the likelihood that they will need to relocate.

Commercial stabilization

Small, locally owned enterprises serve neighborhood residents, generate jobs, support the neighborhood economy, and keep money in the community. These institutions are also critical to the distinctive character of a place and to residents' sense of belonging and ownership. When these businesses are healthy, they are more likely to stay through neighborhood changes.

Many governments and organizations have created programs to support neighborhood businesses. Municipal assistance often begins with capital investments in streets, sidewalks, parks, and lighting in commercial districts. Local governments can offer merchants grants or low-interest loans to renovate their storefronts.

Some local governments and organizations sponsor training for small businesses on topics such as merchandising, marketing, and how to take advantage of financial opportunities like the Enterprise Zone Tax Credit program, which provides tax incentives to businesses in economically distressed areas. Other business assistance programs include education about upcoming development and zoning changes and their implications for the business climate. Some municipalities hire lawyers to help local businesses obtain longer-term leases.

Many locally owned businesses receive aid from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program, which supports commercial district revitalization. The Fruitvale Main Street Program, in a predominantly Latino neighborhood of East Oakland, California, was

one of the first Main Street programs. Led by the Unity Council, a community development corporation, the program has coordinated infrastructure investments, provided grants to help more than 100 businesses renovate their storefronts, promoted the annual Día de los Muertos celebration, and offered assistance to businesses, many of which are owned by immigrants, to improve their products and customer service.⁴⁸

Economic development for existing residents

When revitalization brings jobs and other direct economic benefits to existing residents, they are less vulnerable to displacement. Federal agencies funding infrastructure and other projects in communities have goals for contracting and subcontracting with minority- and woman-owned companies, small businesses, and other disadvantaged enterprises. Some states, metropolitan planning organizations, and municipalities set their own goals for working with minority- and woman-owned companies, working with small and local businesses, and



The Fruitvale Public Market is a small business incubator that provides attractive, affordable storefront space and professional technical assistance services to micro-enterprises. The market's eleven small businesses, specializing in Latin American items, have access to business planning, management, and marketing resources to help sustain and grow their enterprises.
Photo courtesy of the Unity Council.

46 San Francisco Planning Department. *Industrial Land in San Francisco: Understanding Production, Distribution, and Repair*. 2002. sf-planning.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=4893.
47 San Francisco, California Planning Code §210.7-230.

48 PolicyLink. Equitable Development Toolkit. www.policylink.org/site/c.lklXLbMNJrE/b.5136575/k.39A1/Equitable_Development_Toolkit.htm. Accessed 2011.



The Fort Lauderdale, Florida Housing Authority's Step-Up Apprenticeship Program provides young people with construction training as they complete their GEDs. Apprentices built all the cabinets for the Northwest Gardens affordable housing development, and some have since found full-time positions. *Photo courtesy of Fernando Lezcano.*

hiring minority workers. For example, the Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency serving Minnesota's Twin Cities, aims to attain 18 percent minority and 6 percent female workforce participation for its Central Corridor light rail transit project. These goals reflect the local communities' demographics rather than the demographics of the county or region.⁴⁹ Municipalities and community-based organizations can help meet those goals by working with developers and contractors to recruit and train residents. Local governments can partner with nonprofits or community colleges to provide job training programs on relevant skills such as brownfields assessment and cleanup or rehabilitation of historic properties. To address the undersupply of trained and certified minority construction workers in its area, the Metropolitan Council has partnered with the Urban League, nonprofit vocational training centers, labor unions, and construction companies to host workshops and develop a website called LRT Works that matches workers with jobs, companies, and unions.⁵⁰ More than 1,500 workers have signed up since it launched in November 2010.⁵¹ Companies are regularly posting jobs on the site, and the Metropolitan Council is using it to meet

or exceed minority and female hiring goals for the Central Corridor project.⁵²

Some community-based organizations have negotiated community benefits agreements—private contracts between a developer and a community group that establish the benefits the community will receive from a development project. These agreements can be vehicles for resident involvement in decision-making and can ensure that the project incorporates workforce development, including local hiring and training programs and living wages, as well as other community priorities such as affordable housing and green buildings.

It is important to ensure that the economic benefits for existing residents continue after redevelopment efforts are complete and that high-quality, permanent jobs are created. Municipalities can collaborate with developers to recruit small businesses and other commercial, office, and industrial tenants that will hire locally. They can also encourage green industries—manufacturing, assembly, and distribution businesses creating sustainable products and services or working to improve environmental quality—that provide well-paying jobs and make use of industrial land. Community organizations can host job placement centers in the neighborhood and work with social service providers to identify candidates for open positions. Community development corporations can be helpful, as neighborhood revitalization and economic development are fundamental parts of their missions.

49 Kirkpatrick, Wanda. "Met Council committed to minority hiring on light-rail construction." *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*. February 15, 2012. www.spokesman-recorder.com/?p=10649.

50 Metropolitan Council. LRT Works. www.lrtworks.org. Accessed 2012.

51 Kirkpatrick, Wanda. "Met Council committed to minority hiring on light-rail construction." *Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder*. February 15, 2012. www.spokesman-recorder.com/?p=10649.

52 Job Connect and LRT Works. Workforce Solutions and Metropolitan Council Light Rail Partnership Update. 2011. www.jobconnectmn.gov/office2.com/vertical/sites/%7B820AFFA9-77FF-4A3E-8D63-0ACC66FB6C97%7D/uploads/MASTER_-_Summary_for_Light_Rail_Construction_Project_9-14-11.pdf.

Facilitate Meaningful Community Engagement in Planning and Land Use Decisions

Meaningful community participation and leadership in planning and land use decision-making can ensure that revitalization is a community-based process that builds on local values and assets and brings the amenities that residents need. Every strategy in this report must be supported by early and consistent stakeholder engagement to be effective. Inclusive involvement results in planning and development decisions that have been improved by a variety of perspectives, have authentic support from a broad range of constituents, and are more enduring and better for the community as a whole. Obtaining input from groups not historically engaged in planning can help reduce the disproportionate environmental harms and health impacts they often face and make sure that future development brings fair access to new opportunities. For developers, it can lead to more predictable development processes and reduce costly delays caused by community opposition.

Robust and inclusive community engagement requires proactive work by both decision-makers and community members. Government staff should maintain an open relationship with the public throughout the planning process. An important initial step is to identify all affected stakeholders, from residents to local business owners to representatives of community institutions. These constituents should be invited to provide input early so their needs and visions for the community can be incorporated before the plan or project has been shaped. They should be active participants in collecting information, identifying challenges and opportunities, and setting goals. Nonprofit community-based organizations, including environmental and social justice organizations, community development corporations, neighborhood associations, and community advocacy groups, are key partners that can help connect government agencies and residents.

Most local and regional planning and transportation agencies have established public involvement procedures that include public meetings at key stages when developing plans or reviewing projects. They often issue written communications such as news releases and draft documents and solicit feedback through online surveys or social media tools. However, it is important for planners to go beyond the minimum requirements and to address factors that can keep people from engaging. Many residents have never participated in public decision-making and might not be familiar with the process or feel comfortable sharing their views with officials. They might not have reliable transportation to and from meetings, be able to afford child care during meetings, be able to take time off from work to attend, have access to the Internet, or speak fluent English. To achieve a comprehensive public process, officials should seek out and facilitate the involvement of stakeholders who are not traditionally engaged in planning using the approaches in this section. To institutionalize the diverse needs and interests of traditionally underrepresented communities over the long term, it is important that they are fairly represented on city councils, planning and zoning boards, county commissions, transportation agency boards, and other governing bodies.

At the same time, to be effective, community members and organizations might need to seek out opportunities to engage and ways to collect information and present it to decision-makers. Community-based groups can use the approaches provided in this section to gather evidence of local needs and develop visions and targeted goals to inform the planning process.

Three engagement strategies that are particularly applicable to planning and land use decision-making are described here: multilingual outreach, community assessments, and community planning and visioning workshops. These can be led by local government agencies, community groups, or partnerships between them. For instance, a planning agency could hold multilingual public workshops to collect ideas for a neighborhood plan; to prepare for these

workshops, a neighborhood-based nonprofit organization could conduct visioning sessions for residents who are new to the planning process.

Conduct Multilingual Outreach

Outreach to non-English speakers is increasingly important for effective and inclusive public processes. The number of U.S. residents whose primary language is not English has grown over recent decades, spurring local governments to find new ways of engaging the public. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, nearly 11 million Americans have limited English proficiency.⁵³

Comprehensive public engagement programs result in solutions that are better for residents and municipalities. An inclusive approach can help government agencies tailor their programs to users, making them more effective and popular among residents. For example, some transportation authorities have found that improving outreach to non-English-speaking groups increases ridership and public support for their services.⁵⁴

Inclusive outreach is required for transportation, housing, and other infrastructure projects that use federal funding. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on national origin by failing to make activities supported by the federal government accessible to people with limited English proficiency.⁵⁵ Executive Order 13166 requires federally assisted programs to provide written documents in the languages of groups likely to be affected by the particular program. The order also calls for interpretation and translation, such as translating websites and brochures and providing multilingual phone lines and customer service staff.⁵⁶

Many transportation and land use planning agencies regularly provide information and materials for non-English speakers. The transit

agency in Houston, Texas provides printed information in five languages.⁵⁷ In Orange County, California, several staff in the transit agency's customer relations department speak Spanish or Vietnamese, and press releases and other written materials are submitted to Spanish and Vietnamese print and broadcast media.⁵⁸ The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority uses a Spanish-language blog called *El Pasajero (The Passenger)* to serve the 61 percent of its riders and 37 percent of the agency's workforce that speak Spanish.⁵⁹

Staff and volunteers from nonprofit organizations can help improve communication between the government and the community. With their understanding of the community's culture, needs, and objectives, these liaisons can help educate and engage residents, prepare for and conduct public meetings, provide translation assistance, and serve as facilitators. Government agencies can contract with or provide grants to community-based organizations to ensure a long-term relationship, formalize a workplan, and provide financial compensation for their services. The Twin Cities' Corridors of Opportunity is a regional planning effort funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Living Cities that focuses on the area's growing network of transit corridors. This initiative is providing \$750,000 in grants to community organizations to engage underrepresented communities in planning and implementation. Ten grants have already been awarded for activities such as training Community Outreach Ambassadors to engage Southeast Asian residents, conducting educational forums on transit for the Somali community, and improving communication with new immigrant populations.⁶⁰

53 U.S. Census Bureau. Census 2000, SF3 Sample Data. Table QT-P17, Ability to Speak English: 2000.

54 U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Transportation Services: Better Dissemination and Oversight of DOT's Guidance Could Lead to Improved Access for Limited English-Proficient Populations*. 2005. www.gao.gov/new.items/d0652.pdf.

55 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq.

56 Exec. Order No. 13166, 65 Fed. Reg. 159 (August 11, 2000).

57 U.S. Department of Transportation. *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making: Ethnic, Minority, and Low-Income Groups*. 1996. www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/pittd/ethmin.htm.

58 Orange County Transit Authority. *Orange County Transportation Limited-English Proficiency Plan*. 2011. www.octa.net/pdf/lepplan.pdf.

59 Behrens, Zach. "Metro Launches Spanish Language Blog, El Pasajero." KCET. April 8, 2011. www.kcet.org/updaily/socal_focus/transportation/metro-spanish-blog-32151.html.

60 Corridors of Opportunity Community Engagement Team. *Engage Twin Cities*. engagetc.org/about/. Accessed 2011.

Case Study: Inclusive Neighborhood Planning Seattle, Washington

The city of Seattle used innovative neighborhood planning approaches to give the culturally diverse Othello community a voice in the development around a new light rail station. Opened in July 2009, the Othello station is on a light rail line running through Rainier Valley, which links downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac International Airport. An inclusive planning process went beyond minimum requirements to engage Othello's historically underrepresented communities. Today, the station is surrounded by a vibrant and diverse neighborhood with shopping, a library, a community college, and affordable homes.

Othello is located in southeast Seattle, and nearly 50 percent of its residents are foreign-born. The broader southeast area has a variety of income levels, with affluent neighborhoods and two large public housing projects.

In the 1990s, the city asked community members in 38 neighborhoods to create neighborhood plans to guide future growth. Since the adoption of the original neighborhood plans, Seattle has grown in population, jobs, and diversity. With new housing demand, real estate prices have increased in some working-class neighborhoods. There has also been significant development interest around light rail stations. As a result, the city decided to update three neighborhood plans in southeast Seattle, including Othello's. For this effort, the city would draw on its Race and Social Justice Initiative, created in 2002 to end race-based disparities in city programs and services.

To update the plans, the city engaged thousands of people using an online survey and traditional neighborhood meetings. It also employed special outreach liaisons to work with members of historically underrepresented communities, including Cambodian, Somali, Amharic, Vietnamese, Latino, Native American, and African-American communities, youth, and persons with disabilities. Before the city's public meetings, the liaisons translated materials and held smaller



To update the Othello neighborhood plan, the city of Seattle engaged thousands of people using traditional community meetings as well as an online survey and other approaches. *Photo courtesy of City of Seattle.*



The city employed outreach liaisons to work with members of historically underrepresented communities, including Cambodian, Somali, Amharic, Vietnamese, Latino, Native American, and African-American communities, youth, and persons with disabilities. *Photo courtesy of City of Seattle.*

meetings with their constituents. At first, few community members attended the city's public meetings. However, attendance grew over time, with participation increasing from approximately 10 to between 300 and 400 residents per meeting. Altogether, the city provided information to 3,000 people and 1,600 became involved in the planning initiatives.

When the city talked with the Othello community about the planned light rail station, the residents said they wanted a town center that would support the existing multicultural business district, make walking safer and more pleasant using sidewalks and landscaping, and provide affordable housing for working families. Multiple partners collaborated to help realize the community's vision, including Sound Transit, the Seattle Housing Authority, the city's Department of Planning and Development, local developer Othello Partners, and USAA Bank.

The new station provides easy access to the Seattle Housing Authority's NewHolly neighborhood, which includes 1,450 homes for people with a range of incomes. A branch of the Seattle Public Library, South Seattle Community College, and a new walking and biking path are within walking distance of the development. Three additional housing complexes are planned near the Othello station, primarily for low-income buyers. A development of 435 homes has been completed, and a 420,000-square-foot, mixed-use project with 352 residences is planned.

*"To truly achieve equitable development and smart growth, there must be strategies and investments that create anchors to hold in place those communities most at risk of displacement due to real estate pressures," says Nora Liu, Neighborhood Planning Manager for the city of Seattle. "In this way, improvements to the built environment can benefit those who are there now as well as new residents seeking a more sustainable way to live."*⁶¹

"To truly achieve equitable development and smart growth, there must be strategies and investments that create anchors to hold in place those communities most at risk of displacement due to real estate pressures," says Nora Liu, Neighborhood Planning Manager for the city of Seattle.



During the planning process, Othello residents developed a vision of a town center that would support the existing business district, offer affordable housing, and provide facilities to make walking safe and pleasant.

Photo courtesy of City of Seattle.

⁶¹ For references, see page 75.

Conduct Community Assessments

Conventional planning processes might not always capture detailed information about specific community challenges or priorities. A community assessment can empower residents to fill those gaps. In a community assessment, community members gather, analyze, and report information to produce a more complete picture of current conditions, needs, and available resources. An assessment typically focuses on a priority issue in a specific area, such as housing or transportation options in a neighborhood. Examples include walkability audits, which evaluate the safety and convenience of the walking environment, and community food assessments, which analyze the availability of healthy food options.

Community assessments are usually conducted by community organizations and residents and often receive support from government agencies, academic institutions, and foundations. Experts and residents work together to establish indicators that show current conditions and measure future progress. They also identify how to collect information most effectively. Participants usually conduct an on-the-ground assessment; supplementary information can be gathered through interviews, surveys, and focus groups, or by obtaining outside data. After the assessment, participants determine how to share findings with decision-makers and the broader public and integrate them into planning processes.

In Bakersfield, California, the Greenfield Walking Group, comprised primarily of Spanish-speaking female farm workers, teamed with the Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program to spearhead a walkability assessment of a local park. The group identified areas of the park that were unsafe, discouraged physical activity, or were unwelcoming to children. Their findings led to several improvements, including the construction of a walking path and playground.⁶²

With support from EPA, the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute conducted a walkability

workshop with the residents of the predominantly African American 26th ward in St. Louis, Missouri. Participants joined a facilitated walk around the neighborhood where they identified barriers to walkability such as crime, excessive vehicle speeds, street closures, and a lack of walking and bicycling routes to the nearby light rail station. Residents and experts then explored solutions, such as organizing a community-based Active Living Working Group to prioritize efforts and pursue funding, fixing broken pedestrian crossing signals, and reconnecting barricaded streets.⁶³

Community assessments often require funding and expertise. While some communities obtain these resources through grants or partnerships with government agencies, nonprofits, or academic institutions, others engage skilled volunteers such as graduate students with mapping or planning knowledge. Alternatively, using “off-the-shelf” tools, such as pre-prepared zoning code audits, can allow community groups to complete assessments independently.

Community assessments provide credible data that community organizations and government staff can use to document needs, secure grants, and inform future neighborhood investments. They can also lead to helpful new relationships among citizens, organizations, and government partners.



Residents of St. Louis, Missouri’s 26th Ward conduct a walking audit of their neighborhood, where they identify barriers to walkability such as crime, high vehicle speeds, and a lack of good pedestrian and bicycle routes to the nearby light-rail station. *Photo courtesy of Eric Friedman, Housing and Community Solutions, Inc.*

62 The California Endowment. *The Greenfield Walking Group—Transforming a Park, Transforming a Community*. 2002. www.partnershipph.org/sites/default/files/Greenfield_WalkingGroup.pdf.

