

# LEADING LOCALLY: A COMMUNITY POWER-BUILDING APPROACH TO STRUCTURAL CHANGE



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USC  
Dornsife

*Equity Research  
Institute*

Data and Analysis to Power Social Change

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Lead Local Purpose and Partners

The purpose of *Lead Local: Community-Driven Change and the Power of Collective Action*, a project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), was to understand how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities.

To explore this question, RWJF brought together a set of partners: Caring Across Generations, Change Elemental, Human Impact Partners and Right to the City Alliance, Johns Hopkins University SNF Agora Institute, USC Equity Research Institute (formerly USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity), and Vanderbilt University. Turning to those closest to the work, Lead Local partners expanded the project to incorporate the knowledge and expertise of 40 local organizations working in 16 places across the United States.

The report is about the story of community power in 16 places. It is the culmination of a 24-month process to understand how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities through the lens of local organizations who are building community power to dismantle systems that perpetuate health inequity and to create alternative policy and institutional vehicles that can promote healthy communities.

### Community Power and Conditions for Healthy Communities

Community power is the **ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance health equity.** Community power building is particularly critical for underserved, underrepresented, and historically marginalized communities who have been excluded from decision-making on the policies and practices that impact their health and the environments that affect their health.

Building power among such communities starts with the on-the-ground, one-on-one work of organizing, building a membership base and developing grassroots leaders. While there are diversity of models and theories, base building, in general, is a diverse set of strategies and methods to support community members to be in relationship with one another; invest in each other's leadership; share a common identity shaped by similar experiences and an understanding of the root causes of their conditions; and use their collective analysis to create solutions and strategize to achieve them.

Community power-building approaches to shaping conditions for healthy communities are about the development and implementation of policies, practices, and structural changes to support a culture of health. It includes challenging dominant beliefs and mindsets that hinder systems change efforts. And equally important, if not more, is *how* the work is done: It approaches policy and structural changes in ways that increase the power-building capacities and influence of communities most impacted by health inequities. In other words, community power is not only a strategy for achieving health equity, community power is, in and of itself, an end goal.

### **Lead Local Places**

Because of the importance of person-to-person engagement, understanding community power approaches is inextricably linked to understanding the specificities of place—where people live, work, play, and pray. Therefore, we examined community power-building efforts in 16 places across the United States. Nine of the Lead Local places are small to mid-size cities (with populations between 50,000 and 500,000): Atlanta, Des Moines, Eau Claire, Miami, Minneapolis, Portland (Maine), Rochester (New York), Santa Ana, and Santa Fe; three are larger cities (with populations over 500,000): Chicago, Denver, and Detroit; and four are states: Kentucky, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. These places are intentionally diverse by geographic region, political context, and demography so that lessons from this project could be applicable and scale-able in a variety of contexts.



## How community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities

Drawing from a synthesis of community power efforts across a diversity of places, we take the central question for the Lead Local project and turn it into a simple frame for understanding the ways in which community power building impacts the social and structural determinants of health:

- ▶ Community power builders *catalyze* conditions by **setting an agenda** for change, which involves: bringing attention to issues and problems facing marginalized and historically disenfranchised communities; developing analyses of root causes that inform solutions to the problems; and building momentum through collective action and catalytic campaigns.
- ▶ Community power builders *create* conditions by leveraging that momentum toward **achieving an agenda**, which involves: winning—or protecting—funding, programs, and services; developing and passing policies and legislation; and establishing alternative models or programs.
- ▶ And community power builders *sustain* conditions for healthy communities by **governing an agenda**, which involves: developing leaders for key decision-making positions; building mutual accountability between decision makers and communities; and shifting the public discourse through narrative and culture change work.

There are many ways to approach change and many roles required in the work to build healthier communities for all. One could look at what we have just laid out about catalyzing, creating, and sustaining conditions for healthy communities and ask: Isn't it more effective to hire a communications firm to bring public attention to an issue? Isn't it faster to achieve policy gains when it is led by policy experts who also have relationships with decision-makers? Can't we just fund a government agency directly to reform its public participation processes?

We would argue that victories have deeper roots and seed greater change when led and anchored by community power-building organizations. And this is due, in part, to their deeply-seated belief that nothing short of transformational change is needed. Communities hold organizers accountable to what's needed, rather than to what's feasible.



What has become clear through our research is that the most valuable role that community power-building groups play is often the least visible, hardest to measure, as well as the most challenging to resource. The following are examples of the transformational changes they seek to achieve at multiple levels: starting with each individual to the organizational to cross-organizational and ultimately at societal scale:

- ▶ **Focusing on people’s personal and permanent transformation:** This includes a shift from private shame to the desire to make their problems public and collectively build and wield power to change their conditions. Someone’s first public stand may be around a specific demand—like protection of Medicaid, but it is also likely that they will continue to fight as the needs and issues shift.
- ▶ **Modeling new ways of making decisions:** Groups are instilling new values and practices towards more inclusive decision-making by preparing leaders skilled to usher in new ways of working with others, especially with communities most impacted. Organizers may place just as much importance in changing systems and practices as they do their own organizational systems and practices. It means taking the steps to build trust with people in the community; setting intentional time to listen and learn from them; engaging people at every step in the work; empowering people and providing a space for people to develop new skills—in short, not tokenizing their participation.
- ▶ **Seeking to build lasting alliances:** Alliances between community power-building organizations help them connect different constituencies across neighborhood and issue to discover interconnections between their problems and develop a collective analysis of the root causes. Long-term alliances commit to sticking together for the long haul and consolidate wins so that they can build towards greater demands. What it all boils down to is trust. Similar to base building, knowing that others will have your back and are driving toward a shared vision for healthy communities is the lifeblood of long-term alliances.



- ▶ **Changing the culture of civic engagement:** Groups are expanding the notion of what civic engagement is: This includes setting a vision of governance that transforms and expands who votes and on what issues. It is also about the on-going and year-round work of engaging voters *in between* election cycles. Furthermore, having the issues defined by the community and centering the concerns and voices of the most impacted can actually activate and mobilize the under-mobilized.