63 Walkable and Livable Communities Institute. *Suggested Next Steps as Outcome of Technical Assistance, 26th Ward, St. Louis, Mo.* 2011.

Hold Community Planning and Visioning Workshops

Defining a shared vision and goals for a site, neighborhood, city, town, or region is the first step in the planning process and the foundation for subsequent land use policy and regulatory changes and investments in the community.

Community planning and visioning workshops can be sponsored by public agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private developers. These workshops are usually managed by facilitators who lead participants through structured discussions and design exercises, and they often produce visual representations of the community's desired future, such as maps and drawings. After the workshop, the results, along with recommendations on how to achieve the vision, are shared with the broader public and decision-makers and integrated into planning processes. Workshops can be completed in one day or include multiple meetings scheduled over several months. Multi-day collaborative planning events where stakeholders create a plan and implementation strategy are known as charrettes. The costs of a workshop or charrette vary depending on their complexity, technical needs, and duration.

Local decision-makers typically take part in planning workshops to learn about the needs and goals of their constituents. In Gary, Indiana, elected officials joined community leaders at a design workshop convened by the American Planning Association's Planning and the Black Community Division. Together, they developed a vision for revitalizing the Broadway corridor that runs through the heart of Gary's African-American community. The plan called for reusing vacant parcels, strengthening community elements that showcase the area's cultural heritage, and improving transportation options by creating nature trails and transit-oriented development.⁶⁴

Planning and visioning workshops should be tailored to the specific needs of participants, especially if they are new to the planning process. For instance, some community members may not feel comfortable expressing their ideas in front of government representatives. In these cases, a nonprofit organization could hold pre-workshops, where residents can share their experiences and concerns comfortably. Conducting pre-workshops also provides an opportunity for facilitators to educate participants about strategies that have been applied in other communities, expanding their knowledge of potential solutions and preparing them to collaborate with municipal staff.



Elected officials and community leaders worked together to develop a vision for revitalizing the Broadway corridor that runs through the heart of Gary, Indiana's African-American community. *Photo courtesy of Carlton Eley.*



The resident design committee of the High Point community in Seattle met biweekly to help plan what redevelopment would look like. *Photo courtesy of Seattle Housing Authority.*

⁶⁴ American Planning Association, Planning and the Black Community Division. *Vision for Broadway*. 2009. www.planning.org/divisions/blackcommunity/pdf/garyindiana.pdf.

Promote Public Health and a Clean and Safe Environment

A clean and safe environment and healthy residents are the ultimate goals of environmental justice, smart growth, and equitable development. Homes should be buffered from land uses with potential environmental concerns like incinerators, heavy manufacturing plants, and goods movement facilities. Contaminated sites resulting from previous industrial activities should be cleaned up and put to safer use. Buildings, streets, and other infrastructure should be constructed in ways that reduce air and water contamination and improve the health of the people using them. Low-income, minority, and tribal communities should not face disproportionate environmental burdens and should enjoy clean and safe places to live, work, play, and learn.

Approaches that integrate smart growth and environmental justice offer ways of arranging land uses, developing sites, and constructing buildings that can help protect overburdened populations from environmental and health hazards and bring benefits like clean air and water. This section covers five strategies for planning and developing healthy, sustainable neighborhoods. The first two, reducing exposure to facilities with potential environmental concerns and goods movement activities, focus on zoning and planning tools that can help protect the neighbors of existing facilities and appropriately site and design new ones. Next, cleaning up and reusing brownfields and Superfund sites can remove health hazards while boosting local economies and enhancing quality of life. The final two strategies, creating green buildings and green streets, can reduce pollution and contribute to healthier indoor and outdoor environments.

In all of these efforts, local public health departments are important partners who can strengthen the link between planning and health by bringing new information and stakeholders to the table. When engaged in land use planning, they can help residents identify health issues that can be addressed in plans, provide and interpret data documenting local health concerns, organize

workshops and presentations for key decision-makers on land use policy and health, provide sample policies, and comment on draft plans.

Reduce Exposure to Facilities with Potential Environmental Concerns

Proactive and collaborative planning can help reduce residents' exposure to industrial facilities and their health effects while preserving the economic benefits and jobs they provide. These facilities can be anchors of local economies, employing residents in permanent, living-wage positions. But they might also emit pollutants or create byproducts that can cause environmental and health problems, so they and their surrounding neighborhoods should be planned and designed thoughtfully.

Safe land use planning begins with identifying land uses that should not usually be located near each other, such as those that may create health impacts and those that may affect sensitive populations (known as "sensitive uses"). Uses with potential health impacts include sources of localized air pollution such as industrial facilities, power plants, truck depots, and freeways. Sensitive land uses include places where children, the elderly, people with health problems exacerbated by poor air quality, and other vulnerable individuals are likely to be, such as schools, playgrounds, daycare centers, nursing homes, and residences. Complete separation of industrial and other land uses is not always desirable or necessary, but this section describes approaches for separating or buffering future incompatible uses when appropriate and reducing the environmental and health impacts of existing ones.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Proactive cooperation among community residents, all levels of government, and business and industry stakeholders is critical when working with planned and existing facilities. Particularly for new projects, multi-stakeholder collaboration during the planning stage allows early identification of potential negative impacts, increases opportunities to make siting decisions

or incorporate design features that minimize those impacts, and helps business owners mitigate impacts more efficiently and cost effectively.

State and local government collaboration is important. Municipal planners can work with state and local environmental, air, and transportation agencies to understand the potential health and environmental impacts of various types of facilities. These agencies can provide air quality and emissions data, health risk estimates, and evaluation tools for use in land use decision-making. In most cases, state agencies issue permits for air emissions, water discharges, or waste disposal. Local planners can help state officials assess potential impacts on the community, facilitate public input, and incorporate permitted facilities into their planning efforts.

Engaging business and industry stakeholders in planning processes and after facilities have been built can reduce exposure to pollution while supporting local economies and employment. Community-based organizations and industries are using the Collaborative Problem-Solving Model and Good Neighbor Agreements to work more effectively together.

The Collaborative Problem-Solving Model brings various stakeholders together to address a particular issue and create a collective vision with mutually beneficial outcomes. It often starts with a community-based organization convening residents, industry stakeholders, and other relevant partners to identify common concerns and goals. These discussions can lead to community capacity building, dispute resolution and consensus building, the identification of needed resources, and the development of work plans.⁶⁵ The case study in this section describes ReGenesis, a nonprofit organization in Spartanburg, South Carolina, that used the Collaborative Problem-Solving Model to build multi-stakeholder partnerships and tackle complex health and environmental issues.

65 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *EPA's Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Model*. 2008. www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/publications/grants/cps-manual-12-27-06.pdf.

A Good Neighbor Agreement is a formally negotiated agreement that establishes a relationship between an industry and a community organization. Some are voluntary and nonbinding while others are legally binding and created as conditions in formal permitting processes. Although a number of Good Neighbor Agreements have been created in reaction to accidents or other problems, others have been negotiated proactively to reduce pollution, increase well-paying jobs for local residents, set aside land in conservation easements, reduce vehicle traffic, and facilitate access to information.⁶⁶

Municipal planning, zoning, and permitting tools

Working with community, state, and industry stakeholders, municipal agencies can use planning, zoning, and permitting tools to plan and site proposed facilities safely and reduce residents' exposure to existing facilities. The comprehensive plan, developed with input from community members and business stakeholders, can lay out general goals, objectives, and policies for facility siting. For instance, the land use section of the plan could identify areas appropriate for future industrial uses and introduce design parameters that reduce exposure to these uses when they already exist close to residential neighborhoods.⁶⁷

Zoning ordinances can set minimum separation distances for specific facility types or create buffer zones, which are zoning districts that serve as transitional areas between incompatible land uses. Buffer zones can include open spaces or light commercial uses. Vegetation or other types of physical screening can also be used to buffer some incompatible uses.

Conditional use permits allow land uses with potentially significant environmental or health impacts only under certain conditions. These

66 Civic Practices Network. *Good Neighbor Agreements: A Tool for Environmental and Social Justice*. www.cpn.org/topics/environment/goodneighbor.html. Accessed 2012.

67 California Air Resources Board. *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*. 2005. www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm.



Auto-body shops and other facilities with potential environmental and health concerns are interspersed with homes in National City, California's Westside neighborhood, a primarily low-income and minority community. The city is developing a tool that will help staff evaluate the health risks posed by these types of land uses and the costs of moving them. *Photo courtesy of National City.*

permits include special requirements to ensure that facilities will not be detrimental to their surroundings. In Huntington Park, California, permits for facilities in commercial, office, and mixed-use zones depend on the facility's proximity to homes and the potential level of adverse impact. The city can also require mitigation and reduction of diesel emissions generated by expanded or new facilities or operations.⁶⁸

Local governments can use performance zoning to regulate the impacts of land uses by providing standards to limit nuisance-like activities. These standards treat all similar projects equally, reserving the more resource-intensive conditional use permit for projects that require more detailed analysis. Examples of performance standards include limiting hours of operation to reduce emissions exposure, requiring fleet operators to use cleaner vehicles when expanding their fleets, and providing alternate truck routes that avoid residential areas.⁶⁹

68 National Academy of Public Administration. *Addressing Community Concerns: How Environmental Justice Relates to Land Use Planning and Zoning*. 2003. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/reports/annual-project-reports/napa-land-use-zoning-63003.pdf.

69 California Air Resources Board. *Air Quality and Land Use Handbook: A Community Health Perspective*. 2005. www.arb.ca.gov/ch/landuse.htm.

Municipalities can also establish overlay zones, which set additional requirements for existing zoning districts, such as industrial zones close to residential neighborhoods. The city of Austin, Texas, created the East Austin Overlay District, where any new facility with operations more intense than a commercial use must obtain a conditional use permit and notify residents. If industrial facilities within the district closed, another ordinance authorized rezoning those sites to less intensive use categories.⁷⁰

When residents, businesses, and policy-makers have developed a collaborative vision for their community and zoning laws do not match that vision, they might choose to rezone particular areas or the entire jurisdiction. When seeking the rezoning of small areas, stakeholders might find it helpful to document the incompatibility of the existing land use classifications and the impacts on health, safety, and community character; pursue rezoning before specific development proposals arise; and avoid singling out specific properties, instead considering clusters of neighboring parcels with similar use designations and impacts.⁷¹ Comprehensive rezoning is a lengthy undertaking that provides many opportunities for stakeholder input.

Where facilities already exist and affect nearby populations, local government agencies, industry stakeholders, and residents can work together to identify a solution that advances the community's overall health, environmental, and economic goals. Many municipalities "grandfather" land uses that were allowed before current zoning laws. However, municipalities can prohibit grandfathering when these uses conflict with the goals of updated comprehensive plans or bring environmental, health, or economic risks.

70 National Academy of Public Administration. *Addressing Community Concerns: How Environmental Justice Relates to Land Use Planning and Zoning*. 2003. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/reports/annual-project-reports/napa-land-use-zoning-63003.pdf.

71 National Academy of Public Administration. *Addressing Community Concerns: How Environmental Justice Relates to Land Use Planning and Zoning*. 2003. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/reports/annual-project-reports/napa-land-use-zoning-63003.pdf.

Municipalities can also help relocate nonconforming uses when owners are interested in moving to more suitable locations.⁷² Relocation decisions should be made collaboratively and on a case-by-case basis. In some cases, business owners see clear benefits to moving, such as access to an upgraded and modernized facility, access to more supportive infrastructure, or the opportunity to operate with fewer environmental or health impacts. Relocation can allow communities to concentrate industries and target infrastructure investments—such as water, wastewater, transportation, telecommunications, and public transit—to meet their needs. National City, California is developing a decision support tool that will help staff evaluate properties with nonconforming uses according to criteria such as possible threats to public health and safety, cost to the owner of moving and reestablishing the use elsewhere, and adaptability of the property to a currently permitted use. The city's land use code allows the city council to phase out nonconforming uses on the recommendation of the planning commission.⁷³

When redeveloping vacant land in industrial areas, planners should carefully consider whether it is appropriate to build new residences and other sensitive uses near existing facilities and, if so, how buildings should be situated on their sites and designed to mitigate exposure. For example, zoning codes can require buffers, ventilation systems, and other measures to ensure healthy indoor air quality.

Reduce Exposure to Goods Movement Activities

Goods movement is the distribution of freight by all modes of transportation, including marine, air, rail, and truck. Goods movement facilities include seaports, airports, rail yards, rail lines, and truck loading stations and travel routes, as well as places where freight is processed and stored such as warehouses and distribution centers. These facilities exist in urban communities where movement originates and terminates as well as in rural places along transportation thoroughfares. Effective land use planning, along with technology and regulations, can reduce the impacts of goods movement activities so communities can more safely take advantage of the economic opportunities they bring.

Many stakeholders are involved in freight planning, transporting and storing goods, and designing and operating goods movement facilities. Although these players vary in every situation, common stakeholders include regional planning organizations, transportation commissions, port authorities, local governments, industry representatives, and community development organizations. For example, the Southern California Association of Governments, county transportation commissions, the Los Angeles Metro, and private-sector stakeholders partnered to develop a regional action plan to increase the benefits and mitigate the hazards associated with the growing volume of trucks and freight trains moving from ports in Los Angeles and Long Beach.⁷⁴

Local and regional planning agencies can work with goods movement stakeholders and community organizations to design freight facilities and surrounding neighborhoods in ways that support health, environmental, and economic goals. For instance, some are creating freight clusters that accommodate goods movement activities in targeted areas while reducing negative impacts in other

72 Salkin, Patricia. *Environmental Justice and Land Use Planning and Zoning*. 2004. www.governmentlaw.org/files/EJ_land_use.pdf.

73 Partnership for Sustainable Communities. *National City, California: Recommendations for Ranking Properties with Nonconforming Uses in the Westside Specific Plan Area*. 2011. www.epa.gov/brownfields/sustain_plts/reports/property_ranking_process.pdf.

74 LA Metro. *Multi-County Goods Movement Action Plan*. 2009. www.metro.net/projects/mcgmap/.

neighborhoods.⁷⁵ In Baltimore, Maryland, the Maritime Industrial Zoning Overlay District preserves industrial uses along the city's waterfront, which is experiencing significant development pressure and rising rents. The zoning overlay district preserves jobs in this accessible center city location and consolidates the negative impacts of goods movement.⁷⁶ Other states and localities require buffer zones between freight facilities and sensitive land uses. The California Air Resources Board does not allow school districts to site schools within 500 feet of highways or other busy traffic corridors.⁷⁷

Some communities are using a combination of planning approaches, incentives, regulations, and technology. In Oakland, California, the Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative is developing regional strategies to reduce exposure to diesel emissions from trucks. Funded by foundations and federal and state agencies, the group found that average diesel emissions in West Oakland, a predominantly African-American community, were 90 times greater than in the rest of California. They worked with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District to reduce diesel pollution through several methods, including eliminating unlicensed truck traffic, rerouting traffic away from residential neighborhoods, and providing financial incentives to fleet owners to retire the most polluting trucks. They also secured an agreement to move trucking businesses away from residential areas to a decommissioned army base owned by the city and the Port of Oakland. The port installed electrical hook-ups so trucks waiting to enter the port do not need to idle.⁷⁸

Planners should also consider the design of the community around goods movement facilities. They should carefully evaluate whether it is appropriate to build new residences and other

sensitive land uses nearby and, if so, how the buildings should be situated on their sites and designed to mitigate exposure. Planners can include language in the zoning code that sets special location or design requirements for sensitive uses in areas of concern. For example, San Francisco's Health Code requires that newly constructed residential buildings with ten or more units located near major roadways with concentrations of motor vehicle pollution be situated or designed to reduce residents' exposure. Developers can satisfy this requirement by installing ventilation systems, locating the building air intake away from the roadway, locating residential units on the second floor or higher so they are above roadway emissions, setting the building back from the roadway, or planting trees between the building and the roadway.⁷⁹

75 U.S. Department of Transportation. *FHWA Freight and Land Use Handbook*. 2012. www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12006/index.htm.

76 U.S. Department of Transportation. *FHWA Freight and Land Use Handbook*. 2012. www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop12006/index.htm.

77 California SB 352. Ch. 668 (2003).

78 Palaniappan, Meena. "Ditching Diesel." *Race, Poverty and the Environment*. Urban Habitat. Undated. www.urbanhabitat.org/node/163. Accessed 2011.

79 City and County of San Francisco. *Protecting Sensitive Uses from Roadway Air Pollution Hot Spots: Article 38 of the San Francisco Health Code, Frequently Asked Questions*. 2008. www.sfdph.org/dph/files/EHSdocs/AirQuality/AQFAQ.pdf.

Clean and Reuse Contaminated Properties

Brownfields and Superfund sites are contaminated properties that require special cleanup and redevelopment strategies. With planning and remediation, these sites can be reused for commercial and industrial activities, housing, parks, and other community facilities that can boost local economies and improve quality of life. Since these sites are often located in established neighborhoods with a mix of uses, public transit, and compact, walkable designs, their reuse can provide residents with easily accessible jobs, services, and amenities.

EPA defines brownfields as properties whose expansion, redevelopment, or reuse could be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.⁸⁰ Brownfields are often abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial sites. They can be structures or empty lots. Federal, state, and local governments provide support for brownfield cleanup and redevelopment, including tax incentives, grants, low-interest loans, technical assistance, protection from liability, and streamlined government oversight of cleanups.

In contrast to brownfields, Superfund sites have been designated by EPA as the country's most contaminated sites. Cleanup can be complex, often requiring several years to study the issues, develop solutions, and complete remediation. Through EPA's Superfund program, administered with state and tribal governments, the Agency can clean up hazardous waste sites and compel responsible parties to perform cleanups or reimburse the government for cleanup activities. Additionally, EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative provides technical, financial, and other forms of assistance to communities working to redevelop contaminated land.⁸¹ For example, EPA worked with stakeholders in Oakland,



The redevelopment of Egleston Crossing in Boston, Massachusetts' Roxbury neighborhood transformed an auto-body shop with a history of toxic waste problems into a commercial and residential anchor for the neighborhood.
Photo courtesy of Egleston Crossing.

California to explore future uses of the AMCO Chemical Superfund site. The community had envisioned mixed-use, transit-oriented, walkable development, including affordable housing and neighborhood-serving retail stores, so the assistance team created three scenarios that supported that vision. This reuse assessment helped residents and decision-makers think through redevelopment alternatives and identify appropriate cleanup methods.⁸²

Early and inclusive community involvement in site cleanup and reuse decisions is critical to ensure that visions and strategies align with community needs and benefit existing residents. Ideally, the municipality, community stakeholders, and state and federal partners would identify the preferred future use of the site before cleanup occurs. If housing is planned for a brownfield site, for instance, different cleanup remedies might be required than if a new industrial facility is to be built. A plan for the area surrounding the site can further refine cleanup strategies. Many low-income and

80 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. About Brownfields. www.epa.gov/brownfields/about.htm. Accessed 2011.

81 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Superfund Redevelopment. www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/index.html. Accessed 2011.

82 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Planning for the Future: Reuse Assessment for the AMCO Chemical Superfund Site, Oakland, CA*. 2010. www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/recycle/pdf/amco-reuse.pdf.

minority communities are affected by multiple contaminated sites and the economic and environmental challenges associated with them.

By using an area-wide approach rather than considering one site at a time, communities can better identify the most productive and appropriate reuse options, address infrastructure needs, and spur lasting economic development. Neighborhood planning and visioning efforts, feasibility studies, and market and infrastructure analyses can help municipalities and nonprofit organizations create and implement informed area-wide revitalization strategies. EPA's Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program is supporting the city of Ogdensburg, New York, as it turns a formerly industrial corridor along its riverfront into a walkable, mixed-use development. The city is creating an action plan for the 15 brownfields in the area, with an inventory of site conditions, reuse opportunities, and existing infrastructure.⁸³

If site cleanup is already underway, municipalities, states, and federal agencies can work together to remove barriers to reuse. Assessing the reuse potential of properties, providing education about reuse practices and opportunities, and encouraging private entities to invest in reuse can be effective. In addition, existing zoning ordinances, building codes, and tax policies might make it difficult to redevelop contaminated sites and do infill development.⁸⁴ Planners can remove regulatory barriers and provide incentives to accomplish these goals, such as faster project approval and reduced impact fees.

Early and inclusive community involvement in site cleanup and reuse decisions is critical to ensure that visions and strategies align with community needs and benefit existing residents.



The Mission Creek Senior Community in San Francisco, California transformed a brownfield into an attractive, mixed-use, low-income senior community. Formerly used for a sewage pumping station, a box factory, a mill, and other industrial facilities, the remediated site now contains affordable senior housing that is 25 feet from a streetcar stop, two blocks from a commuter rail station, and less than one block from a bus stop. *Photo courtesy of Mercy Housing California and San Francisco Housing Authority.*

⁸³ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Pilot Project Fact Sheet: Ogdensburg, NY*. 2010. www.epa.gov/brownfields/grant_announce/awp/awp_ogdensburg_ny.pdf.

⁸⁴ Infill development is development or redevelopment of sites that are already served by infrastructure or surrounded by other development.

Case Study: Site Cleanup as a Catalyst for Revitalization Spartanburg, South Carolina

The Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods in Spartanburg, South Carolina, revitalized their community through partnerships to clean up pollution from contaminated sites. The effort was spearheaded by ReGenesis, an environmental justice organization whose initial focus on brownfield cleanups broadened over time to include revitalization of the entire community. The ReGenesis initiative eventually led to the construction of new housing, businesses, a shopping center, and health clinics.

Located on the edge of Spartanburg's downtown, the Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods are predominantly African-American. Because of the lack of zoning before 1976, homes are located near former industrial and landfill sites and an active chemical plant. Residents have reported high rates of illness and death that they attribute to environmental pollution. The neighborhoods have also struggled with high unemployment, poor health services, disinvestment, and run-down housing.

After his father passed away from an undiagnosed illness, resident Harold Mitchell began examining the health impacts faced by residents living near a former dump and an abandoned fertilizer plant. He founded ReGenesis in 1997 to bring together residents who had been affected. He also asked EPA for assistance. After extensive sampling, EPA found contaminants such as metals, nitrate, and fluoride in the soil, ground water, surface water, and sediment at one of the sites, which was later designated a Superfund site.

ReGenesis used the Collaborative Problem-Solving Model to cooperatively address economic and environmental concerns. ReGenesis began by connecting existing neighborhood associations in the Arkwright and Forest Park communities. The summer of 2000 marked a turning point in the success and scale of ReGenesis' efforts, when it held a meeting to discuss the community's visions and needs with more than 100 people, including representatives from federal agencies, the county,



"We demonstrated that community residents were essential components of our efforts in Spartanburg," says Harold Mitchell, shown here at a visioning workshop. "The community's deep engagement and commitment were what made the revitalization of the Arkwright and Forest Park areas possible." *Photo courtesy of Harold Mitchell.*

the city, businesses, and universities. The meeting uncovered shared priorities among its diverse participants. As a result, ReGenesis created the Environmental Justice Partnership, which held one-on-one meetings and forums with local, state, and federal government representatives as well as businesses, politicians, foundations, and technical experts. "You can't put money in a community and say 'Make it happen,'" says Nancy Whittle, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control community liaison who took part in ReGenesis' many revitalization forums. "You build community capacity with time and patience."

ReGenesis continued to seek allies, including non-traditional partners. For example, ReGenesis invited the local chemical plant to collaborate despite the community's concerns about the health effects of its operations. Although the initial relationship was contentious, both sides wanted to avoid hostilities and lengthy legal debates, so they agreed to use a proactive approach known as facilitated dialogue. In this case, facilitated dialogue involved inviting an independent third party respected by both sides to facilitate conversations between the two

“You can’t put money in a community and say ‘Make it happen,’” says Nancy Whittle, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control community liaison who took part in ReGenesis’ many revitalization forums. “You build community capacity with time and patience.”

groups. Their weekly telephone conferences and face-to-face meetings resulted in improved noise and odor controls, enhanced health and safety procedures, air and groundwater monitoring, local job creation, new emergency preparedness practices, and facility beautification.

With the support of its partners, ReGenesis obtained the grants, technical assistance, and in-kind assistance necessary to achieve the community’s revitalization vision. This support provided the opportunity to establish a community visioning process through design charrettes, where drawings and ideas for a parkway, a park, affordable housing, shopping areas, an entertainment center, a job training center, a health clinic, and other facilities were



Many community members participated in design charrettes for the Arkwright and Forest Park neighborhoods, where ideas for a park, affordable housing, shopping areas, a health clinic, and other amenities were developed.

Photo courtesy of Harold Mitchell.

developed. ReGenesis had raised \$166 million by 2006, the result of the organization’s efforts to work with stakeholders from all sectors to realize the community vision. “We demonstrated that community residents were essential components of our efforts in Spartanburg,” says Harold Mitchell, now a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives. “The community’s deep engagement and commitment were what made the revitalization of the Arkwright and Forest Park areas possible.”

With strong support from the mayor and county, state, and federal officials, the ReGenesis partnerships led to change. As part of a HOPE VI housing project, businesses owned by women and minorities and unemployed residents who had completed a job training program built affordable homes. Through a \$2.2 million appropriation, Congress funded a study of alternate access roads to link neighborhoods divided by railroad tracks. ReGenesis also worked with the environmental group Upstate Forever to create green space and trails along the nearby creek, complementing a senior housing development constructed on a cleaned-up brownfield site. “Smart growth is possible with an informed and empowered community,” says Cynthia Peurifoy, environmental justice program manager for EPA Region 4. “The ReGenesis story teaches us that community-driven redevelopment efforts can bring great results.”⁸⁵

⁸⁵ For references, see page 75.

Promote Green Building

Green buildings use sustainable siting, design, and materials to create healthy indoor and outdoor environments. When designed and operated appropriately, green buildings can reduce exposure to toxics and pollutants that have been linked to cancer, asthma, and other health problems. Green buildings often include natural landscaping features to capture and filter polluted runoff that would otherwise flow into water bodies. They also use innovative practices and technologies to reduce energy and water consumption and costs.^{86,87} These practices bring significant benefits for low-income families, who spend 19 to 26 percent of their household incomes on energy. The lowest-income families can spend even more.^{88,89} When green buildings are located in walkable and transit-accessible neighborhoods, they can further reduce household energy use and expenditures.⁹⁰

There are a range of green building certification programs nationwide. Two of the most widespread are the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and EPA's ENERGY STAR Homes programs. LEED provides green building guidelines and certification, rating buildings based on their performance in five areas: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. ENERGY STAR Homes qualifies new homes that meet its energy efficiency guidelines. Builders participating in the program work with certified experts to incorporate features—including insulation, high-performance windows, and efficient heating and cooling equipment—that can make homes 20 to 30 percent more efficient than standard homes.

86 Turner, Cathy and Frankel, Mark. *Energy Performance of LEED for New Construction Buildings: Final Report*. New Buildings Institute. 2008. www.usgbc.org/ShowFile.aspx?DocumentID=3930.

87 Kats, Greg. *The Costs and Financial Benefits of Green Buildings: A Report to California's Sustainable Building Task Force*. 2003. www.usgbc.org/Docs/News/News477.pdf.

88 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Utility Bills Burden the Poor and Can Cause Homelessness*. 2009. www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/library/energy/homelessness.cfm.

89 Trisko, Eugene. *The Rising Burden of Energy Costs on American Families, 1997-2007*. 2006.

90 Jonathan Rose Companies. *Location Efficiency and Housing Type: Boiling it Down to BTUs*. 2011. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/location_efficiency_BTU.pdf.



The redevelopment of Egleston Crossing in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood incorporated green building features that reduce energy consumption and utility costs while enhancing indoor air quality and improving residents' health. *Photo courtesy of Egleston Crossing.*

The Enterprise Green Communities Criteria is another certification system designed specifically for affordable housing, providing cost-effective green building practices that can be integrated into all affordable housing types, including new construction and rehabilitation in multifamily and single-family homes. Homeowners and developers can also incorporate green building techniques without seeking certification through one of these programs.

Community organizations and municipalities around the country are working with nonprofits, foundations, and other private entities to incorporate green design in their development projects. In Chicago, Bethel New Life (profiled on page 51) built a LEED-certified community center on a cleaned-up brownfield. Public housing developers are also using green designs to create healthier environments for residents and reduce their own operating costs. High Point, a HOPE VI public housing redevelopment in Seattle, uses green building strategies to improve water and energy efficiency, enhance indoor air quality, and manage runoff.^{91,92}

Community organizations are also using green building practices to tackle health hazards in older

91 Seattle Housing Authority. HOPE VI Program. www.seattlehousing.org/redevelopment/hope-vi. Accessed 2011.

92 The High Point Redevelopment project won EPA's National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2007. For more information, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "2007 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement" at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards/sg_awards_publication_2007.htm.

homes. The National Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning is coordinating the Green and Healthy Homes Initiative to train workers to deal with health concerns such as deteriorating lead-based paint, mold, poor ventilation, and pests, and to boost their energy efficiency.⁹³

Build Green Streets

Rainwater that washes over pavement carries pollutants such as motor oil and grease directly into streams, lakes, rivers, and bays. These pollutants can come into contact with humans through drinking water and in other ways. A green street uses natural landscaping to collect, filter, and cleanse polluted runoff by mimicking natural processes where rainfall evaporates, is taken up by plants, or drains into the soil. Almost any type of street can be greened, including main arterial roads, residential streets, and alleys.

Green streets can incorporate a variety of elements, including rain gardens, sidewalk planters, tree boxes, landscaped medians, and permeable paving. These elements are also known as green infrastructure. The plants and soils used in gardens, medians, and planters help to filter and break down pollutants. Trees catch and absorb rainfall and help water to evaporate. Green street designs sometimes reduce the amount of hard surface by narrowing the street. Porous materials such as permeable pavement can also replace portions of streets typically covered by concrete and asphalt.

Green streets improve air quality by intercepting small particles of air pollutants and reducing “heat islands” that occur when concrete and asphalt are heated during hot weather.⁹⁴ They can beautify neighborhoods and calm traffic, making walking and biking safer and more enjoyable. Green streets can also reduce the risk of localized flooding and the need for more costly traditional “grey” infrastructure—such as expanded sewer systems and water treatment facilities—to handle runoff.



Before (*above*) and after (*below*) green street facilities were created through a Safe Routes to School project at Humboldt Elementary School, located in an underserved area of Portland, Oregon. *Photo courtesy of Environmental Services, City of Portland, Oregon.*

Green street projects run the gamut from large and complex to relatively simple and low-cost. Planners can ensure that street design standards encourage the use of green infrastructure elements in all types of projects. The city of Portland, Oregon approved a resolution in 2007 to promote green street features in public and private developments. The resolution directed city agencies to work together to install green streets and integrate them into the city’s land use and transportation plans. Projects resulting from the resolution include street planters at Portland State University, an elementary school rain garden, and permeable pavement around the city.⁹⁵ In San Francisco, the nonprofit Plant*SF worked with city agencies to streamline permitting for green sidewalk projects such as planters, tree boxes, and rain gardens. The organization also created a guide to help individuals, businesses, and neighborhood groups obtain permits and design and install their own sidewalk landscaping.⁹⁶

93 Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning. Green and Healthy Homes Initiative. www.greenandhealthyhomes.org. Accessed 2011.

94 According to EPA, heat islands are built up areas that are hotter than nearby rural areas. For more information, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Heat Island Effect” at www.epa.gov/heatisld.

95 Portland Bureau of Environmental Services. Portland Green Street Program. www.portlandonline.com/BES/index.cfm?c=44407. Accessed 2011.

96 Plant*SF. Plant*SF. www.plantsf.org. Accessed 2011.

Case Study: Greening a Small Town Main Street Edmonston, Maryland

Edmonston, Maryland's Green Street Project marries new and old technologies to reduce pollution, conserve energy, manage stormwater runoff, and redesign the town's main thoroughfare, Decatur Street. Spearheaded by Mayor Adam Ortiz, a citizens' advisory group, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, this project redefines the street as more than just cars and asphalt. Completed in November 2010, Edmonston's green street protects the regional watershed, lays a foundation for reinvestment in the town center, and is already inspiring other communities to implement similar projects.

Located near Washington, D.C., Edmonston is a port town that extends on both sides of the Anacostia River. The town sits in a low-lying area, and has suffered frequent flooding since its incorporation in the 1920s. During the past decade alone, Edmonston flooded four times, and a 2006 flood submerged 56 homes. "Contrary to conventional wisdom, we don't flood from the Anacostia River," says Mayor Ortiz. "We flood because of parking lots, shopping centers, highways, and roofs." Stormwater runoff from these hard surfaces not only contributes to flooding, but also carries pollutants into the Anacostia River and ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay.

For Mayor Ortiz, the flooding problem was as much a social justice issue as an environmental one, as the town's sizable lower-income and immigrant populations were most affected. Shortly after the 2006 flood, the town began searching for long-term solutions.

With a \$25,000 grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the town tasked a local research organization, the Low Impact Development Center, to examine stormwater options along Decatur Street. The mayor and city council formed a volunteer "Green Team" of residents, students, engineers, designers, and representatives from environmental and health organizations to generate ideas, review plans, and share recommendations with town officials.



Edmonston's mayor dedicates the redesigned Decatur Street in 2010. *Photo courtesy of Faith Cole.*

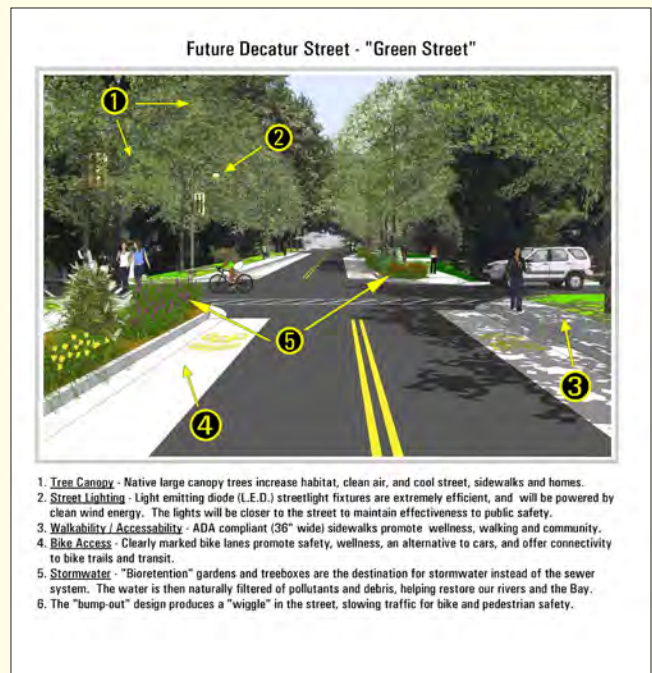
"There is a misconception that smaller, working-class communities are not able to do great things," says Mayor Ortiz. "However, we can implement innovations quickly and set an example for bigger cities."



Decatur Street's bike lanes are constructed with permeable materials that allow water to filter through instead of collecting on top. *Photo courtesy of Faith Cole.*



Decatur Street in 2009 before it was redesigned.
Image courtesy of City of Edmonston.