### Lessons and Recommendations

So, what does this all mean and what actions does it suggest? The following are the top five lessons from this project:

1. **Community power-building strategies and capacities are inextricably tied to place**—and its historical, demographic, economic, political, and geographic contexts and structures. The *Changing States* framework considers power contestation in these and related arenas across multiple scales, and so helps us understand the terrain facing 16 very different places, ranging from Miami, FL to Washington State in communities seeking voice and promoting health. We argue that such specificity is needed to explore how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities—and what investments can help strengthen the field.



- 2. Community power has multiple dimensions**, including setting the public agenda, winning that agenda, *and* ultimately governing to realize that agenda. Governing power—not just the ability to advocate for and win policies, especially those related to structural reform, but also the ability to oversee their protection and implementation—is crucial. Yet so is the ability to shape mindsets and to generate narrative change. And while organizations have experienced successes in navigating administrative, economic, and cultural arenas of change, these aspects of governing power are the leading and growing edges of the field.
- 3. Community power is not just a way to achieve outcomes but is an outcome in and of itself.** It is important to address structural barriers to healthy communities but the process itself can build organization and leadership within impacted communities in ways that have lasting impact. Because of this, more resources and coordination are needed to lift up leadership and organizational development. In addition, the metrics of success need to focus not just on transactions, such as particular policy shifts, but also on transformation at the individual, organizational, inter-organizational, and societal levels.
- 4. Organizing and base building are the foundation of community power building—and exist within an ecosystem of organizations.** There is an ecosystem of advocacy groups, legal supporters, research centers, and intermediaries that play important roles. Yet, organizing is too often seen as being in service to an agenda determined by professional advocates, funders, or communications experts. This project highlights the impacts—both tangible and intangible—when organizing is at the center. The most important contribution of power builders to building healthy communities is often less visible, less frequently measured, and less resourced. Yet it is critical. For historically-excluded residents to engage in strategies and campaigns that drive toward healthy communities, they must make their private problems public and join with others to make change.
- 5. The time to invest in power building is now.** It is appropriate to think of community power building as a long-term strategy—but that does not mean it is an activity to be postponed in favor of emergency relief or quicker policy advocacy. Whether talking to statewide groups or hyperlocal groups, all acknowledge that conditions were precarious even before COVID-19: housing was scarce, healthcare was neglected, immigrants were threatened, wages were inadequate, incarceration was rampant, education was failing, and community fragmentation and isolation was growing. Post-COVID-19, the needs are even starker, but they will only be met if we collectively recognize our connections *and* if communities are able to force their way into the conversation about the road ahead.

So what investments in power building should be made? We would be remiss if we did not state the obvious: Fund community power-building organizations with multi-year and general operating grants. The following are an additional ten recommendations:

1. Take steps to center community power.
2. Center racial equity in health equity.
3. Strengthen organizations and networks that are rooted in communities most impacted by unhealthy conditions, particularly Black and indigenous communities.
4. Understand the specificities of a place in order to determine what strategies and capacities are needed—and how to support or partner with local community power-building organizations.
5. Support groups in organizing a constituency base.
6. Increase the field's capacity to organize toward governing power.
7. Support experiments and efforts in cultural and narrative change—particularly around restoring people's faith in government.
8. Explore ways for community power-building organizations to partner with government agencies—and how to leverage agency resources to counter corporate power and influence.
9. Build a network of scholars with the skills and capacity to partner with—and to bolster the work of—community power-building organizations.
10. Develop clear measures of community power—including the less visible and less frequently tracked measurements of transformation that are of paramount importance to the field.

## **Conclusion**

At the start of this project, we could not have predicted such a turning point and transformative moment in our world's history: that a virus could bring the world to a stop. That a virus could wake up more people to see that even pre-COVID-19 conditions were precarious for too many. Yet what it is teaching us is that we can take steps today to protect the most vulnerable and to remake our communities into places where all can live, play, learn, and thrive. And it begins with building the kind of community power, systems disruption, and story about ourselves and this nation that, in fact, reminds us of the American ideals we lifted up to the world even as we never quite lived up to their promise.

## INTRODUCTION

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The widespread and devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 have revealed how critical social, environmental, and economic conditions are in the protection of public health. The pandemic has brought to public attention trends that have been in place for a long time. There are still many people and communities who lack health insurance; who do not have financial assets to survive an emergency; who are forced to go to work regardless of the risks or rewards of that work; who are at constant risk in overcrowded or unstable housing; who are on the wrong side of a digital divide that makes remote work and remote learning challenging; and who are finding themselves and their family members getting sick and dying at rates higher than the general population.

This marks an opportunity for a transformative teaching moment. Many are recognizing that our own health is linked to that of others and that when we protect everyone, we protect ourselves. There is growing awareness of the underlying inequities by race, income, and geography that leave some communities systematically marginalized and at higher risk of debilitating health affects and death after contracting the COVID-19 virus. Additionally, protests sweeping the nation and the world sparked by the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, at the hands of the police, and Ahmaud Arbery, killed by armed white residents, one a former police officer, are bringing to public attention racial discrimination.



Across the country, there are long overdue conversations about how the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 virus and police violence on Black Americans, in particular, have deeper roots in racism (Ollove and Vestal 2020; Vestal 2020) and how racism is a public health issue (Vestal 2020). These conversations are happening alongside a growing recognition of powerlessness as another root cause of unhealthy communities (Givens et al. 2018; Kickbusch 2015; Schrantz 2016). So, the question we need to explore is not whether these kinds of conditions determine the health of communities. We know they do. The question is how do impacted communities re-shape such conditions to improve their daily lives and those of their children?

This report finds that the answer lies in community power. This report is based on a 24-month project that brought together leaders from across the country who are directly working to address issues of powerlessness in communities disproportionately impacted by racial, economic, and environmental inequities. The research question we set out to explore together was: **How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities?** We answer this question by assessing the conditions in 16 places across the United States through the knowledge and experiences of local community power-building organizations, understanding their approaches to re-shaping conditions, and identifying the ways in which they contribute to collaborative efforts to achieve healthy communities for all.

What has become clearer through this project is that the most valuable roles that community power-building organizations play are often the least visible and are not well understood by those outside the field. Our hope is that this report sparks conversation about the importance of centering community power *and* racial equity going forward so that health equity leaders and practitioners will pursue opportunities that help build community power and advance towards a healthier, more equitable society.