This rendering shows the features that were added to Decatur Street, including wide sidewalks, bike lanes, rain gardens, and curb bump-outs that narrow the street and calm traffic. Image courtesy of City of Edmonston.

The resulting Green Street Project extends along seven blocks of Decatur Street. Its native tree cover cools and beautifies the street. The wind-powered street lights use high-efficiency LED bulbs that save energy, while the pedestrian and bicycle paths give residents safe, convenient transportation options and provide space for neighborhood children to play. The bike paths are constructed with porous bricks and cement that allow water to filter through instead of collecting on top. The most critical part of the Green Street Project is the water filtration system, which directs stormwater from storm drains and the sewer system to bio-retention rain gardens along the street. Combined, these features capture an estimated 90 percent of the street's stormwater, which reduces pollution locally and in the Chesapeake Bay.

Thanks to extensive citizen support and effective partnerships, the two-year implementation phase went smoothly. The town paid for 90 percent of the \$1.3 million project with federal funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Partnerships with landscape architects, horticulturalists, engineers, and other local

experts helped to reduce the costs of the project's design and development. Local companies, 70 percent of which were owned by minorities, performed all of the construction work. The project led to 50 to 60 construction jobs in the community.

"There is a misconception that smaller, working-class communities are not able to do great things," says Mayor Ortiz. "However, we can implement innovations quickly and set an example for bigger cities." Edmonston's Green Street Project shows how a small project covering less than a mile can make a big difference in a community and benefit an entire region. Broader action is needed to stop the flooding in Edmonston, but because of their success, a neighboring town is already taking on its own green street project.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ For references, see page 76.

Strengthen Existing Communities

Many established communities—city downtowns, older suburban neighborhoods, and rural villages—are rich in culture, heritage, and social capital but lacking in economic opportunities for residents. Investing in existing communities rather than in new developments on the outer fringes of metropolitan areas can improve quality of life for low-income and overburdened populations by bringing the new jobs, services, and amenities they need. Revitalizing long-standing communities can also help address the health hazards from contaminated properties, abandoned buildings, and poorly designed streets. In addition, this approach can increase the tax base to support other local needs. Just as important, investing in existing communities allows residents to strengthen what they love about where they live. Bringing new resources into existing neighborhoods can help preserve and build on the assets that make them distinctive.

This section introduces three broad strategies governments and community organizations can use to strengthen and revitalize existing communities. A “fix-it-first” approach to transportation, water, and other infrastructure prioritizes the repair and maintenance of



The redevelopment of downtown Silver Spring, Maryland turned a struggling inner suburban commercial district into a vibrant destination with shopping, offices, apartments, and hotel space. *Photo courtesy of EPA.*



Old North, a historic St. Louis, Missouri neighborhood, has been transformed over the last several years through a comprehensive, locally driven redevelopment strategy that has turned a largely abandoned area into a flourishing community. *Photo courtesy of Sean Thomas, Old North St. Louis Restoration Group.*

existing assets over new construction on undeveloped land. Redeveloping vacant and abandoned properties can convert liabilities into needed amenities. Rethinking land use and transportation along blighted commercial corridors can help provide new opportunities for neighborhood businesses and expand access for low-income residents.

Providing housing and transportation options and improving access to opportunities and daily necessities are also important parts of strengthening existing communities. Since each of these priorities is supported by many specific strategies of their own, they are addressed separately in later sections.

Fix Existing Infrastructure First

“Fix-it-first” strategies prioritize the repair and maintenance of existing infrastructure over the construction of new infrastructure in undeveloped places. These strategies are often applied to transportation infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and rail lines; and water facilities such as sewers, pipes, and treatment plants. They can also be applied to housing, schools, and other buildings.

Investing in existing infrastructure prolongs its usable life, minimizes the need for costly repairs, and reduces failures that can jeopardize safety. Public investment in infrastructure maintenance signals a commitment to a neighborhood that can make the private sector more confident about investing there. In addition, a fix-it-first approach creates jobs. Prioritizing roadway repair and maintenance⁹⁸ and mixed-use, compact, infill development projects within towns and cities⁹⁹ can create more jobs per dollar spent than building new infrastructure.

State and local governments can adopt fix-it-first policies that direct resources to support maintenance and upgrades of existing infrastructure and facilities. The Michigan Land Use Leadership Council worked with stakeholder groups including the Detroit National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to recommend that the state adopt minimum standards for spending on road repair, prioritize the reuse of historic buildings and other existing structures when locating public facilities, and direct state and federal financial assistance to commercial centers with infrastructure already in place and relatively dense populations. Following those recommendations, Michigan’s Cool Cities pilot program allocated priority funding to localities with plans to revitalize established areas and use previously built infrastructure.¹⁰⁰

- 98 Smart Growth America. *Recent Lessons from the Stimulus: Transportation Funding and Job Creation*. 2011. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2011/02/04/new-report-reveals-smart-transportation-spending-creates-jobs-grows-the-economy.
- 99 Good Jobs First. *The Jobs are Back in Town: Urban Smart Growth and Construction Employment*. 2003. www.goodjobsfirst.org/sites/default/files/docs/pdf/backintown.pdf.
- 100 Michigan Land Use Leadership Council. *Michigan’s Land, Michigan’s Future*. 2003. www.peopleandland.org/Learn_More_Documents/MLULC-FINAL_REPORT_0803.pdf.

Reuse Vacant and Abandoned Properties

Vacant and abandoned properties can jeopardize residents’ safety and encourage blight and disinvestment by attracting crime and reducing surrounding property values. Converting them into community amenities such as housing, commercial space, or gardens can increase residents’ access to needed services and opportunities and spur additional investment in the neighborhood.

Many municipalities and community organizations begin the redevelopment process by taking an inventory of all vacant properties in the city or neighborhood and prioritizing them for reuse. Indianapolis’ Abandoned Housing Initiative assessed almost 8,000 vacant properties and, with the help of a HUD Neighborhood Stabilization Grant, directed resources to neglected properties with redevelopment potential.¹⁰¹

An area-wide approach that considers vacant properties in the context of comprehensive neighborhood plans can help identify uses that support the broader vision of the community. Some municipalities, such as Genesee County, Michigan and Cleveland, Ohio, have created land banks to acquire tax-delinquent properties, hold them until the market can support redevelopment, then rehabilitate them in ways that address local needs and strengthen the neighborhood.^{102,103} When a property is targeted for revitalization, municipal programs, such as Cleveland’s Repair-A-Home Program, can provide low-interest loans and technical assistance.¹⁰⁴

- 101 The City of Indianapolis and Marion County. Mayor’s Abandoned Housing Initiative Press Releases. 2008. www.indy.gov/eGov/City/DMD/Abandoned/Pages/press.aspx.
- 102 Genesee County Land Bank. Genesee County Land Bank. www.thelandbank.org. Accessed 2011.
- 103 City of Cleveland. Housing and Home Improvement Building/Maintaining. portal.cleveland-oh.gov/portal/page/portal/CityofCleveland/Home/Community/HousingandHomeImprovement/BuildingMaintaining. Accessed 2011.
- 104 City of Cleveland. Division of Neighborhood Services. portal.cleveland-oh.gov/portal/page/portal/CityofCleveland/Home/Community/HousingandHomeImprovement/BuildingMaintaining. Accessed 2011.

Some communities are exploring interim uses of vacant properties to remove blight and safety hazards and allow residents to use the space until there is a market for new residential or commercial development. For example, some municipalities encourage resident groups to create community gardens or parks. Others are simply “greening” or landscaping vacant lots. Over the past 10 years, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society has worked with the city of Philadelphia and community organizations to green nine million square feet of vacant land by adding fences, cleaning up, mowing, and planting trees and shrubs. Work crews are made up of neighborhood residents who receive training in landscaping so they can develop marketable skills.¹⁰⁵

Whether the community is targeting green space, gardens, building renovations, or new construction, planners can remove barriers to redevelopment that exist in zoning and building codes, provide incentives for infill development such as streamlined project approval and reduced impact fees, and make sure that proposed uses are permitted. Additionally, local governments can use code enforcement to encourage



Community members clean up and build a fence on a vacant lot in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The workers received landscaping training through the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's Community LandCare program.

Photo courtesy of Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

¹⁰⁵ Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. Community LandCare. www.pennsylvaniahorticulturalsociety.org/phlgreen/vacant-CLC.html. Accessed 2011.

demolition and redevelopment of unsafe and unsightly buildings that are beyond repair.

Redevelop Commercial Corridors

Around the country, many commercial corridors are aging and blighted by run-down strip malls, abandoned gas stations, and other vacant properties. Despite this disinvestment, these corridors serve as important transportation routes and shopping destinations and are well-positioned for redevelopment as safe, convenient, and vibrant thoroughfares. Revitalizing commercial corridors can enhance the customer base of existing businesses, create new jobs and business opportunities for residents, and improve the safety and convenience of economical transportation options such as walking, bicycling, and public transit.

Effective corridor redevelopment calls for restructuring the land use pattern along the corridor and redesigning the street. To create a more attractive, pedestrian-friendly land use pattern, local governments can use zoning tools such as mixed-use ordinances that put homes, shops, and workplaces close together and reduced setback requirements that bring buildings closer to the street. Municipalities can make streets more welcoming and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists with narrower traffic lanes that slow traffic, space for bike lanes and on-street parking, expanded sidewalks with street furniture and landscaping, and improved street crossings. The green streets and complete streets strategies described previously can also help make streets safer and more inviting for all users. If public transit exists along the corridor, the local transit agency can consider upgrading service in areas targeted for redevelopment. Any transit improvements should include safe access for pedestrians.

Public investment along targeted commercial corridors is critical for revitalization. Municipal street and sidewalk improvements, lighting, trees and greenery, and other basic amenities set the stage for redevelopment and can attract additional public, private, and nonprofit investment. Municipalities can also offer

Public investment along targeted commercial corridors is critical for revitalization. Municipal street and sidewalk improvements, lighting, trees and greenery, and other basic amenities set the stage for redevelopment and can attract additional public, private, and nonprofit investment.

incentives for redevelopment through relatively low-cost programs such as grants to local businesses for façade improvements that make the corridor more attractive. Because commercial corridors are comprised of many individually owned parcels, local governments can promote revitalization by building relationships with business owners, chambers of commerce, and other business associations and communicating the benefits of corridor improvements to them.

One example of corridor revitalization on a large scale is the Grand Boulevard Initiative. This coalition of 19 cities, counties, regional agencies, businesses, labor groups, and developers is working to improve California’s El Camino Real, a 600-mile historic highway. Partners are



Specially designed bike racks strengthen the character of Minneapolis’ American Indian Cultural Corridor and encourage residents and visitors to get around by bicycle by giving them safe places to lock their bikes.

Photo courtesy of the Native American Community Development Institute.



The American Indian Cultural Corridor builds on the unique history of American Indian people in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to create a vibrant destination with culturally inspired public spaces and art, educational and employment opportunities for local residents, and Indian-owned businesses such as the All My Relations fine arts gallery. *Photo courtesy of the Native American Community Development Institute.*

collaborating to implement zoning that targets housing and job growth around transit stations and key intersections, encourage mixed-use development with a range of housing and business opportunities, create a pedestrian-friendly environment with continuous sidewalks and good lighting, reserve traffic lanes for buses, and provide incentives to attract private development and investment along the corridor.¹⁰⁶

Viewing commercial corridors in the context of their broader neighborhoods can help ensure that new businesses have the customer base necessary for lasting revitalization. The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development’s Elm Street Program funded joint planning, technical assistance, and physical improvements for commercial corridors and adjoining residential neighborhoods dealing with high rates of crime, poverty, unemployment, and blight. This approach helped increase local businesses’ responsiveness to neighbors’ needs and, in turn, profitability.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Grand Boulevard Initiative. Grand Boulevard Initiative. www.grandboulevard.net. Accessed 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. Elm Street Program. www.newpa.org. Accessed 2012. The program has been consolidated into the Keystone Communities Program.

Case Study: Restoring a Cultural Business Corridor New Orleans, Louisiana

After the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, residents of New Orleans' largest Vietnamese-American community came together to rebuild their lives and neighborhoods with the help of the Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation (MQVN CDC). Among their many accomplishments, the residents and MQVN CDC revitalized a main business corridor that preserved local jobs and restored the community's distinctive culture.

Located in the Ninth Ward, the Village de L'Est (known locally as Versailles) had 7,000 residents before Katrina. The community had its roots in the Vietnamese refugee resettlement that began in the 1970s. As in Vietnam, the church is the center of the community's religious and social life. During Katrina, the Mary Queen of Vietnam Church organized evacuations, connected residents who were displaced around the country, and helped bring people home. By spring 2007, over 90 percent of the Vietnamese-American residents had returned to Versailles.

The MQVN CDC, established in 2006, helped the community create a vision for rebuilding Versailles through public meetings, focus groups, surveys, interviews, and design charrettes. Responding to the needs identified through this input, MQVN CDC began planning a cultural district called Viet Village. The community wanted to build a business corridor and create a strong sense of place based on Vietnamese culture. "Our overall goal after Hurricane Katrina was to rebuild and get the businesses to come back," says Tuan Nguyen, deputy director of MQVN CDC.

The resulting business development plan included four strategies for revitalizing the community's economic corridor and creating the cultural district. The Viet Village Collective Marketing Campaign created an area directory, map, resource guide, signage, and banners to attract customers. The Façade Improvement Program constructed business plazas and new façades for old buildings. The Technical Assistance Program delivered workshops on marketing and



The Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation's Façade Improvement Program supported the construction of business plazas and new façades for local establishments. *Photo courtesy of Mary Queen of Vietnam Community Development Corporation.*

accounting to small business owners. The Viet Village Streetscape Project created a culturally inspired streetscape design and obtained \$400,000 from the city of New Orleans for implementation. Altogether, the MQVN CDC has helped business owners obtain over \$2 million in capital to rebuild or expand their businesses.

"It was a beautiful plan where the city took every opinion and suggestion that community members made into consideration," says Mr. Nguyen. "Community members even chose what type of trees will be planted. This is the first time that the city had ever done a project like this in Village de L'Est."

MQVN CDC partnered with many organizations, including the city government, the University of New Orleans, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and ASI Federal Credit Union. Louisiana Economic Development, the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation, and the city of New Orleans provided funding.

As a result of these partnerships, the business corridor attracted further investment, and the benefits are felt throughout Versailles. "Our food and what we offer out here is unique in the Gulf Coast," says Mr. Nguyen. "We want to open up the Viet Village and take it to a whole new level in order to serve not only Vietnamese-Americans, but all of New Orleans."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ For references, see page 76.

Provide Housing Choices

Affordable, healthy, high-quality housing is one of the basic elements of a sustainable community. It is important to provide decent homes in safe neighborhoods, convenient to jobs, good schools, and daily necessities for people of all income levels, family sizes, and stages of life. Having a variety of housing price points and types, including rental apartments, townhouses, and large and small single-family homes, can ensure that everyone—from a young person living on her own for the first time, to a working family, to a retired couple—can find an affordable place to live. Achieving this range of choices might require affordable housing preservation or new construction, two broad strategies that are described in this section, or a combination of both. Developers, local governments, and community development corporations are key partners in these strategies.

Planning ahead to provide housing choices before property values rise is central to minimizing displacement. Setting land aside early for affordable housing, building new homes at a range of price points, and making sure existing and new affordable homes remain affordable over time can enable low-income residents to stay in their neighborhoods if property values rise. Green building techniques can also reduce housing costs, as described earlier in this chapter.

Where homes are located and how they are connected to the rest of the community and region have important implications for affordability. A unit built in an outlying area far from employment centers might be called affordable, but it increases transportation costs for residents and isolates them socially, economically, and geographically. Truly affordable housing is convenient to job opportunities and other amenities and services, and provides access to public transit and safe options for walking and bicycling. Homes should also be separated or buffered from land uses that could impact residents' health.

Municipalities also need to consider the vulnerability of affordable homes to natural

Housing choice is critical to reducing health, economic, and quality of life disparities among communities and building thriving regions.



With its mixture of new rental and for-sale housing at all income levels, Seattle's NewHolly neighborhood is transitioning from an isolated enclave of poverty to a vibrant, successful community.

Photo courtesy of Seattle Housing Authority.

hazards such as flooding or wildfires, to what extent those hazards might worsen with climate change, and how they will respond if a natural disaster damages or destroys the homes. These considerations might change whether a community decides to renovate existing buildings or build new homes in a safer, but still well-connected, location.

Housing choice is critical to reducing health, economic, and quality of life disparities among communities and building thriving regions. When people of all income levels can afford to live near their jobs, their commutes are shorter, resulting in lower transportation costs, cleaner air, and higher quality of life. Providing homes that teachers, retail workers, public safety personnel, and other moderate- and low-income earners can afford ensures that a strong workforce is available to fill essential jobs. Offering a range of housing price points and sizes allows young people to find homes in their hometowns and older people to stay in their communities as they age. Just as important, inclusive communities with residents of all ages, races, incomes, and ethnicities are

richer places for people to live and raise their families.

Preserve Affordable Housing

The National Housing Trust estimates that for every affordable apartment built, two are lost to deterioration, abandonment, or conversion to more expensive housing.¹⁰⁹ Preserving existing affordable housing is essential to stabilizing populations in low-income and overburdened communities. Existing affordable housing is often located near jobs, public transportation, and other services and amenities. Retaining affordable housing in areas that are revitalizing helps ensure that low-income families have access to new opportunities and quality of life benefits. Using this approach in struggling neighborhoods can catalyze investment and development. In addition, preserving and rehabilitating affordable housing is much less costly than building new affordable units.