## LEAD LOCAL PROJECT AND PARTNERS

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*How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities?*

### LEAD LOCAL NORTH STAR QUESTION

Launched in December 2018, *Lead Local: Community-Driven Change and the Power of Collective Action* was a collaborative project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) designed to understand how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities. It brought together a set of partners each with frameworks and theories of change for community power building as well as relationships with local community power-building organizations. The following are the Lead Local partners and the distinct focus that each brought to the project.

University of Southern California Equity Research Institute (USC ERI) seeks to use data and analysis to contribute to more powerful movements for equity. For Lead Local, we look at community-led structural reforms as well as apply our *Changing States* framework to the investigation of the story of community power building in place. Not only do we bring academic knowledge and an analytical framework to the project, but we also leverage our capacity to provide quantitative data on socio-economic and demographic conditions and regional equity indicators as demonstrated on the National Equity Atlas, a partnership with PolicyLink.

## LEAD LOCAL PROJECT AND PARTNERS *continued*

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Caring Across Generations is a national campaign that brings together all people touched by care—family caregivers, care workers, older adults, and people with disabilities—to transform the way we care in this country and to create an inclusive society that helps all of us reach our full potential, live well, and age with dignity. For this project, it was brought in for its theory and practices on cultural and narrative change to shift mindsets as a community power-building strategy. It also brings expertise in grassroots-led, multi-sector collaborations in achieving healthy communities.

Human Impact Partners (HIP) is a national nonprofit organization using capacity building, advocacy, and research to challenge the inequities that harm the health of our communities. HIP brings the power of public health to campaigns and movements for a just society. For Lead Local, it works with Right to the City Alliance (RTTC) to explore the current housing crisis—which includes housing instability (eviction, foreclosure, houselessness), unaffordable housing, and poor-quality housing—and how the crisis is directly linked to poor health outcomes and rooted in an unequal distribution of power. Representing true grassroots power and leadership of the most impacted, RTTC’s member organizations weave together local on-the-ground policy advocacy campaigns to build a robust and unstoppable national movement for housing, land, and development justice.

Change Elemental partners with individuals, organizations, and networks to co-create and catalyze what is needed for lasting, equitable change. Its approach centers on deepening practices around the key elements of transformative change: advancing deep equity; cultivating leaderful ecosystems; valuing multiple ways of knowing; influencing complex systems change; and creating the space for inner work. Its focus for Lead Local is on exploring the capacities that are uniquely important for community power building in its definition of capacities as patterns of thinking (one’s mindset and assumptions), behaving (one’s actions, behaviors, and habits), feeling (one’s emotions), and being (one’s inner state and how one relates to actions, events, and others).

Dr. Hahrie Han at Johns Hopkins University SNF Agora Institute and P3 Lab and Dr. Paul Speer and Jyoti Gupta at Vanderbilt University bring existing academic knowledge on community organizing and community power theories of change; observational and experimental methods for studying civic engagement and collective action; and relationships with foundations about measures and metrics for power building. For Lead Local, their focus is on an assessment of needs, gaps, and opportunities of existing research on community power and health equity and the development of a forward-looking research agenda.

See Appendix C: Lead Local Project Partners for full descriptions of the partner organizations. All the reports published by partners as part of the Lead Local project are available for download at [www.lead-local.org](http://www.lead-local.org)



## ROADMAP TO THE REPORT

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The report is about the story of community power in 16 places. It is the culmination of a 24-month process of answering the Lead Local North Star question—how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities—and understanding each place through the knowledge and experiences of 40 local community power-building organizations and with the guidance and coordination of Lead Local partners and RWJF.

The report starts with a description of the research methods employed in the three steps of the research process. The first step is selecting the places and local organizations. With the places and field partners selected, the next step is the collaborative process for interviewing local organizations to answer the overall North Star question as well as to explore each partner’s distinct research focus as previously described. The third step is analyzing the interview data and methods used to explore both the story of each place and overarching themes and findings across place.

It then provides an overview of *Changing States*, the starting framework that guides the data collection and analysis for this project. *Changing States* is organized into three parts: conditions for change; arenas of change that define the terrain upon which change is waged, won, implemented, and protected; and capacities for building power to affect change. The framework is applied in the following ways: in developing the interview questions with the local organizations, in guiding the quantitative data analysis of the 16 Lead Local places, in informing the analysis of community power building in each place, and in determining what part of the story of place to highlight.

The following sections focus on two discrete components of the North Star question: conditions for healthy communities and community power. For each component, we provide a working definition and explanation drawn from interview data, a review of existing literature, and discussion among Lead Local partners. At the beginning of the project, it was not the intent to come to a shared definition of these terms. However, in the final phase of the project, the utility of doing so became clear, especially because the similarities in definitions that emerged from the field made the task so clear.

At the heart of this report are the narratives of the 16 places selected to be part of the Lead Local project. Before the stories of place, we briefly highlight key indicators for comparing places to each other and to the overall U.S. The purpose is to provide at a glance the socio-economic and demographic contexts that shape community power-building efforts. This snapshot includes key population data comparing the size of the total population and percentages of people of color, youth of color, immigrants, the percentage of population living below the federal poverty line, and median household income. It also includes dissimilarity indices as measures of social connection and disconnection.

The report then has a narrative of all 16 places starting with the cities: Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Denver, Co; Des Moines, IA; Detroit, MI; Eau Claire, WI; Miami, FL; Minneapolis, MN; Portland, ME; Rochester, NY; Santa Ana, CA; and Santa Fe, NM. Then it covers the four states: Kentucky, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. These places are intentionally diverse by geographic region, political context, and demography so that lessons from this project could be applicable and scale-able in a variety of contexts.



We then return to a synthesis across all places to highlight how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities. We turn this central question into a simple frame for understanding the ways in which community power building impacts the social and structural determinants of health: Community power builders *catalyze* conditions by setting an agenda for change. Community power builders *create* conditions by leveraging that momentum toward achieving an agenda. And community power builders *sustain* conditions for healthy communities by governing an agenda. This section discusses each in more detail with illustrative examples from the field.