Communities have used an array of tools to preserve affordable housing. For example, deed restrictions allow an individual to buy a home for less than market value and sell it later below market value to keep it affordable for future buyers. Community land trusts administer deed restrictions and purchase and retain land for new affordable housing. Because land trusts typically maintain possession of the land while the buyer purchases the building, the home price remains stable without the inflationary pressure from rising land values.

Housing trust funds are another tool city, county, and state governments use to provide a consistent source of funding for affordable housing initiatives, including repairs, renovations, and new construction. These trusts are created by state legislation and municipal ordinances. More than 625 city and county housing trusts operate in 40 states, generating more than \$1 billion a year for affordable housing.¹¹⁰ The revenue for trust funds can come from a variety of sources,

¹⁰⁹ National Housing Trust. Affordable Housing Preservation FAQs. www.nhtinc.org/preservation_faq.php. Accessed 2011.

¹¹⁰ Center for Community Change. Housing Trust Fund. www.communitychange.org/page/housing-trust-fund. Accessed 2011.



In Denver, Colorado's historic and diverse La Alma/Lincoln Park neighborhood—now known as the Mariposa District—existing affordable housing is being preserved while new middle-income and market-rate homes are being added, for a total of about 800 housing units where only 270 existed before. This affordable senior housing complex features a mural by a local artist. *Photo courtesy of EPA.*

including real estate taxes and fees, fees paid by developers, tax increment funds, and interest from government funds.

Other housing preservation tools include rehabilitation assistance and code enforcement. Keeping roofs, plumbing, and electrical systems in good repair can help homeowners, especially elderly residents, remain in their homes. Well-maintained housing is also at less risk of being purchased by speculators at bargain prices. Municipalities and community-based organizations can offer low-income property owners grants for rehabilitation, hands-on assistance, and education to help them comply with codes.

Federal agencies, particularly HUD, provide considerable support for affordable housing. The federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, described in the next section on creating new affordable housing, allows an owner or developer to claim a federal tax credit equal to a percentage of the cost incurred to rehabilitate low-income rental units. HUD provides grants, loans, and mortgage insurance for affordable housing rehabilitation as well as new construction. In rural areas, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural

Development programs provide loans, grants, and loan guarantees for affordable housing improvements and construction.¹¹¹

Create New Affordable Housing

Building new affordable housing is another way to expand housing choices for low- and moderate-income households, and is important not only in neighborhoods with sizeable low-income populations, but also in more affluent communities currently lacking housing opportunities for low-income earners, young people, and seniors. Three important tools to facilitate affordable housing development are inclusionary zoning, updated land use regulations, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

Municipalities can use inclusionary zoning to require that a certain percentage of new housing be affordable to low- or moderate-income households. In exchange, they can offer developers special allowances such as fast-track permitting or permission to build more units on a site than zoning would typically allow. Montgomery County, Maryland adopted one of the first inclusionary zoning programs in the country in 1974. Its Moderately Priced Housing law requires that 12.5 to 15 percent of the units in large new developments be moderately priced and that 40 percent of those units be offered to the county and nonprofit housing agencies for low- and moderate-income families.¹¹² The program has produced more than 10,000 affordable units.¹¹³ Washington, D.C.'s inclusionary zoning program mandates affordable set-asides of 8 to 10 percent of new residential construction, or 50 to 75 percent of the additional units the developer is allowed to build in exchange for creating affordable housing, whichever is greater.¹¹⁴

111 U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. Housing and Community Assistance. www.rurdev.usda.gov/LP_Subject_HousingAndCommunityAssistance.html. Accessed 2012.

112 Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs. Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit Program. www.montgomerycountymd.gov/dhctmpl.asp?url=/content/dhca/housing/housing_p/mpdu/Summary_new.asp. Accessed 2011.

113 Smart Growth America. Social Equity. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/socialequity.html. Accessed 2011.

114 District of Columbia Department of Housing and Community Development. Inclusionary Zoning Affordable Housing Program.



The city of Santa Cruz, California's Accessory Dwelling Unit Development Program makes it easier for homeowners to create accessory units by converting garages or building separate structures. These accessory units create more affordable housing options, allow homeowners to earn extra money by renting them out, and can provide a place where young adults or elderly parents can live near their families yet still have privacy and independence.

Photo courtesy of City of Santa Cruz Department of Housing and Community Development.

Local governments can update other land use regulations to encourage the construction of affordable housing. Many codes and ordinances prevent or inhibit developers from building lower-cost housing. Regulations prohibiting multifamily and accessory units¹¹⁵ and requiring minimums for lot sizes, setbacks from the road, building square footage, and parking can drive up the cost of land acquisition and housing production. In contrast, reducing the land area required for construction, reducing or eliminating setback requirements, and making parking requirements more flexible significantly lower costs for developers and consumers. Reduced square footage requirements and accessory units provide options for lower-income and smaller households. Accessory units—particularly suited to suburban and rural contexts—can also house aging family members or bring in rental income

dhcd.dc.gov/service/inclusionary-zoning-affordable-housing-program. Accessed 2011.

115 Accessory units—also referred to as accessory apartments, second units, or granny flats—are additional living quarters on single-family lots that are independent of the primary dwelling unit. For more information, see U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, "Accessory Dwelling Units: Case Study" at www.huduser.org/portal/publications/adu.pdf.

for homeowners. In small town settings, mixed-use zoning ordinances that allow apartments above shops can increase affordable options.

Communities can use the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit to finance new affordable rental housing and to support affordable housing rehabilitation and preservation. Tax credits go to developers of qualified projects, who can then sell these credits to investors to raise capital for projects, reducing the money that the developer would otherwise have to borrow. With less debt, the developer can offer lower rents.¹¹⁶

Affordable housing developers face several challenges despite the many tools at their disposal. One of the biggest challenges is finding available and affordable land, particularly in neighborhoods where land values are appreciating quickly. Before investments in a neighborhood drive land prices up, it is important for community and government stakeholders to identify locations for affordable housing and acquire property. Other challenges include gaining political support among local officials, which can be overcome with engagement by community members and affordable housing advocates. It can also be difficult to ensure that affordable housing remains affordable over time. This can be accomplished using deed restrictions and other affordable housing preservation strategies discussed above.

Community development corporations are important leaders in the creation of new affordable housing. The Umpqua Community Development Corporation worked with the state of Oregon, the city of Roseburg, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation to convert a former hotel in downtown Roseburg into a mixed-use development with retail on the ground floor and 37 housing units upstairs. With \$3.2 million generated from Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, \$1 million from historic rehabilitation tax credits, and other funding, Umpqua ensured that 33 of those units are affordable to very low- and



Silver Gardens Apartments is a 66-unit affordable housing development located on a reclaimed brownfield site across the street the main transit hub in downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico. *Photos courtesy of Patrick Coulie.*

moderate-income residents. In addition, several of the units provide housing for women from the Safe Haven Maternity Home.¹¹⁷

116 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. How Do Housing Tax Credits Work? www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/affordablehousing/training/web/lihtc/basics/work.cfm. Accessed 2011.

117 Kimura, Donna. "Hotel project provides housing while rescuing city's past." *Affordable Housing Finance*. August 2005. www.housingfinance.com/ahf/articles/2005/august/032_AHF_12-3.htm.

Case Study:
Bringing Transit Service and Affordable Housing to a Community in Need
Boston, Massachusetts

Boston's Fairmount Line, a commuter rail, runs through underserved and densely populated communities in Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. For decades, many residents living along the line could see the train from their windows, but it did not stop in their neighborhoods and the nearest stations were well beyond walking distance.

"For residents of neighborhoods such as Four Corners in Dorchester, who currently bear the burden of hosting a diesel rail line without the benefit of service, the Fairmount Line is a textbook example of environmental injustice," says Noah Berger, the program manager at the Federal Transit Administration. Most residents of the communities bordering the Fairmount Line are African-American or Latino, and about half of the households earn less than \$25,000 per year. Because 30 percent of them do not own a car, residents use public transit four times more than the regional average. The communities also have many vacant properties and brownfields, a problem made worse by a rise in foreclosures since the mid-2000s. In 2009, nearly 70 percent of Boston's foreclosures were in Dorchester and Mattapan.

In response to these challenges, four community development corporations (CDCs) representing Dorchester Bay, Codman Square, Southwest Boston, and Mattapan came together to form the Fairmount/Indigo Line Collaborative. They also joined the Greater Four Corners Action Coalition's transit equity campaign to advocate for new service and transit-oriented development along the nine-mile rail corridor. The commonwealth of Massachusetts, the city of Boston, and federal agencies have committed nearly \$200 million to construct four new stations as well as affordable housing, office buildings, and a greenway to better serve the residents and reinvigorate their neighborhoods.

"We are working with residents to plan and create new urban villages along the line with mixed-use developments that include affordable housing and commercial uses," says Gail Latimore, executive director of the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation. "The Fairmount work is a catalyst for economic revitalization of our communities. While we have a lot more work to do, we are well on our way to transforming our neighborhoods and are serving as a national model for responsive community development."

The Fairmount/Indigo Line Collaborative partnered with Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development to develop a vision of how transit could improve access and mobility and catalyze economic and social renewal. The coalition wanted the Fairmount train service to operate as part of the city's subway network under the name the "Indigo Line." They engaged a broad coalition of residents, community organizations, academic institutions, and foundations. Collaborative representatives found common ground among diverse neighborhood interests on shared goals.

The collaborative was especially concerned that speculative property transactions and rising land values around the new stations would drive up the cost of living for current residents and push them out of the neighborhood. As a result, the plans for transit-oriented development focused on creating and preserving affordable housing. The CDCs are purchasing and rehabilitating foreclosed homes and acquiring, cleaning up, and reusing brownfield sites and other vacant and abandoned properties for housing development.



The area around Uphams Corner, a station on the Fairmount Line in Dorchester, before the station renovation (*above*), and a rendering showing the planned redevelopment around the station (*below*). Photo and rendering courtesy of Fairmount Collaborative.

To further support opportunities for affordable housing and equitable development, the Partnership for Sustainable Communities provided technical assistance to the collaborative. The Partnership is a joint effort of HUD, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and EPA to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution. The Partnership helped create a comprehensive inventory of more than 150 sites near the rail line and a site prioritization tool to identify opportunities to develop housing, retail, and green space. The Partnership also supported the refinement of a design concept for a brownfield located close to the recently refurbished Morton Street station that will include affordable housing and commercial space.

The Federal Transit Administration contributed over \$135 million to support four new stations and the renovation of two existing stations. HUD provided over \$50 million through Community Development Block Grants; the HOME Investment Partnerships Program; and Section 202 for public housing, new housing, and rental subsidies. EPA dedicated \$720,000 to clean up more than 30 brownfield sites within a half-mile of the new and renovated stations and will provide technical assistance to a Green Jobs Incubator on a former brownfield. Other funders include the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts Housing Partnership, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, and several local and national foundations.

The four new stations are expected to open by 2013. The Fairmount/Indigo Line Collaborative expects to create 1,200 new affordable homes near these stations. The collaborative also estimates that the new stations will attract over 780,000 square feet of new retail space with the potential to generate more than 1,300 new jobs. Additionally, the collaborative plans to develop a six-mile green corridor, which will include playgrounds, orchards, parks, a pedestrian and bicycle path, community gardens, and open space.

“We are working with residents to plan and create new urban villages along the line with mixed-use developments that include affordable housing and commercial uses,” says Gail Latimore, executive director of the Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation. “The Fairmount work is a catalyst for economic revitalization of our communities. While we have a lot more work to do, we are well on our way to transforming our neighborhoods and are serving as a national model for responsive community development.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ For references, see page 76.

Provide Transportation Options

For many low-income and overburdened communities, public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks are critical links to the regional employment and educational opportunities that can help residents improve their lives. Transportation options such as reliable bus and rail systems and well-connected sidewalks and bike paths make it possible for people to reach a job in the suburbs, their doctor's office across town, or the grocery store around the corner safely and conveniently, even if they do not drive a car.

Expanding transportation choices can also save people money. Families living near public transit can own fewer cars—or no cars—and drive them less, which can mean significant savings on gas and maintenance costs. As noted in Chapter 2, the average American family spends roughly 18 percent of household income on transportation and very low-income households can spend 55 percent or more, while households with access to good transit service spend only 9 percent.¹¹⁹

Providing transportation options can also help create jobs. Investments in public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure create more jobs per dollar spent than building new roads.^{120,121}

In addition, when people can walk, bike, or take public transit, physical activity becomes part of their daily routines, which can keep them healthier. Well-designed streets with sidewalks, bike lanes, safe crossing points, and good lighting reduce the risk of being hit by a car. Providing alternatives to driving can also decrease pollution from motor vehicles, helping to protect air quality, reduce asthma and other illnesses that disproportionately impact low-income and minority communities, and mitigate climate change.

119 Center for Transit-Oriented Development. *Mixed-Income Housing Near Transit*. 2009. www.reconnectingamerica.org/public/display_asset/091030ra201mixedhousefinal.

120 Smart Growth America. *Recent Lessons from the Stimulus: Transportation Funding and Job Creation*. 2011. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2011/02/04/new-report-reveals-smart-transportation-spending-creates-jobs-grows-the-economy.

121 Garrett-Peltier, Heidi. *Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure: A National Study of Employment Impacts*. Political Economy Research Institute, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. 2011.

Transportation options such as reliable bus and rail systems and well-connected sidewalks and bike paths make it possible for people to reach a job in the suburbs, their doctor's office across town, or the grocery store around the corner safely and conveniently, even if they do not drive a car.



Public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks can connect low-income residents to jobs and educational opportunities, save money on transportation, and help to integrate physical activity into peoples' daily routines.

Photo courtesy of EPA.

This section presents three broad approaches that expand the transportation choices available to low-income and overburdened communities: providing access to public transit; designing safe streets for all users; and implementing equitable, transit-oriented development. Different strategies will be appropriate depending on the scale of the community. For instance, a rural community might not have enough population to support a fixed-route bus system, but residents could benefit from demand-responsive public transit and safely designed streets with sidewalks.

Coordinating the implementation of these transportation strategies with neighborhood planning can result in more accessible amenities and services and more viable transportation options. When homes, offices, stores, and civic

buildings are located near public transit and close to each other, it is convenient to walk, bicycle, and take the bus or train. Planners can ensure that land use policies and regulations support compact, mixed-use development, including affordable housing, near transit and walking and bicycling routes. It might also be necessary to address safety and crime concerns before residents feel comfortable walking, bicycling, or using public transportation. Along with police enforcement, clustering destinations close to transit stops and increasing the number of eyes on the street can improve neighborhood safety.

Provide Access to Public Transportation

Public transportation is especially critical for low-income people, older adults, youth, and individuals with disabilities who might not have other ways of getting around. Transportation planners can engage these groups to ensure that transit routes and service hours meet their needs.

Many public transportation trips are made up of multiple legs on different forms of transit such as regional rail and local bus. Linking public transportation options at transportation hubs and coordinating schedules between transit providers can increase accessibility and



The Tempe, Arizona Transportation Center combines the downtown light-rail stop, the main city bus station, and the state's first "bike station," which offers secure on-site storage and repairs, into one facility.
Photo courtesy of City of Tempe and Architekton + Otak.

convenience. In rural communities, demand-responsive transit service, which operates on flexible routes and schedules according to passenger needs, can be a successful approach. In urban, suburban, and rural places, coordinating traditional public transit and transportation provided by social service agencies can further expand transportation options for customers.

Municipalities can make access to public transportation easier and safer through thoughtful design of transit stops and surrounding streets. Waiting areas should be safe, well lit, and clearly marked. They should be easy and safe for patrons to reach on foot and by bicycle via sidewalks, bike paths, and crosswalks. Transit agencies can educate the public about their transportation options by translating schedules and brochures into local languages and placing these guides in schools, churches, businesses, and other community destinations.

The La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians in southern California is working with the San Diego Association of Governments and the nonprofit Walk San Diego to evaluate ways of increasing access to bus stops while encouraging physical activity. Potential strategies include marking stops more clearly, calming traffic, and protecting the trails and roadside paths that lead to the stops from fast-moving vehicles using logs, rocks, and other natural barriers obtained from the surrounding landscape.¹²²

Planners can consider the equity and health outcomes of transit investments at the beginning of the decision-making process using tools such as environmental and social impact analyses. They can also create accountability measures or indicators to ensure that transportation projects meet equity and health objectives. A common approach is to calculate transportation benefits by income group. Specific metrics can include average travel time for various types of trips, the number of jobs that are accessible within a given travel time, and average distance to the nearest transit stop, all analyzed for a range of income

¹²² Walk San Diego. *Active Transportation Assessment for the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians*. 2012.

groups.¹²³ These metrics can be monitored over time to ensure that transit investments continue to serve transit-dependent populations.

Much of the funding for public transportation is distributed directly to transit agencies, which then decide how to spend it. However, transit agency boards often include one representative for each jurisdiction served—usually multiple suburban towns and one city—instead of basing representation on population. This can result in more investment in outlying areas and less funding for urban cores where transit-dependent groups often live and where population densities generally better support the provision of transit service.

To advocate for the equitable distribution of funding, residents can participate in riders' councils and other advisory groups that make recommendations to transit agencies and engage the public. In 2010, the city of Seattle created a citizen transportation advisory committee to advise the mayor and city council on transportation priorities. The committee includes representatives from diverse communities as well as equity and social justice advocates.¹²⁴ Nonprofit organizations can also conduct community assessments to uncover information about specific transportation needs that can inform agency decisions, as described previously.