The most valuable role that community power-building groups play is often the least visible, hardest to measure, as well as the most challenging to resource. Therefore, we dive a little deeper into what organizers share as perhaps the most important aspects of their work—and discuss how it brings about deeper and bolder change. We focus on transformational impacts of their approaches to leadership development, strategic alliances, and cultural change yet we recognize that this is only a starting list and is not comprehensive.

Finally, we wrap up the report with lessons and recommendations for increasing community power to achieve health equity. While we certainly hope that foundations see ways in which they can increase grantmaking to community power-building organizations, we also acknowledge that every one of us can set into motion a series of steps that will help strengthen the field. As we discuss in this report, there are different roles in building healthy communities, so are there different roles that everyone can play in increasing community power—from government agencies, legal and policy advocates, national civic organizations, and even academic research centers.

For a summary of key findings, lessons, and recommendations, please see the report *Story of Place: Community Power and Healthy Communities* available on the project website, [www.lead-local.org](http://www.lead-local.org).

## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

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### Lead Local Place and Field Partner Selection

A critical step in exploring the North Star question was selecting the places in which we would gather data, primarily in the form of interviews with Lead Local field partners. Lead Local grantees, with RWJF staff, spent months undergoing an in-depth, data-driven process of selecting what ended up being the 16 Lead Local places of study—and the 40 field partners therein who participated in Lead Local through interviews and attending convenings. The selection process involved two in-person meetings at RWJF in Princeton, New Jersey, several virtual meetings, and many more discussions and analyses in between.

The first step in place selection was the co-creation of criteria among Lead Local grantees and RWJF staff. There were place-based criteria to ensure diverse representation by geographic region, political context, and demography so that lessons from this project could be applicable and scale-able in a variety of contexts. Criteria also included knowledge and expertise among Lead Local grantees about organizations and efforts that could shed light on our thematic areas of inquiry: structural reforms, capacities for change, cultural and narrative work, multi-sector coalitions, and housing justice. Finally, RWJF has a particular focus on small- to mid-size cities, so we took that into account, too.

To narrow the initial list of places that was compiled based on the set of criteria collectively identified, Lead Local grantees each mapped potential field partners and places. Criteria for individual organizations included community power-building organization with a track record of success and/or learnings; a commitment to building power at scale; demonstrated ability to raise and deploy resources responsibly; and an existing relationship with Lead Local grantees that could be deepened and strengthened. Criteria for the portfolio of organizations included a range of base-building traditions, methods, and strategies; a mix of campaign targets and strategies working across a range of decision-making arenas (legislative, electoral, legal, administrative, cultural, and corporate); a mix of organizational lifecycle stages, types, and sizes; and diversity among constituency bases.

To refine our selection criteria and collective priorities for choosing places and field partners, USC ERI interviewed the Lead Local grantees—Caring Across Generations, Change Elemental, Human Impact Partners, and Right to the City—as well as RWJF staff. USC ERI then analyzed interview transcripts by identifying key themes, and the amount of overlap between themes, to refine place and field partner selection criteria. Based on the field mapping and grantee interviews, USC ERI created four different scenarios that encompassed a total of 43 cities across 24 states to identify which criteria to weight and the rationale that would inform choice-making.

Finally, at a second in-person, multi-day gathering hosted by RWJF in May 2019, Lead Local grantees collectively finalized the selection of 40 field partners to invite to participate in interviews and in-person convenings across 16 places: Nine are small to mid-size cities (with populations between 50,000 and 500,000): Atlanta, Des Moines, Eau Claire, Miami, Minneapolis, Portland (Maine), Rochester (New York), Santa Ana, and Santa Fe; three are larger cities (with populations over 500,000): Chicago, Denver, and Detroit; and four are states: Kentucky, Oregon, Texas, and Washington.

### **Data Collection**

After selecting 16 places and 40 field partners, to answer the North Star question—how community power building shapes conditions for healthy communities—USC ERI conducted in-depth, video interviews with 38 of them. (Two of the field partners were selected because of their cultural and narrative change work, rather than their place-based work, to inform thematic areas of inquiry led by Caring Across Generations, so USC ERI did not interview them for this report.) Representatives from HIP/RTTC and Change Elemental joined the interviews that were relevant to their specific focus areas. This combined effort was done to limit the strain on groups who need to focus on the day-to-day task of organizing and meeting community needs.

While the interview protocol was based on USC ERI’s *Changing States* framework (see the next section), members of the Lead Local Research Committee co-developed the questions (see Appendix B). To do this, each member wrote questions they would like to see as part of a protocol to help answer the North Star question as well as their thematic areas of inquiry. USC ERI then analyzed the questions for overlap and came up with the following guiding questions, which the interview protocol followed: What are the living conditions that affect historically-marginalized populations? What is community power building and how does it improve living conditions and address inequities that historically-marginalized communities face? How are community organizing groups building power towards healthy communities? What capacities are essential for building such power? What impacts are community organizing groups having in the 16 Lead Local places?

To prepare for interviews, USC ERI developed preliminary place profiles drawing largely from the National Equity Atlas (a joint effort of PolicyLink and USC ERI, for which ERI provides the underlying data infrastructure) and other publicly-available data sources (primarily the U.S. Census Bureau) to better understand the demographic, economic, geographic, and political conditions. We also examined secondary research from academic and grey (or “popular”) publications and other web sources so we could have more in-depth conversations with our interviewees.

Interviews with field partners ranged from 1-2 hours and were conducted between September and December 2019. At the Lead Local Symposium in November 2019, we presented early insights from our data collection and preliminary analysis, at which we received feedback and reactions from Lead Local partners to ensure our representation of the data was accurate and aligned with community power building work on the ground.



### Data Analysis

Starting in January 2020, we then started a formal analysis of the interview data by using the mixed-methods software Dedoose. We started with a list of 17 codes that correspond to our Changing States framework (i.e. conditions, arenas, and capacities) and to the North Star questions (i.e. definition of community power and power-building strategies). Coding was an iterative process in which we created new sub-codes based on interview data then reapplied to interviews previously coded. By the end of the coding, we had applied a total of 62 codes to over 1,000 pages of interview transcripts. For a visual of the coding software, see Figure 1.

To guide our preliminary analysis, we looked at the codes with the highest frequencies in each of the interview transcripts affiliated with that place. After the preliminary analysis of each place, we applied the elements of our Changing States framework, specifically the arenas of change, strategies, and capacities, to determine the main focus to emphasize in each place to ensure a diverse representation of the field as a whole.

Because our analysis is based primarily on interviews with Lead Local partners, the profiles in this report are not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of the place. In places where there was only one organization, we conducted supplementary interviews. Instead, these profiles are intended to illustrate the specific questions of the Lead Local project and inform future exploration and inquiry.



Figure 1. Screenshot of Dedoose showing the code count by interview transcript

## THE *CHANGING STATES* FRAMEWORK

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To provide a systematic assessment across a diverse set of places, people, and partners, our inquiry into how community power catalyzes, creates, and sustains conditions for healthy communities was through the *Changing States* framework. Published in 2016, *Changing States: A Framework for Progressive Governance* (Pastor, Ito, and Wander 2016) is a research-based, action-oriented tool for assessing the full terrain on which social change efforts are fought and victories secured and protected so as to inform an understanding about what capacities and strategies are needed. The three parts of the Changing States framework are:

- ▶ **Conditions for change** that set the context for understanding power-building approaches in a place.
- ▶ **Arenas of change** that define the playing field for pushing, passing, implementing, and protecting policy and structural change.
- ▶ **Capacities for change** that are building enough power to affect change in varying arenas of change.

Not to be confused with the “conditions for healthy communities,” which we explain later, the conditions for change are about understanding the demographic, economic, political, historical, and geographic trends in a place. This is helpful in identifying key constituencies, the issues that may motivate them to action, and the barriers to overcome. Economic and political trends, for example, are often closely tied to who sits in positions of power.

The most pertinent part of the framework for the Lead Local project is the arena of change. There are six arenas that are defined by the entity who has the final decision-making authority. While together they define the full terrain where ideas, policies, and power are contested, the purpose of doing so is less about building power in all six arenas simultaneously and more about identifying the interplay between arenas and the opportunities to support strategic choice-making about where, how, and when to contest for power. The six arenas are the following:

- ▶ The **electoral** arena is where voters are shaping policy indirectly through electing representatives or directly through ballot initiatives. This is the most widely recognized form of political participation and avenue for building and mobilizing popular power through voter education and get-out-the-vote efforts. Integrated voter engagement is an emerging strategy to build power in multiple arenas, most commonly, at the interplay of the electoral, legislative, and cultural arenas.



- ▶ The **legislative** arena is where elected representatives and policy makers propose, shape, and approve (or disapprove) laws and policies. At the local level, this is the domain of city councils, aldermen, county supervisors, and boards of education who are targets of advocacy and lobbying efforts, both grassroots and professional. Working in this arena often means organizing constituencies and allies to influence legislators beyond the public hearings and testimony that are often symbolic in nature.
- ▶ The **judicial** arena is where courts and judges determine the legality of policies and practices. This arena is particularly important in places where community power-led efforts face harsh political opposition and where such efforts threaten the strongholds of those holding positions of power and authority. While judicial decisions can preserve privilege and the status quo, they can also safeguard democratic processes from bias and special interests.
- ▶ The **administrative** arena is where executive officials and the staff of government agencies are making decisions as they oversee and implement laws and rules, coordinate agencies and regulatory bodies, and administer public participation processes. While policy and structural reforms are most commonly fought and won in the electoral and legislative arenas, whether or not the intended impacts are realized is often dependent upon decisions made in the administrative and judicial arenas. This is where “inside-outside” strategies that build partnerships between those inside government and those outside government (e.g. community power-building organizations) come into play.
- ▶ The **cultural** arena is where the efforts to influence the values, worldviews, and beliefs of the public at-large occur. In the narrowest sense, it includes the messaging and communications strategies to win over the public to support a particular issue or policy proposal. In the broadest sense, it is about the narrative and culture change strategies aimed at moving society as a whole to embrace and to take actions rooted in values of inclusion, justice, and dignity for all.
- ▶ The **corporate** or **economic** arena is where business leaders and corporate stakeholders make decisions that directly affect workers, families, and communities. This is the realm in which workers, families, and residents place demands and negotiate directly with corporate leadership for better wages and benefits, worker protections, community benefits, and other changes in practices.

One final note about this framework: Its utility is that it is applicable to any issue and to any geographic scale (local, state, regional, and national). Furthermore, it is applicable and valid regardless of political persuasion and social change goals. We come to this work with a particular set of values and beliefs: We believe that vulnerable and marginalized people and communities should be well represented and be active participants in public policy debates and that the institutions of government and the economy should be accountable and responsive to them. However, we also operate such that our analytical methods and frameworks are independent of ideology and politics. After all, everyone is operating on the same terrain.



## CONDITIONS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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Throughout this report, the term “condition” is used under a variety of contexts: conditions *for* change, conditions *to* change, and conditions *for healthy communities*. Of particular importance for this project is “conditions for healthy communities” as it is a key part of the North Star question: How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain **conditions for healthy communities?**

As mentioned in the previous section, “conditions for change” is the first part of the *Changing States* framework. When referenced in this context, it is about the conditions and trends that may facilitate community power-building efforts or that may hinder progress or present challenges. For example, shifting demographics can help identify the constituencies in the minority whose voices and concerns are at-risk of being overlooked or suppressed and/or which constituencies that are growing and, if organized, can have potential power and influence.

Conditions in this sense is distinct from “conditions to change,” which is about the problems, experiences, and living conditions that community power-building organizations are seeking to change. Drawing from our interviews for this project, the conditions that organizations are seeking to change range from racially-motivated violence against communities of color; rising rents as development woos more affluent renters; wages too low to pay for housing, food, transportation, health care, and child care; long commutes and few viable transit options; cockroaches and mold in their apartments; overcrowded schools with inadequate resources; to the fear of being separated from their families and deported to places they have not lived for years—or ever before.

These problems of housing, work, transportation, education, and immigration status may seem like disconnected issues; however, a healthy equity frame can help make the link to health outcomes as well as help shape community power-building efforts themselves (Pastor, Terriquez, and Lin 2018). Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.<sup>1</sup>

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1 For more, please see: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>.