Implement Equitable Transit-Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is commonly defined as compact, mixed-use development within walking distance (usually half a mile) of a transit station. Residents of transit-oriented developments can choose to drive less because of their convenient access to public transportation and walkable streets. Equitable TOD offers a mix of housing choices affordable to people with a range of incomes. Providing affordable housing near transit can significantly lower combined housing and transportation costs, which can claim 55 to 60 percent of the household incomes of working families in major metropolitan areas.¹²⁵

Equitable transit-oriented development uses many of the tools described earlier that create and preserve affordable housing, though some tools are particularly suited to station-area development. Because TOD residents are more likely to use transit, municipalities can reduce or eliminate minimum parking standards in TODs, which can decrease the costs of development and therefore the costs of building affordable housing. Greater building height or floor-area allowances—sometimes called density bonuses—



Denver residents help plan development around the Decatur-Federal station on the planned West Corridor light-rail line. *Photo courtesy of Denver Liability Partnership.*

123 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Guide to Sustainable Transportation Performance Measures*. 2011. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/transpo_performance.htm.

124 Seattle Department of Transportation. Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee III. www.seattle.gov/transportation/ctac.htm. Accessed 2011.

125 Center for Housing Policy. *A Heavy Load: The Combined Housing and Transportation Burdens of Working Families*. 2006. www.cnt.org/repository/heavy_load_10_06.pdf.

Municipalities can remove barriers to equitable TOD and reduce costs by waiving or reducing impact fees, expediting permitting approvals, or donating publicly owned land.

can accomplish similar objectives and work well near transit stations, where communities typically want more development. Land banking is another viable tool. Public and nonprofit entities can acquire land for affordable housing near transit early when prices are lower and hold it in a land bank until the time is right for redevelopment. When a private developer is interested in building, land bank authorities transfer the land to the developer with conditions guiding how it will be developed—for example, as mixed-income housing.

The Denver Livability Partnership, with support from a HUD Community Challenge Planning Grant and a DOT Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) II Planning Grant, is working to ensure that people in all income brackets benefit from the city's planned West Corridor light rail line. In anticipation of rising land prices, the Urban Land Conservancy, a member of the Denver Livability Partnership, purchased a two-acre parcel along the line on which an 80-unit affordable housing development, a library, and other facilities will be built.¹²⁶ The partnership also created a Housing Development Assistance Fund, awarding \$750,000 grants to the Urban Land Conservancy and the Denver Housing Authority for planning and predevelopment expenses associated with developing affordable housing near the light rail line. These grants ensure that the costs of developing transit-accessible housing are not passed on to renters or buyers.¹²⁷ The Denver Livability Partnership's plans will more than double the number of affordable homes near West Corridor transit stations from 1,400 to 3,000 units, building a foundation for



Fruitvale Village provides shopping, mixed-income housing, office space, a clinic, a library, and a senior center on a former parking lot at the entrance to the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit station. *Photo Courtesy of The Unity Council.*

inclusive communities that are linked to regional opportunities.¹²⁸

Transit-oriented development will not necessarily be affordable without careful planning by the municipality and involvement from the community. Developing in transit-accessible infill locations can be more time-consuming, difficult, and expensive than conventional development, so housing there is often built for the high end of the market. Municipalities can remove barriers to equitable TOD and reduce costs by waiving or reducing impact fees, expediting permitting approvals, or donating publicly owned land. Additionally, collaboration among local planners, metropolitan planning organizations, community development corporations, and developers can increase the likelihood of achieving development that meets community goals.

¹²⁶ Cohen, Elisa. "West side partnerships forming." *North Denver Tribune*. June 1, 2011. www.fresc.org/west-side-partnerships-forming.

¹²⁷ City of Denver. Transit-Oriented Development: Denver Livability Partnership. denvergov.org/tod/DenverLivabilityPartnership/tabid/438465/Default.aspx. Accessed 2011.

¹²⁸ City of Denver. *HUD/DOT Grant Fact Sheet*. 2010. www.denvergov.org/Portals/193/documents/TOD%20SIP/HUD%20Award%20Fact%20Sheet-City%20and%20County%20of%20Denver%20Community%20Planning%20and%20Development.pdf.

Case Study: Equitable Transit-Oriented Development Chicago, Illinois

Since 1979, Bethel New Life, a faith-based community development corporation, has catalyzed redevelopment in the underserved West Garfield and Austin neighborhoods of Chicago. In 1991, when the Chicago Transit Authority proposed closing the elevated train line that linked residents to jobs and services, Bethel formed a regional coalition to preserve transit service. Bethel eventually created a transit-oriented development plan that led to the construction of Bethel Center, a two-story, 23,000-square-foot community center on the leading edge of equitable development and green construction.

Located five miles west of downtown Chicago, the West Garfield and Austin neighborhoods are predominantly African-American. In 1966, Martin Luther King, Jr. made national headlines when he moved his family into a tenement apartment in this area to fight for civil rights in housing, transportation, and public education as part of the Chicago Freedom Movement. After a series of riots in the late 1960s, the community declined when businesses closed and banks redlined neighborhoods, cutting off investment. The city's decision to close the elevated Green Line train would have been another devastating blow. "We had to respond to the proposed closure because the train line is the only way people can get to work or visit their families," says Mary Nelson, founding president of Bethel New Life.

In 1992, Bethel formed the Lake Street El Coalition with other community groups, environmental organizations, and a few suburban townships and businesses. The coalition pressured local and federal officials to preserve transit service and kept their concerns in the public eye through press conferences, protests, and demonstrations. In particular, the coalition highlighted the disparities in federal spending on highways compared to public transit. After a series of hearings and meetings, the Chicago Transit Authority committed \$380 million to repair the line. The Green Line's rehabilitation was completed in 1998.



Threatened with the loss of their transit station, the West Garfield and Austin neighborhoods worked with Bethel New Life to keep the station open and catalyze transit-oriented redevelopment with the Bethel Center as the anchor. *Photo courtesy of Farr Associates, photography by Ballogg Photography.*



The Bethel Center was built on a former brownfield, and its transit-accessible, walkable location allows residents to reach local and regional destinations conveniently and affordably. The development incorporates green building technology and features a green roof, photovoltaic cells, and recycled and non-toxic building materials. *Photo courtesy of Farr Associates, photography by Alan Shortall.*

After its victory, Bethel began to consider developing the areas around the transit station. “We realized the stop was a neighborhood asset and that 2,500 to 3,000 people a day got on and off at the intersection of Lake Street and Pulaski Road,” says Ms. Nelson. Bethel collaborated with residents, faith-based organizations, schools, public officials, and the Garfield Park Conservatory to create the Lake Pulaski Transit Village Plan. The plan proposed neighborhood revitalization strategies based on smart growth principles, such as compact building design, walkable neighborhoods, and access to public transportation. The residents also wanted a community center at the heart of the transit village.

For more than a decade, Bethel struggled to find funding to develop the community center on a site adjacent to the transit stop. The site had once hosted a gas station, whose leaking underground storage tanks had contaminated the groundwater and soils. Bethel was turned down by three banks unwilling to finance loans on land with environmental risks but was able to get public funding from the city of Chicago’s Empowerment Zone, the state of Illinois, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Community Services for predevelopment costs and small business development. The organization received additional funding from private foundations and corporations such as the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and Commonwealth Edison. Bethel also used New Market Tax Credits, a program designed to make investment capital available to businesses in qualifying low-income communities. With public and private money in place to clean the site and construct the center, U.S. Bank came on board. Altogether, Bethel pieced together \$4.9 million for site cleanup and the center’s construction.

Completed in 2005, the Bethel Center is LEED Gold certified and a national model for green building. It houses six businesses, retail and financial services, affordable childcare, and an employment center that provides job counseling and job placement services. With assistance from faith-based financial services organization Thrivent Financial and a

Since its founding, Bethel New Life has helped bring \$110 million of investment to Chicago’s West Side, placed over 7,000 people in jobs, and developed over 1,000 units of affordable housing.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services program that matches contributions to savings accounts, the Community Savings Center provides financial education and matched savings accounts for home purchases, small business starts, and educational advancement. Among the many honors it has received, Bethel Center won EPA’s National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2006.

The Bethel Center creates a long-term economic anchor at the Lake Street and Pulaski Road intersection. “When doing community development, one of the most important things is creating a sense of an economic future,” says Ms. Nelson. “The center also made the transit stop much more usable and convenient.” Ridership at the stop has increased 25 percent since 2004. Bethel and other organizations have also worked to revitalize the surrounding area. The transit village now includes 36 affordable, energy-efficient homes within walking distance of the transit stop, parks, and stores. In addition to connecting residents to jobs throughout the region, the Bethel Center itself created about 100 new jobs.

Since its founding, Bethel New Life has helped bring \$110 million of investment to Chicago’s West Side, placed over 7,000 people in jobs, and developed over 1,000 units of affordable housing. Bethel has also become a national example of the role faith-based organizations can play in promoting equitable community development.¹²⁹

¹²⁹ For references, see page 77.

Design Safe Streets for All Users

Well-designed streets allow safe, comfortable travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transit users of all ages and abilities. Also called “complete streets,” they often provide sidewalks, bike lanes, median islands, pedestrian signals, bus lanes, and plenty of crossing opportunities. Complete streets strategies can be used with the pollution-reducing green streets approaches described previously.

Not only do safely-designed streets make it less dangerous and more appealing for people to walk, bike, and use transit, they also bring economic benefits to urban, suburban, and rural communities. Streets that are more pleasant to walk along bring more pedestrians to shopping districts, and more foot traffic means more customers. Traffic calming measures can also increase business because drivers are better able to see stores and more likely to stop and shop.

Many towns, cities, and states have adopted complete streets policies directing transportation agencies to design and build new and retrofitted roadways to enable safe access for all users. Because almost 20 percent of Kingston, New York’s residents live below the poverty line and 44 percent of its children are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, the city launched a complete streets initiative. City staff teamed up with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the school district, the local Cooperative Extension branch, and community health and environmental organizations to create a Complete Streets Committee, conduct a “SWOT” (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of local streets, and undertake a code audit to identify regulations that were hampering the city’s ability to build complete streets.¹³⁰ Kingston passed a Complete Streets Policy Framework in 2010.¹³¹ The framework describes approaches the city will use to advance complete streets and creates an advisory council to identify projects, select design options, and provide policy

¹³⁰ City of Kingston. Complete Streets Committee. www.kingston-ny.gov/content/120/2336/2344/default.aspx.

¹³¹ City of Kingston. A Healthy Kingston for Kids. www.kingston-ny.gov/content/120/2336/default.aspx.



At this Portland, Oregon, intersection, bike lanes, crosswalks, and traffic lanes have been safely integrated with rain gardens that filter polluted stormwater runoff.

Photo courtesy of Environmental Services, City of Portland, Oregon.

recommendations.¹³² Since Kingston and other New York communities have initiated complete streets efforts, New York State passed a bill that requires complete streets approaches to be considered in the planning, design, construction, and rehabilitation of roadways that receive federal or state funding.¹³³

To improve infrastructure on existing streets not slated for reconstruction, local governments can prioritize these projects in their transportation planning processes. Localities could get federal transportation funding for these improvements by working with their state departments of transportation.

Local governments can implement some street improvements with minimal cost. For example, changing the timing on a walk signal at an intersection costs almost nothing but makes the street safer for pedestrians by giving them more time to cross. Where the state owns roadways, municipalities need to work with state transportation agencies.

¹³² City of Kingston. *City of Kingston Complete Streets Policy Framework*. 2010. www.kingston-ny.gov/filestorage/120/2336/2344/rs11090dg_cs_policy_adopted.pdf.

¹³³ Seskin, Stefanie. “Excelsior! Complete Streets Will Be Law in New York.” National Complete Streets Coalition. August 16, 2011. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2011/08/16/excelsior-complete-streets-will-be-law-in-new-york/.

Improve Access to Opportunities and Daily Necessities

All residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, should have access to the basic ingredients of healthy, productive lives. These include employment and educational opportunities; services such as health care, child care, and public transportation; and amenities such as safe streets, parks and recreational facilities, and grocery stores and other places to buy nutritious food.

This section includes strategies for improving access to key neighborhood destinations that help address the challenges facing many low-income, minority, and tribal communities. Diverse, community-centered schools can serve as anchors for surrounding neighborhoods and important amenities for children and families. Safe Routes to School programs improve children's health and well-being by enabling them to walk and bicycle to school. Incorporating nutritious food stores and green spaces into neighborhoods can help increase physical activity, reduce chronic disease, and provide other health benefits. The strategies in the earlier sections on housing, transportation, and strengthening existing communities are also important for creating access to opportunities and amenities.



This community health workshop in Detroit, Michigan, provided residents with basic health analyses and the opportunity to have private conversations with medical professionals. The workshop focused on health issues important to the community.

Photo courtesy of Lauren Cooper.

Promote Diverse, Community-Centered Schools

A community-centered school is located near the families it serves, is accessible via multiple modes of transportation, fits well with the neighborhood, and has a relatively small footprint. There are many benefits of community-centered schools for low-income and overburdened communities. Because community-centered schools are centrally located, students, parents, and faculty can get to them on foot, by bicycle, or via school bus, public transit, or driving. The availability of multiple transportation options can save families money. Children who walk or bike to school get regular exercise as part of their daily routines, and they can access playgrounds and school facilities after school, on the weekends, or during the summer, which encourages them to stay active in a safe environment. Children can spend more time playing and learning instead of sitting through long car or bus rides. Having a school nearby makes parent participation much more feasible for busy families, and parent involvement is linked to student performance.¹³⁴

Centrally located schools can be community resources as well. Facilities can be used for events during non-school hours, such as adult classes, Boy and Girl Scout meetings, after-school sports, performing arts, and voting. Some schools offer health, dental, childcare, and employment services. To facilitate broader community use of school facilities like playgrounds, libraries, kitchens, and community gardens, joint use agreements can be created between schools and city recreation departments and other local government agencies, organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs, and other community groups. This is particularly important in rural communities that might lack other public facilities.

Many communities contain schools, and preserving those schools can anchor neighborhood revitalization. Abandoning and

¹³⁴ Hoover-Dempsey, Kathleen V. and Sandler, Howard M. "Parental Involvement in Children's Education: Why Does It Make a Difference?" *Teachers College Record*, 97(2): 310-331, 1995. www.vanderbilt.edu/peabody/family-school/papers/childrens_education.pdf.



The Moore Square Museums Magnet Middle School is situated in the heart of Raleigh, North Carolina's cultural and arts district, providing students with a unique educational opportunity that takes advantage of downtown institutions. Within walking distance of diverse neighborhoods and the Capital Area Transit bus center, the school has a socially and economically diverse student body and has helped strengthen and revitalize the surrounding area. *Photo courtesy of Wake County Public School System/City of Raleigh.*

demolishing schools in existing communities can result in decreased property values; in contrast, the presence of a local school raises property values and encourages more public and private investment in the neighborhood.¹³⁵ This in turn reinforces the tax base available to the schools. In newer communities that are building schools, it is important to site those schools so they are easy to access.

Various decision-makers influence where new schools are sited, whether existing ones are maintained or closed down, and how schools fit into the community. School districts have direct control over school siting decisions. Local governments decide where other community elements, such as housing, parks, and sidewalks, are located in relation to schools, and make long-term plans for surrounding neighborhoods. Collaboration between school districts and local planners can help link school siting decisions to development plans, create better connections between schools and adjacent neighborhoods,

¹³⁵ National Trust for Historic Preservation. *Helping Johnny Walk to School*. 2010. www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/historic-schools/helping-johnny-walk-to-school/.

promote the co-location and joint use of schools with other facilities, and better align comprehensive and school facility plans. States also influence where school facilities are located, often helping to fund school renovation, maintenance, and construction and providing siting and size guidelines. Municipalities can promote community-centered schools by working with state governments to remove minimum acreage requirements, which often call for large sites not typically available in existing neighborhoods; remove state funding biases that favor the construction of new buildings even if renovation is less expensive; and fund regular maintenance and repair, particularly of older school facilities in underserved communities.¹³⁶

When promoting community-centered schools, decision-makers should consider potential air, soil, and water contamination. Uncontaminated sites that meet the educational, economic, and community goals discussed above are preferable. However, such sites can be hard to find in established communities, and school districts are often faced with choosing among sites that have some level of contamination from



Homes in Portland, Oregon's New Columbia neighborhood are close to amenities such as a grocery store, parks, the Rosa Parks Elementary School, community college classrooms, and a Boys and Girls Club. *Photo courtesy of Housing Authority of Portland.*

¹³⁶ National Trust for Historic Preservation. *Helping Johnny Walk to School*. 2010. www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/historic-schools/helping-johnny-walk-to-school/.

prior uses or that are close to potential sources of contamination. It is possible to safely locate schools on those sites by carefully evaluating and addressing the environmental and public health risks and benefits. EPA has developed school siting guidelines to help local education agencies, states, and tribes identify and implement site-specific and community-wide exposure and risk reduction strategies.¹³⁷

Community-centered schools can have unintended effects on school diversity. Few neighborhoods are representative of the racial, ethnic, or economic makeup of their community or school district as a whole. As a result, schools whose student populations come only from nearby neighborhoods might be more racially, ethnically, or economically homogeneous than those that draw from a larger geographic area. In other words, it might be difficult to have schools that are both diverse and close to residences. However, diversity, health, environmental protection, and community vibrancy are all important outcomes that school districts can aim to balance.

The long-term solution to this challenge is diverse, mixed-income communities where neighborhoods—and student bodies—reflect the broader population. In the shorter term, municipalities, school districts, and community-based organizations can explore other responses. For instance, school districts and land use planners can consider both proximity to the families served and the diversity of school populations when making decisions about school siting, rehabilitation, and closure. Planners and school officials can also work together to encourage neighborhood diversity near schools with development projects that provide mixed-income housing close to schools. In addition, school districts can promote diverse, community-centered schools by designing school attendance zones and assignment policies to support walkability and diversity.

137 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *School Siting Guidelines*. 2011. www.epa.gov/schools/siting.

Create Safe Routes to School

Safe Routes to School programs are efforts by parents, schools, community leaders, and local and state governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school.

In 2009, 13 percent of children 5 to 14 years of age walked or bicycled to school, compared with 48 percent of children in 1969.¹³⁸ Reduced physical activity rates are associated with obesity and chronic disease, problems that disproportionately affect low-income and minority children. When students are able to walk or bike to school, they are more likely to get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity, which can help reduce childhood obesity and related health issues.

Relative to higher-income children, more low-income children do walk to school, some on busy streets with fast-moving traffic, no pedestrian paths, and dangerous street crossings.¹³⁹ Safe Routes to School approaches provide strategies low-income and minority communities can use to get more students walking and bicycling to school where it is safe and to improve conditions where it is not. These strategies include education,



Safe Routes to School programs can include education for students on safe bicycling and walking, such as this class in Phoenix, Arizona.

Photo courtesy of www.pedbikeimages.org / Mike Cynecki.

138 National Center for Safe Routes to School. *The Decline of Walking and Bicycling*. www.saferoutesinfo.org/guide/introduction/the_decline_of_walking_and_bicycling.cfm. Accessed 2011.

139 Safe Routes to School National Partnership. *Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities*. 2010. www.saferoutespartnership.org/lowincomeguide.

engineering, enforcement, and encouragement. Education programs teach students safety skills for walking and bicycling and teach motorists how to drive safely around pedestrians and bicyclists. Engineering projects improve sidewalks, crosswalks, signs, and signals to create safer places to walk or bike. Enforcement efforts increase awareness of laws protecting walkers and bicyclists and guiding driver behavior. Encouragement strategies such as contests and rewards help to create excitement around walking and biking.

Some elements of a Safe Routes to School program, such as Walk to School Days, signs, and painting crosswalks, cost very little money. Others, such as new sidewalk construction, require more funding. Safe Routes to School activities are eligible for DOT funding that is distributed to metropolitan planning organizations and state departments of transportation.

Communities are designing Safe Routes to School programs that meet their unique needs. For instance, crime or fear of crime inhibits walking and biking to school in some places. Other communities have cited obstacles like abandoned buildings and stray dogs. To address these issues, residents can organize safety patrols made up of older students, create school route maps, and coordinate “walking school buses” or “bicycle trains,” which are groups of students accompanied by adults that walk or bicycle a pre-planned route to school.

The principal and teachers from Thomas Elementary School in Flagstaff, Arizona, worked with the municipal health and parks departments and local law enforcement to address safety issues in nearby Bushmaster Community Park, a hub for activities that threatened students’ safety while walking to school. A local business donated office space for a police substation one-quarter mile from the park, and volunteers asked local businesses to stop offering the individually sold bottles of beer that contributed to many of the problems in the park. The community also began weekly walking school buses.¹⁴⁰

140 Safe Routes to School National Partnership. *Implementing Safe Routes to School in Low-Income Schools and Communities*. 2010. www.saferoutespartnership.org/lowincomeguide.

Provide Access to Healthy Food

Many underserved neighborhoods lack sources of healthy, affordable food, a challenge linked to the high rates of diet-related diseases among low-income and minority populations.^{141,142} A number of issues can contribute to these “food deserts,” including supermarkets’ perceptions that low-income neighborhoods are not profitable locations, an assumed lack of spending power among residents, a lack of viable sites, high land and development costs, and lengthy approval processes.¹⁴³

However, economic research shows that low-income neighborhoods can have significant purchasing power and unmet demand.^{144,145} Local planning and economic development agencies and community organizations are building on these findings by conducting their own market studies, removing barriers, and providing incentives to attract grocery stores into neighborhoods that need them. For example, planners and economic developers are identifying and assembling suitable land for grocery store sites, speeding project approvals, and offering workforce development programs to prepare local residents for food retail jobs. Others are using financing tools to attract retailers, including New Market Tax Credits and private bank loans as well as federal and state grants. In New York City, the East Harlem Abyssinian Triangle development organization and the Abyssinian Development Corporation secured public financing that attracted private money to bring a supermarket to a predominantly African-

141 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Obesity Data/Statistics. minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=550. Accessed 2010.

142 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Diabetes Data/Statistics. minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=3&lvlid=62. Accessed 2010.

143 Change Lab Solutions. *Getting to Grocery: Tools for Attracting Healthy Food Retail to Underserved Neighborhoods*. 2012. changelabsolutions.org/publications/getting-grocery.

144 Porter, Michael. *The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City*. Harvard Business Review. May/June 1995. Porter estimated that America’s inner cities had roughly \$85 billion in annual purchasing power (or 7 percent of total retail spending). In many neighborhoods, more than 25 percent of demand for goods was not being met locally.

145 Miara, James. *Retail in Inner Cities*. Urban Land. January 2007. www.icic.org/ee_uploads/publications/Retail-in-Inner-Cities-ULL-ICIC-012007.pdf.



The North City Farmers' Market in Old North St. Louis provides free health screenings and healthy cooking demonstrations. *Photo courtesy of the City of St. Louis and the Old North St. Louis Restoration Group.*



The First Oriental Market in Philadelphia received a \$500,000 loan from the Fresh Food Financing Initiative to help its owners purchase the property they had previously leased. *Photo courtesy of Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative.*

American and Latino neighborhood in Harlem.¹⁴⁶ The supermarket agreed to give local residents at least 75 percent of the store's jobs. Since it opened in 1999, the store has met or exceeded industry averages for profitability.¹⁴⁷

Corner markets and convenience stores can also be sources of healthy foods. These small retailers might already be operating in underserved communities, and new ones might be able to fit into existing neighborhoods without lengthy development processes. Local government agencies can help small retailers sell healthy foods by providing grants or loans for physical improvements or equipment such as shelving or refrigeration units; covering the costs of initial healthy food orders; and offering marketing assistance for advertising, signage, and community outreach.¹⁴⁸

Retail stores are not the only potential outlets for fresh and healthy food. Nonprofit organizations can plant community gardens and start farmers' markets to bring produce from regional farms into neighborhoods. Another approach is community-supported agriculture, which allows residents to purchase shares from farmers at the beginning of a growing season in exchange for a portion of the crops. The farm either delivers directly to homes or distributes at a specific location in the neighborhood.

Local zoning and permitting regulations can prevent or slow the development of community gardens, farmers' markets, and mobile produce vending. Planners can remove regulatory barriers and ensure that zoning encourages sources of healthy food in neighborhoods that currently lack them.¹⁴⁹

146 The Abyssinian Neighborhood Project won EPA's National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2007. For more information, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "2007 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement" at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards/sg_awards_publication_2007.htm.

147 Flournoy, Rebecca. "Healthy Foods, Strong Communities." *Shelterforce Online*. National Housing Institute. 2006. www.nhi.org/online/issues/147/healthyfoods.html.

148 Healthy Corner Stores Network. *Healthy Corner Stores Q&A*. 2011. www.healthycornerstores.org/healthy-corner-stores-q-a.

149 Change Lab Solutions. *Zoning Talking Points*. 2012. changelabsolutions.org/publications/zoning-talking-points.

Some state and federal agencies provide resources to improve access to healthy food in low-income and minority communities. In 2004, the state of Pennsylvania, the nonprofit Food Trust, and The Reinvestment Fund, a community development financial institution (CDFI), created the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative.¹⁵⁰ They committed \$150 million to increase the number of grocery stores and supermarkets in underserved, low-income urban neighborhoods and small towns.¹⁵¹ The initiative provides grants and loans to qualified food retail enterprises for land acquisition financing, equipment financing, construction and permanent finance, workforce development, and other activities. As of 2011, the initiative has invested \$192 million to develop 90 new stores, creating or preserving more than 5,000 jobs and improving access to healthy food for more than half a million people.¹⁵²

The U.S. Department of Agriculture maintains the Food Environment Atlas, an online tool that allows users to identify food deserts.¹⁵³ The Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a partnership among the U.S. Departments of Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services, is working to expand the availability of nutritious food, including developing grocery stores, small retailers, corner stores, and farmers' markets and equipping them to sell healthy food.¹⁵⁴ In 2011, the Healthy Food

Financing Initiative awarded \$25 million in grants through the Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund to 12 CDFIs working to increase access to affordable healthy foods.¹⁵⁵

Provide Access to Parks and Green Space

Green space at all scales—from small neighborhood parks to greenways to forests and wetlands—provides health, social, and environmental benefits for low-income and overburdened communities. Parks, community gardens, playing fields, riverfront shorelines, and wildlife refuges offer opportunities for physical activity, social engagement, and mental respite. These natural and cultivated spaces provide habitat for wildlife and serve important biological functions that purify air and water, lower ambient air temperatures, and absorb rainwater to reduce flooding in developed areas.

Coalitions of community organizations, land conservationists, planners, and public health groups are combining funding from local, state, federal, nonprofit, and private sources to create parks and green spaces. The Bootheel Heart Health Project, a collaboration between the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, built walking trails in 12 rural, predominantly African-American communities in southeast Missouri. Almost 60 percent of trail users reported that they exercised more because of the trail.¹⁵⁶ In Chattanooga, Tennessee, community activists, the Trust for Public Land, and city officials partnered to create the Alton Park Safewalk to serve the low-income Alton Park neighborhood.¹⁵⁷ The urban greenway connects residents to the South Chattanooga Recreational Center and

150 The Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative won EPA's National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2006. For more information, see the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "2006 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement" at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/awards/sg_awards_publication_2006.htm.

151 New Rules Project. Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. www.newrules.org/retail/rules/financing-local-businesses/pennsylvania-fresh-food-financing-initiative. Accessed 2011.

152 The Food Trust. Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative. www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/ffi.php. Accessed 2011.

153 U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food Environment Atlas. www.ers.usda.gov/FoodAtlas. Accessed 2011.

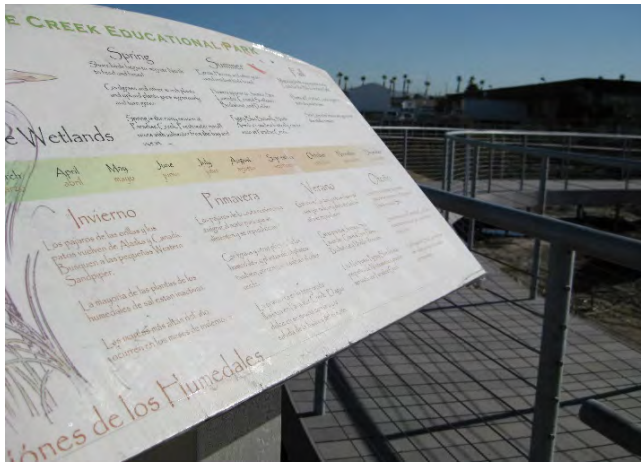
154 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy Food Financing Initiative. www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/ocs_food.html. Accessed 2011.

155 U.S. Department of the Treasury. "CDFI Fund Announces \$25 Million in Healthy Food Financing Initiative Awards." September 2011.

[www.cdfifund.gov/news_events/CDFI-2011-18-CDFI-Fund-Announces-\\$25-Million-in-Healthy-Food-Financing-Initiative-Awards.asp](http://www.cdfifund.gov/news_events/CDFI-2011-18-CDFI-Fund-Announces-$25-Million-in-Healthy-Food-Financing-Initiative-Awards.asp).

156 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Preventing Chronic Diseases: Investing Wisely in Health*. 2003. atfiles.org/files/pdf/CDC-HHS.pdf.

157 International City/County Management Association. *Active Living and Social Equity: Creating Healthy Communities for All Residents*. 2005. bookstore.icma.org/Active_Living_and_Social_Equit_P1247C15.cfm?UserID=73333666&jsessionid=4e3049a2a14454137426.



Community members in National City, California, led the restoration of Paradise Creek, a tidal saltwater marsh that had been harmed by pollution and dumping. Through organized cleanups, fundraising, collaboration with the local government, and native species planting, they created the Paradise Creek Educational Park, which will be the centerpiece of a planned affordable housing and transit-oriented development. *Photo courtesy of National City.*

will eventually link to schools, churches, and downtown Chattanooga through the planned Chattanooga Creek Greenway.¹⁵⁸

Communities are designing green spaces in ways that respond to their specific needs, such as improving visibility and lighting where crime is a concern. The Olneyville Housing Corporation worked with the Providence, Rhode Island police department to design a park, playground, and bike path on a strip of long-vacant land along the Woonasquatucket River. By involving the police in the planning process early and using the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design—a set of approaches aimed at designing the physical environment to deter crime—the housing corporation made siting and layout decisions that made the park and bike path easier to police and safer for users. As a result, these amenities are well-used by local families in what was once one of Providence's most dangerous neighborhoods.¹⁵⁹

158 Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency. *Alton Park/Piney Woods Community Plan (Draft)*. 2010. [www.chcrpa.org/Projects/Land_Use_Plans/Alton_Park_Plan/Alton%20Park%20Master%20Plan%20\(5-12-2010\).ALL.pdf](http://www.chcrpa.org/Projects/Land_Use_Plans/Alton_Park_Plan/Alton%20Park%20Master%20Plan%20(5-12-2010).ALL.pdf).

159 Local Initiatives Support Coalition Rhode Island. *Riverside Gateway-Providence, Rhode Island*. www.chcrpa.org/Projects/Land_Use_Plans/Alton_Park_Plan/Alton%20Park%20Master%20

Parks can also be places of cultural expression. The Campo Band of Mission Indians in southern California obtained funding from the San Diego Association of Governments to plan a community park that reflects the tribe's values of health and harmony with nature and welcomes all generations. The park is being designed with input from tribal staff, elders, and community members and will include indigenous medicinal and edible plants, a native orchard, and a teaching pavilion.¹⁶⁰

Municipalities can update their comprehensive plans and zoning to protect existing parks and encourage new green space. Some are doing this by developing policies to encourage green infrastructure as part of buildings, neighborhoods, and streets. As discussed in the section on green streets, green infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and natural processes to manage polluted stormwater runoff. At the scale of a city or county, green infrastructure refers to the patchwork of natural areas that provide habitat, flood protection, and cleaner air and water. At the scale of a neighborhood or site, green infrastructure refers to stormwater management features that mimic nature by soaking up and storing water.¹⁶¹ In both cases, green infrastructure can also provide places for recreation and make streets, public spaces, and buildings more attractive and pleasant. Philadelphia's *Green City, Clean Waters* plan uses elements such as restored stream corridors and wetlands, rain gardens, and green roofs to meet federal requirements for stormwater management while enhancing its neighborhoods. By 2029, the city plans to replace at least one-third of its impervious surfaces with green space to manage stormwater naturally and beautify the city.¹⁶²

[Plan%20\(5-12-2010\).ALL.pdf](#). Accessed 2011.

160 Campo Band of Mission Indians. *Final Project Report: Campo Tribal Community Park Project: Hummingbird Community Park*. 2012.

161 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Green Infrastructure. water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/index.cfm. Accessed 2012.

162 City of Philadelphia. *Manage Stormwater to Meet Federal Standards*. www.phila.gov/green/greenworks/equity_target8.html. Accessed 2011.

Preserve and Build On the Features that Make a Community Distinctive

Authentic community planning and revitalization are anchored in the physical and cultural assets that make a place unique. As decision-makers and community stakeholders implement the policies and strategies described in this report, they should build on the distinctive characteristics of their neighborhoods. Preserving and strengthening the features that make a place special maintains what existing residents value about their homes, attracts new residents and visitors, and spurs economic development that is grounded in community identity.

Land use planning processes often begin with visioning exercises where residents identify the aspects of their neighborhood that they like, including public spaces, long-standing institutions, and local traditions. Effective planning helps to preserve these assets and strengthen them through future development. This section discusses two broad approaches to culturally focused planning and development: preserving existing features that define local heritage, and strengthening that heritage through new development. Together, these strategies can promote development that respects local history and reinforces community pride.



Community leaders celebrate the unveiling of Minneapolis' American Indian Cultural Corridor. *Photo courtesy of the Native American Community Development Institute.*

Preserve Existing Cultural Features

Preserving the cultural heritage of a place can mean maintaining its physical elements, including buildings, main streets, public and civic spaces, and agricultural and natural lands. It can also mean supporting a community's cultural assets, such as traditions, festivals, commemorations of history, and shared community memories. These features help define the neighborhood and its values, are a source of local pride and identity, and provide a foundation for community-based revitalization and economic development.

A first step in cultural heritage preservation is to identify physical and cultural assets that matter to residents and document their histories and importance. Community-based organizations can collect information that tells the story of a place or tradition through library and Internet research, interviews, and site visits; communicate those stories to decision-makers and the public; and build support for preservation. Walking tours, seminars, celebrations or remembrances, place markers, museum exhibitions, oral history recording projects, and websites can also educate stakeholders and raise awareness about the importance of a place or tradition.

A community or region's physical and cultural assets can be a foundation for its land use and economic development planning. Municipalities and regional planning and development organizations can strengthen these assets using land use policies and regulations, entrepreneurship and workforce programs, small business retention and attraction, and industry cluster development strategies that enhance physical features and equip community members to build skills, get and keep jobs, open businesses, and shape economic growth that is homegrown and authentic.