This guides us to an understanding of “conditions for healthy communities” for the purposes of Lead Local. The last few decades have seen an upsurge in research linking health outcomes to the “conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age” — commonly referred to as the **social determinants of health** (Cash-Gibson et al. 2018; Commission on Social Determinants of Health 2008). These include “economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment” (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 2014).

More recently, many in the public health field are recognizing the root causes of the social determinants of health—the **structural determinants** that keep inequities in place (Baum et al. 2018; Beckfield and Krieger 2009; Givens et al. 2018; Wailoo 2017). These are rules and regulations, institutional policies and priorities, cultural norms and values (for example, racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and ableism)—and disparities in power and influence. This relates back to the arenas of change: The structures and systems in each of the decision-making arenas—and the interplay between them—are directly related to the health and well-being of a community.



## COMMUNITY POWER

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The other key component of the Lead Local North Star question is “community power.” When asked how they define community power, interviewees provided concise and consistent definitions. Although there is a diversity of models and theories within the field of community power building, there are consistent themes and principles. See *Figure 2* for a word cloud visual based on excerpts from interview transcripts on how interviewees define community power.

Drawing from interviews, existing literature, and discussion among Lead Local partners, we define community power as **the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain, and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions, and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision makers that change systems and advance health equity.**

Community power drives toward influencing decision makers and even shifting who is making decisions by **centering the voices of communities most impacted by unhealthy conditions**—or, as one interviewee put it, those “on the ground feeling the most hurt,” such as: care givers and farmworkers working long hours for low pay, families displaced from their neighborhoods due to gentrification, voters purged from the rolls, tenants living in slum housing, and immigrants who have been separated from their families.

A guiding principle of community power building is that community members are themselves experts about their own experiences and conditions, and as such, they should drive the design, implementation, and protection of policies and reforms that improve their day-to-day lives. And community-driven policy campaigns, in fact, can change lives: paid sick leave in Minneapolis; publicly-funded, long-term care in Washington State; defeating the ability of police to impound undocumented residents’ cars in Santa Ana; building a public transit system in Clayton County outside of Atlanta; and creating a housing trust fund in Detroit.



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**Figure 2.** Word cloud based on interview excerpts on definitions of community power

When community members participate in, take ownership of, and see themselves as public actors in determining the future of their communities, they are best positioned to push for the deep structural reforms that are necessary and less likely to push for what is viable. In fact, community members can hold community power organizations accountable to the community and the change that they want to see in the world. Often times this is an important counterforce to the political calculations that may drive negotiations and compromises with decision-makers. This begins to push against tendencies to stick with incremental change rather than transformational change.

As an interviewee put it, community power building is a “long-term project” that requires the development and sustained active presence of **a strong and organized base of people most impacted by the systems targeted for change** to hold decision makers accountable—or become the decision makers themselves. An organized **base** of community members are in relationship and invest in each other’s leadership; share a common identity shaped by similar experiences and an understanding of the root causes of their conditions; and use their collective analysis to create solutions and strategize to achieve them. In this way, base building is more than mobilization—and in fact, repeated mobilizations around specific issues cannot happen without the work to build a base. At the same time, mobilizations are ways of exercising the sort of civic engagement muscles that sustain people in the long-term efforts of power building.

For communities that are underrepresented and historically-excluded from public and private decision-making processes, building power starts with the on-the-ground, one-on-one work of organizing, building a membership base and developing grassroots leaders. Yet organizing and base building alone are insufficient to build the kind of power necessary to achieve health equity. It requires a place-rooted ecosystem of organizations with diverse capacities, skills, and expertise.



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**Figure 3.** Ecosystem of Power-Building Organizations with Organizing and Base Building at the Center

As represented in *Figure 3*, complementary organizations within the power-building ecosystem include those that focus on leadership development (e.g., political education, personal transformation and healing, trainings); research and legal support; advocacy and policy expertise; communications, messaging, and polling; and arts, culture shifting, and narrative change. There are also individuals, organizations, and programs that support the core operations and sustainability of organizations: organizational development, technology, technical assistance, capacity building, and funders.

It is important to note that organizing and base-building groups often have in-house capacities to carry out several of the functions. For example, grassroots leadership development is a core strategy of community organizing groups, thus it is carried out by staff or volunteers of the organization. Yet there are independent leadership development organizations and programs that are part of the power-building ecosystem and play important roles in building voice, leadership, and connection among people who are usually not civically involved or are structurally excluded. This distinction can be made across all the capacities within the ecosystem.



## THE STORIES OF COMMUNITY POWER IN 16 LEAD LOCAL PLACES

The exploration of how communities re-shape conditions to improve their daily lives should be rooted in an understanding of place. This is due, in part, because community power starts with person-to-person engagement, so it is inextricably linked to place, where people live, work, play, and pray. It also follows the research showing that both social and structural determinants of health are tied to place (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine et al. 2017).

For the Lead Local project, we apply the *Changing States* framework to an examination of 16 places. *Table 1* shows the diversity in the size of the places. Nine of the Lead Local places are small to mid-size cities (with populations between 50,000 and 500,000): Atlanta, Des Moines, Eau Claire, Miami, Minneapolis, Portland (Maine), Rochester (New York), Santa Ana, and Santa Fe; three are larger cities (with populations over 500,000): Chicago, Denver, and Detroit; and four are states: Kentucky, Oregon, Texas, and Washington. *Figure 4* is a map of Lead Local places of study.

As described in the methodology, the Lead Local project team designed criteria for place selection to ensure diverse representation by geographic region, political context, and demography so that lessons from this project could be applicable and scale-able in a variety of contexts. As *Table 1* shows, the 16 Lead Local Places represent a diverse array of cities and states in terms of size, race/ethnicity, immigration status, and income. The smallest city is Portland, Maine, with just over 65,000 residents, and the largest city is Chicago, with over 2.7 million residents. States range from Oregon, with nearly 4.1 million residents, to Texas, with nearly 28 million (accounting for close to 9 percent of the entire U.S. population).



**Figure 4.** Map of Lead Local Places of Study

The demography of a place—including how it is shifting and how fast it is shifting—is helpful in considering who are the key constituencies for change and who they may be in the future. For example, in places that are majority people of color, multi-racial organizing and coalition building are key. However, in places that are predominantly white, organizing and building coalitions with poor and working-class white communities are still central to a power-building strategy.



**THE STORIES OF COMMUNITY POWER IN 16 LEAD LOCAL PLACES** *continued*

The Lead Local places range from predominantly people of color—such as Santa Ana, Detroit, and Miami, in which approximately nine out of ten residents are people of color—to those that are predominantly white—such as Eau Claire, Kentucky, and Portland, ME, each of which is over 80 percent white. While percent youth of color mirrors percent people of color in each place, it is noteworthy that every single place has a higher percent youth of color than overall people of color; the difference is particularly wide in Minneapolis, Rochester, Santa Fe, Denver, and Des Moines. *Table 1* lays out this broad range of demographic conditions.

	Lead Local Place	Total Population (2018)	Percent People of Color (2018)	Percent Youth of Color (2018)	Percent Immigrants (2018)	Percent Below Poverty (2018)	Median Household Annual Income (2018)
<b>Cities</b>	<b>Atlanta, GA</b>	479,655	62%	74%	7%	22%	\$55,279
	<b>Chicago, IL</b>	2,718,555	67%	80%	21%	20%	\$55,198
	<b>Denver, CO</b>	693,417	46%	67%	16%	14%	\$63,793
	<b>Des Moines, IA</b>	215,932	35%	54%	13%	17%	\$52,251
	<b>Detroit, MI</b>	677,155	90%	94%	6%	36%	\$29,481
	<b>Eau Claire, WI</b>	68,086	11%	19%	4%	17%	\$50,940
	<b>Miami, FL</b>	451,214	89%	90%	58%	24%	\$36,638
	<b>Minneapolis, MN</b>	416,021	40%	65%	16%	20%	\$58,993
	<b>Portland, ME</b>	66,735	18%	35%	12%	16%	\$56,977
	<b>Rochester, NY</b>	207,778	63%	86%	9%	33%	\$33,399
	<b>Santa Ana, CA</b>	333,499	91%	97%	45%	18%	\$61,774
	<b>Santa Fe, NM</b>	83,847	60%	82%	15%	14%	\$56,262
<b>States</b>	<b>Kentucky</b>	4,440,204	15%	21%	4%	18%	\$48,392
	<b>Oregon</b>	4,081,943	24%	36%	10%	14%	\$59,393
	<b>Texas</b>	27,885,195	58%	68%	17%	15%	\$59,570
	<b>Washington</b>	7,294,336	31%	43%	14%	11%	\$70,116
	<b>United States</b>	322,903,030	39%	49%	13%	14%	\$60,293

**Table 1.** Demographic Data for 16 Lead Local Places and the U.S. (Source: USC ERI analysis of 2018 5-year American Community Survey estimate, U.S. Census) <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> In this section, we use the latest 2018 5-year estimates from the U.S. Census American Community Survey. In the place profiles, we use the 2017 5-year estimates as those are the latest data in the National Equity Atlas (NEA), a partnership between PolicyLink and USC ERI. We use the NEA to demonstrate that it is a useful tool in assessing “Conditions for Change” in a place.

Table 2 shows the projected share of people of color by decade until 2050 for the Lead Local states and the broader metropolitan regions where the Lead Local cities are located. Like the U.S. as a whole, every place will experience an increasing share of people of color into the future. However, Table 2 also shows a diversity in the rate of growth of people of color across Lead Local places. Of the Lead Local cities, the Minneapolis region will experience the largest percentage point increase of people of color between 2020 and 2050 (22 percentage points), followed by the Atlanta region (16 percentage points) and the Des Moines region (13 percentage points). On the other side of the spectrum, we see the Santa Ana region, which will only have a 7 percentage point increase of people of color between 2020 and 2050 due to its already large population of color. However, the Portland, Maine region, which is one of the whitest places in the portfolio, will only experience an 8 percentage point increase of people of color in the next three decades. Among Lead Local states, Washington will experience the largest increase of 16 percentage points, and, again interestingly, the whitest state Kentucky will only experience an 8 percentage point increase.

		Percent People of Color Projection				
Lead Local Place	Metro Region	2020	2030	2040	2050	
Cities	Atlanta, GA	Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA MSA	55%	60%	66%	70%
	Chicago, IL	Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI MSA	48%	52%	56%	60%
	Denver, CO	Denver-Aurora, CO MSA	37%	41%	45%	49%
	Des Moines, IA	Des Moines, IA MSA	20%	24%	29%	33%
	Detroit, MI	Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI MSA	34%	38%	41%	46%
	Eau Claire, WI	Eau Claire, WI MSA	9%	12%	16%	20%
	Miami, FL	Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL MSA	70%	74%	78%	81%
	Minneapolis, MN	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI MSA	27%	33%	41%	48%
	Portland, ME	Portland-South Portland-Biddeford, ME MSA	9%	11%	13%	16%
	Rochester, NY	Rochester, NY MSA	25%	29%	33%	38%
	Santa Ana, CA	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA MSA	71%	74%	76%	78%
	Santa Fe, NM	Santa Fe, NM MSA	57%	60%	64%	66%
States	Kentucky		16%	19%	22%	25%
	Oregon		26%	30%	35%	40%
	Texas		59%	63%	68%	71%
	Washington		33%	38%	44%	49%
Unites States			40%	44%	48%	52%

**Table 2.** Percent People of Color Projections, 2020-2050  
 (Source: USC ERI analysis of Woods & Poole data);  
 NOTE: Projections for cities are at the CBSA (or metropolitan regional) level due to data reliability

Returning to *Table 1*, we see that places also range from majority immigrant, such as Miami, to less than 10 percent immigrant, including Kentucky, Eau Claire, Detroit, Atlanta, and Rochester. And in terms of poverty and income, we see much diversity—ranging from 11 percent of Washingtonians to 36 percent of Detroiters living below the poverty line. We note, however, that nearly all (13 of the 16) places have higher rates of people living below poverty than the U.S. overall and lower median household incomes than the nation as a whole; those three Lead Local places faring better than the nation in terms of poverty and income are Denver, Santa Ana, and Washington state.