Historic preservation tools can help preserve physical places or structures. Community organizations can start the historic preservation process by undertaking an assessment that identifies interested stakeholder groups; opportunities, such as a chance to obtain ownership of a site; threats, such as potential

The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, created to commemorate the 1965 Voting Rights March in Alabama, runs through an area facing high unemployment, health concerns, and other economic and social challenges. The trail is an important cultural asset to local communities and a potential economic driver. It passes several interpretive centers, museums, and monuments, and walking tours and other educational opportunities are offered along the way. Local communities are working with HUD, DOT, EPA, and other federal and state agencies to clean up former gas stations and petroleum-contaminated brownfields along the corridor, where residents hope to spur revitalization and develop local businesses such as craft and gift shops, restaurants, and vegetable stands.^{163,164}



Mt. Zion Church in West Montgomery, Alabama, is an important historic landmark along the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. The community is working with federal and state agencies to advance community revitalization and historic preservation in Montgomery and three other locations along the trail.

Photo courtesy of EPA.

163 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *National Historic Voting Rights Trail: Selma to Montgomery, Alabama*. 2010. www.epa.gov/oust/docs/al_recact1yr_story.pdf.

164 Partnership for Sustainable Communities. *Three Years of Helping Communities Achieve Their Visions for Growth and Prosperity*. 2012. www.sustainablecommunities.gov/toolsKeyResources.html.

demolition; the parties with control over the property; and specific goals, such as getting a structure recognized as a historic landmark or securing financial support to restore it.

There are various ways of obtaining official recognition for a historic site and, in some cases, protecting it. Getting a building listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places brings eligibility for tax credits and protection in the form of extra scrutiny if a site is threatened, though it does not prevent demolition. After San Francisco's Bayview Opera House, the nation's first African-American opera house, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it received funding and technical assistance from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.¹⁶⁵ Local, state, and federal landmark laws are other tools to protect historic properties.

Some historic preservation programs focus more on architecture and aesthetics than on history and culture, which can create hurdles for places that are notable primarily for their association with an event, era, or tradition. To overcome this challenge, stakeholders must provide a well-researched history of the place and show evidence of public support. Residents of the Bronx are working with the borough government to encourage the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission to declare the Bronx's *casitas*, or "little houses," city landmarks. *Casitas*, reminiscent of the wood farmhouses in the Puerto Rican countryside, might not always exemplify "notable" architecture, but they are vital elements of Puerto Rican culture in New York and have played an important role in neighborhood revitalization.¹⁶⁶

Some localities have included historic preservation elements in their master plans that lay out visions, goals, and implementation strategies to protect historic neighborhoods, corridors, and commercial centers and enhance the public's understanding of the community's

165 Smith, Matt. "Restoring Bayview Opera House Lifts the Area." *San Francisco Weekly*. November 17, 2010. www.sfweekly.com/2010-11-17/news/restoring-bayview-opera-house-lifts-the-area.

166 Hughes, C.J. "In Bronx, Little Houses that Evoke Puerto Rico." *New York Times*. February 22, 2009. www.nytimes.com/2009/02/23/nyregion/23casitas.html.

history and historic assets. Municipalities can also create historic preservation overlay zones that encourage reuse of historic buildings, require exterior building renovations and repairs to be approved by historic preservation experts before work begins, and allow historic preservation commissions to comment on proposals before the zoning board.

Community organizations can also preserve a building by securing grants to renovate or restore the structure, raising funds to purchase it, or obtaining a long-term lease. They can also collaborate with schools, libraries, churches, and historical societies to identify new ways the building can contribute to local life, such as offering performance or meeting space to artists or social groups.

Create New Development that Strengthens Local Culture

By taking inspiration from important landmarks, neighborhood designs, and local traditions, new development in a community can strengthen cultural identity. Design guidelines and neighborhood conservation districts can capture the specific physical characteristics of development that determine the overall character of a neighborhood and apply them to new built projects.

With design guidelines, municipalities establish common standards for the form and character of a neighborhood and elements within it. They can be tailored to specific types of development projects, such as commercial buildings, multifamily homes, industrial facilities, or streets and sidewalks. Design guidelines can contain standards that address the building itself, including architectural style, scale, height, roof form, materials, and color; its relationship to the street, including orientation and setback; landscaping; signage; and other elements. Similarly, local governments can create pattern books to provide developers and architects with images of acceptable components of new and renovated buildings.

The Mississippi Renewal Forum developed a Gulf Coast pattern book to preserve the architectural heritage of the region as it is rebuilt after Hurricane Katrina. The book provides images of building forms and key architectural elements to be used in the restoration and new construction of individual homes, commercial buildings, neighborhoods, and landscaping. It describes traditional block layouts, housing placement on lots, building types, decorative elements, and materials, and offers recommendations for fulfilling Federal Emergency Management Agency rebuilding requirements in a way that complements historic character.¹⁶⁷ By mixing different options from the pattern book, developers can create a variety of building types with a common architectural standard.

Local governments usually implement design guidelines as part of other development regulations and policies. These guidelines are most easily followed if they are clear, simple, and illustrated with photographs and images. In developing these guidelines, it is helpful for planners and community organizations to work with architects to distill the most important elements of community character.

Municipalities use neighborhood conservation districts, suitable for areas that are mostly built out, to ensure that new development and substantial modifications are in keeping with local character. Like design guidelines, this tool addresses the characteristics of buildings and sites. Neighborhood conservation districts are often implemented as zoning overlay districts that establish design standards for new construction, additions, or alterations to the street-facing facades of existing buildings. They can be simple, identifying the basic physical features that define a neighborhood such as

¹⁶⁷ Mississippi Renewal Forum. *A Pattern Book for Gulf Coast Neighborhoods*. 2005. www.mississippirenewal.com/documents/Rep_PatternBook.pdf.

the position of buildings on the site and their distance from the street, parking location, roof form, and the existence of front porches. Some communities prefer to implement voluntary neighborhood conservation districts.

Kansas City, Missouri's Jazz District, once a flourishing African-American community and a hotbed of Kansas City jazz, is being revitalized based on its cultural history, architectural styles, and neighborhood character. The Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation constructed residential, commercial, and retail space designed to complement existing architecture.¹⁶⁸ The district has attracted commercial tenants such as the Black Chamber of Commerce, the offices of an African-American newspaper, a blues club, and the Black Archives of Mid-America.¹⁶⁹

Standards that clarify design and compatibility preferences and requirements help create predictability in the development process for developers and community members. Guidelines for developers are clearly established, making their projects more likely to be approved and reducing costly delays. Community members can feel confident that new development will reinforce what they like about their neighborhoods. Providing images of preferred building styles can further clarify these standards.



The design of Minneapolis' American Indian-owned Woodlands National Bank and the accompanying public art celebrate native cultures. *Photo courtesy of the Native American Community Development Institute.*

¹⁶⁸ Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation. *Development Opportunities*. 2010. www.kcjazzdistrict.org/.

¹⁶⁹ Jazz District Redevelopment Corporation. 18th and Vine Jazz District Rebirth. www.kcjazzdistrict.org/. Accessed 2011.

Case Study:
Culturally Driven Land Use Planning
Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, New Mexico

In 2000, Ohkay Owingeh’s tribal members created a pueblo-wide Master Land Use Plan that encompassed all 5,800 square miles of Rio Arriba County. This long-term growth strategy coordinates future housing and commercial development and preserves the community’s historic plazas. The plan both strengthens the pueblo’s identity and protects its natural surroundings by keeping the traditional commitment to environmentally sensitive design. The Master Land Use Plan was the first tribal smart growth plan in the country and won EPA’s National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2004.

Located 35 miles north of Santa Fe, Ohkay Owingeh, formerly called San Juan Pueblo, has a population of 6,750. Over the years, the pueblo has faced unemployment, water constraints, and housing shortages. Nearly 20 percent of its residents live below the poverty line, and there is a long waiting list for housing.

Through their land use planning efforts, tribal leaders realized that continuing to construct housing away from the pueblo’s center would decrease the land available for agriculture and open space. The tribe’s infrastructure systems, including those for water and wastewater, also were not able to keep pace with the pueblo’s



The design for Tsigo Bugeh Village is inspired by traditional pueblos, which include pedestrian-oriented villages. *Photo courtesy of the San Juan Pueblo Office of the Governor.*

The Master Land Use Plan was the first tribal smart growth plan in the country and won EPA’s National Award for Smart Growth Achievement in 2004.

dispersed development. The water and sewer systems were at capacity and would not be able to provide sufficient water supply or pressure with future growth.

Approved in 2001, the Master Land Use Plan coordinates existing transportation and water infrastructure with housing and commercial development, preserves the pueblo’s historic plazas, and promotes main street-style retail and commercial development. The plan’s guidelines used traditional architectural designs that preserve Ohkay Owingeh’s cultural heritage and foster a distinctive sense of place. With the adoption of the Master Land Use Plan, the pueblo also expanded the sewer system and installed two new water tanks to allow for future growth, putting a temporary moratorium on new development until the upgrades were complete.

The first project implemented under the plan was Tsigo Bugeh Village, a development of 40 affordable townhouses arranged around two



The buildings in Tsigo Bugeh Village are clustered around two plazas, and contain affordable townhouses, a meeting space, a playground, a computer room, a fitness room, and business center. *Photo courtesy of the San Juan Pueblo Office of the Governor.*

plazas. The village was inspired by the original community design of the pueblo and includes a meeting space, playground, computer room, fitness room, and business center.

Collaboration among multiple organizations brought Tsigo Bugeh Village to life. For two years, the Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority invited tribal members, elders, and tribal leaders to participate in project planning. This public engagement provided valuable input on community concerns, including affordability and safety, sacred geographic locations, and floor plans to accommodate feast-day rituals. “The Tsigo Bugeh Village project demonstrates that people can help create housing that meets their needs,” says Tomasita Duran, the housing authority’s executive director. “The project combines modern characteristics with our traditional design.”

The pueblo built Tsigo Bugeh Village by making innovative use of funding from HUD, state and local agencies, and foundations. For the first time, HUD’s HOME funds, which are block grants to state and local governments designed to create affordable housing for low-income households, were used for rental housing on tribal lands in New Mexico. In another first, the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority provided low-cost loans on American Indian trust lands. The Ohkay Owingeh Housing Authority also used federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits.

Ohkay Owingeh’s Master Land Use Plan used smart growth concepts such as affordable housing, walkable neighborhoods, mixed land uses, compact building design, and stakeholder engagement to restore the pueblo’s traditional settlement patterns. As the tribe grows, it will use the plan to preserve its strong sense of culture and place for future generations.¹⁷⁰



The central plazas in Tsigo Bugeh Village include “hornos,” or traditional ovens. *Photo courtesy of the San Juan Pueblo Office of the Governor.*

¹⁷⁰ For references, see page 77.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

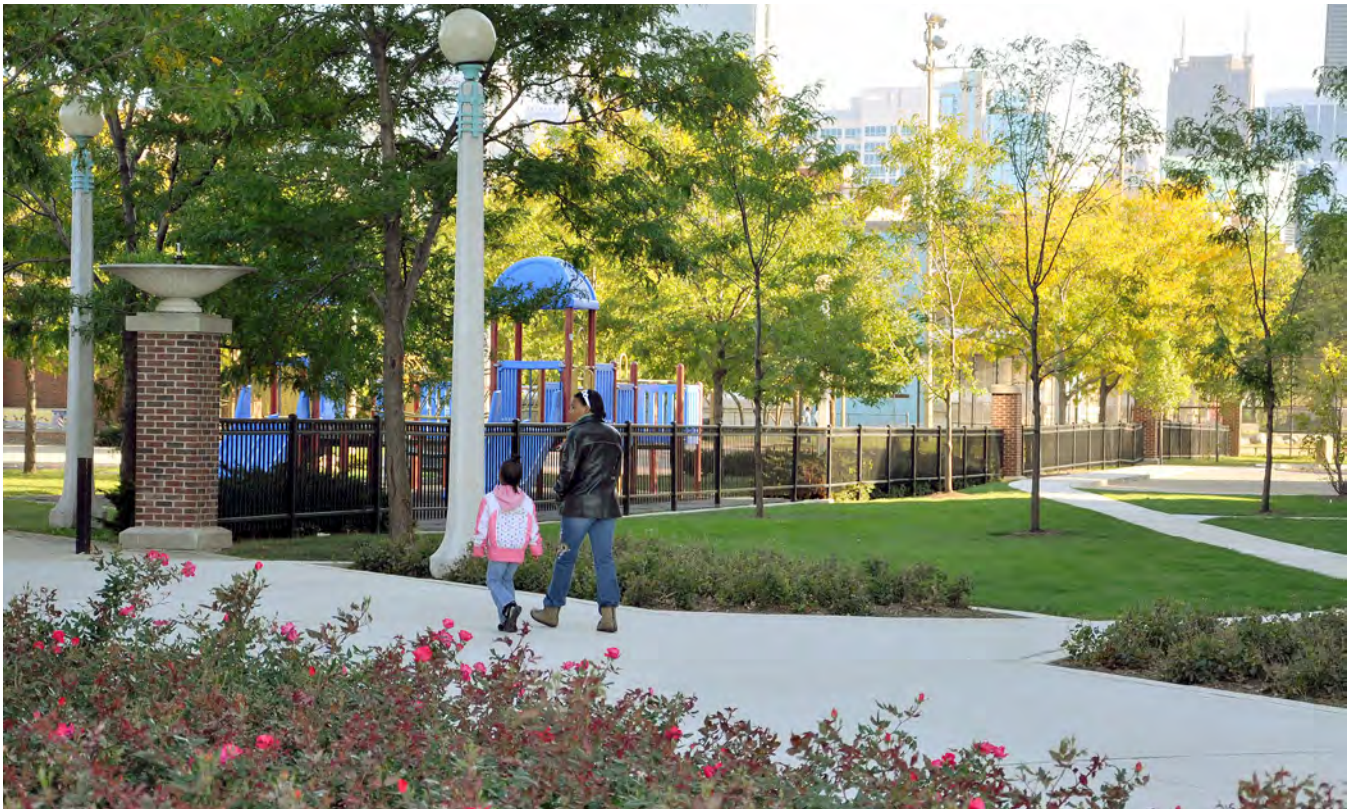
The strategies outlined in this publication can help low-income, minority, tribal, and overburdened communities shape development to respond to their needs and reflect their values. These strategies can also help local and regional planners and policy-makers make land use decisions that are equitable, healthy, and sustainable for all residents.

To chart a path forward and select the approaches that will meet local goals, each community can undertake a process of self-evaluation and dialogue. This process might include the following steps:



Downtown Silver Spring, Maryland's streetscape is inviting, interesting, and safe for families. *Photo courtesy of Lee Sobel.*

- *Build relationships among community-based organizations, residents, community development corporations, business owners, developers, local and regional decision-makers, and others interested in growth and development issues.* Effective partnerships among these stakeholders are critical to carrying out inclusive planning processes, identifying the right policies and investment priorities, and achieving development that works for all residents. Community-based organizations and community development corporations can play a particularly important role as liaisons to traditionally underrepresented populations and bring them into planning and development processes.
- *Build capacity while you plan.* Local and regional staff and community-based organizations can conduct inclusive and educational planning exercises that simultaneously identify residents' goals and needs and build the knowledge they need to shape development. These exercises include community assessments and visioning workshops.
- *Conduct community assessments and visioning exercises.* Planning tools such as walkability audits and community planning and visioning workshops are well-suited to drawing out the needs and goals of residents who are new to land use decision-making. Using these tools with small groups of residents from specific neighborhoods can facilitate an authentic community-driven planning process.



In Chicago, Illinois' Parkside of Old Town public housing redevelopment, greenways and playgrounds provide safe, visible play areas, while pedestrian paths create easy routes between residences and the surrounding parks, community facilities, and stores.

Photo courtesy of Parkside of Old Town.

- *Ensure that land use and development policies and codes are aligned with community visions and address the needs of low-income and overburdened communities.* The community's vision can be integrated into the comprehensive plan, and the zoning ordinance and other policy and regulatory documents can be updated to implement the plan. Tools such as inclusionary zoning, mixed-use zoning, street design standards, and others described throughout this publication can be used to support low-income and overburdened communities.
- *Start working to mitigate residential and commercial displacement as early in revitalization efforts as possible.* Activities can include mapping important commercial, industrial, service, and cultural places; assessing community demographic and economic trends to identify areas vulnerable to rising housing costs; setting aside land for affordable housing; and putting land use regulations in place to protect community assets.

These steps can help communities develop their visions for the future; identify strategies and policies to achieve them; and create development that is fair, enduring, and authentic.

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Resource Guide

General Smart Growth Resources

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- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Symposium on the Science of Disproportionate Environmental Health Impacts. www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/multimedia/albums/epa/disproportionate-impacts-symposium.html. Provides 14 scientific reviews commissioned by EPA to examine why low-income, minority, and tribal populations are exposed to greater environmental pollution and experience greater environmental health risks.
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Minimizing Displacement: An Early Priority in Revitalization

- National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. *Unintended Impacts of Redevelopment and Revitalization Efforts in Five Environmental Justice Communities* (PDF, 40 pp., 284K). 2006. www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/publications/nejac/redev-revital-recomm-9-27-06.pdf. Contains recommendations on avoiding the displacement that can follow successful brownfields cleanup and redevelopment.
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 - Center for Community Progress. *Land Banks and Land Banking* (PDF, 120pp., 2.8MB). 2011. www.communityprogress.net/filebin/pdf/new_resrcs/LB_Book_2011_F.pdf. Provides a step-by-step guide for taking control of vacant properties through land banking and leveraging them to spur smart development and meet community needs.

Provide Housing Choices

- National Neighborhood Coalition and Smart Growth Network. *Affordable Housing and Smart Growth: Making the Connection*. 2001. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/topics/ah.htm. Uses case studies to illustrate strategies that can foster affordable housing and smart growth.
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- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Guide to Sustainable Transportation Measures*. 2011. www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/transpo_performance.htm. Describes opportunities for transportation agencies to incorporate environmental, economic, and social sustainability into decision-making through the use of performance measures.
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Improve Access to Opportunities and Daily Necessities

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