Finally, *Table 3* shows a measure of residential segregation—the dissimilarity index—by race/ethnicity and income. This measure is particularly relevant as housing justice is a thematic area of inquiry within the Lead Local project led by the Right to the City Alliance and Human Impact Partners. It is also a measure of social disconnect that can further fuel a sense of othering and mistrust. The dissimilarity index measures the “evenness” with which two groups are distributed across a certain geography; it ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 representing perfect integration and 100 representing complete separation of the two groups. So, the higher the dissimilarity index, the more severe the segregation.

Of Lead Local places, Detroit and Chicago have the highest levels of racial residential segregation between white residents and residents of color—as well as between white and Black residents, and white and Latinx residents; Miami also has a relatively high level of white-Black segregation. In terms of residential segregation based on income, Atlanta, Minneapolis, and Eau Claire top the list among the Lead Local places.



Lead Local Place		Dissimilarity Index, white and people of Color (2017)	Dissimilarity Index, white and Black (2017)	Dissimilarity Index, white and Latinx (2017)	Dissimilarity Index, poor and non-poor (2017)
Cities	Atlanta, GA	0.64	0.74	0.42	0.38
	Chicago, IL	0.60	0.82	0.60	0.32
	Denver, CO	0.48	0.54	0.55	0.29
	Des Moines, IA	0.31	0.39	0.41	0.24
	Detroit, MI	0.53	0.60	0.66	0.20
	Eau Claire, WI	0.19	0.32	0.31	0.36
	Miami, FL	0.54	0.76	0.56	0.24
	Minneapolis, MN	0.43	0.54	0.50	0.38
	Portland, ME	0.33	0.42	0.41	0.25
	Rochester, NY	0.51	0.54	0.57	0.25
	Santa Ana, CA	0.48	0.43	0.51	0.24
	Santa Fe, NM	0.39	0.43	0.40	0.21
States	Kentucky	0.45	0.58	0.45	0.31
	Oregon	0.31	0.57	0.38	0.26
	Texas	0.49	0.56	0.55	0.35
	Washington	0.35	0.56	0.42	0.29
Unites States		0.54	0.65	0.63	0.35

**Table 3.** Dissimilarity Indices for 16 Lead Local Places and the U.S. (Source: USC ERI analysis of 2017 5-year American Community Survey estimate, U.S. Census)

What follows are the narratives of community power in each place. It is important to note that we do not intend these profiles to be a comprehensive analysis. For such an endeavor, we would conduct multiple interviews in a single place and ensure a diversity of perspectives. We have done such “audits” and applied *Changing States* to identify opportunities for power building in places like Arizona, Georgia, Minnesota, and Missouri (Goldman et al. 2018). The charge for this project is to focus widely across multiple places in order to draw common themes about the field of community power. The focus of each place emerged from both an analysis of interview data as well as an eye towards ensuring that all the arenas of change and that a diversity of power-building strategies are represented.

## ATLANTA, GEORGIA

### **Conditions of Change**

The City of Atlanta, Georgia is known to be the epicenter of reverse migration as large numbers of Black Americans return to the South. Atlanta is also home to vibrant and growing immigrant communities, the historic center of the Civil Rights Movement, and home to corporate headquarters for multiple Fortune 500 companies.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is often referred to as the city that is “too busy to hate,” preferring to be recognized for its growth and friendly corporate climate to its history of racial segregation and role in the Deep South. At the same time, however, the city continues to struggle with persistent inequality: a legacy of racial segregation, a trend of newly gentrifying neighborhoods, and blatant voter suppression. Recent and ongoing efforts by state officials to suppress voting have led Atlanta organizers to wield judicial tactics, such as litigation, to ensure voters are able to cast their ballots.

These conditions, namely that of voter suppression, become particularly important when considering the demographic makeup of Atlanta’s residents and those in surrounding areas. Today, Atlanta is 52 percent Black, 37 percent white, 5 percent Latinx, and 4 percent Asian.<sup>4</sup> Politically, Atlanta has a younger Black mayor—Keisha Lance Bottoms—who has served as both a councilperson and judge. Mayor Bottoms has some level of national profile and was long considered as a potential 2020 Democratic vice-presidential candidate. The combination of these factors has contributed to the city’s progressive image when compared to the rest of the state. However, state officials have contested the city’s power to shape and enforce local policy. This was recently exemplified when Georgia’s Governor sued the Mayor of Atlanta over her mandate for people to wear masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, something the state does not support.

### **Arenas of Change**

Due to the push and pull context that Atlanta exists in, the city’s organizers have had major breakthroughs but also continue to struggle for power and representation in multiple arenas. Efforts to build power in the legislative arena, for example, have culminated in a citywide comprehensive energy reduction plan aimed at lowering the impact on climate change.<sup>5</sup> Local organizations have additionally carried out a multi-year effort to raise the minimum wage in Atlanta, which concluded in the passage of \$15 minimum wage in 2017.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, when it comes to key players in the legislative arena, Atlanta’s corporate players are particularly influential. In interviews, community organizations noted seeing local and state government prioritize tax incentives for developers versus the city’s safety net or social programs.

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3 Metro Atlanta Chamber. (2020, May 18). Metro Atlanta Fortune 500 & 1000 Headquarters. *Metro Atlanta Chamber*. <https://www.metroatlantachamber.com/resources/most-popular/fortune-500-fortune-1000-in-metro-atlanta>

4 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Atlanta, GA [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=06000000000013041>

5 Mayor’s Office of Communication. (2015, April 21). City of Atlanta Adopts Progressive Energy Policy to Tackle commercial Energy Use. *City of Atlanta, GA*. <https://www.atlantaga.gov/Home/Components/News/News/3498>

6 Mayor’s Office of Communication. (2017, June 21). Mayor Kasim Reed Raises Minimum Wage to \$15 per Hour for City Workers. *City of Atlanta, GA*. <https://www.atlantaga.gov/Home/Components/News/News/5010/1338#:~:text=ATLANTA%20%E2%80%93%20Mayor%20Kasim%20Reed%20today,beginning%20on%20July%201%2C%202017>

Developments such as the Mercedes-Benz Stadium—that reportedly cost Georgia taxpayers \$700 million—is criticized for its grandeur and display of wealth especially as it overlooks one of the most poverty-stricken areas of Atlanta.<sup>7</sup>

What stands out about Atlanta, however, is the critical work that community organizations are waging in the administrative and judicial arenas. These arenas have become particularly important in efforts to ensure people of color are registered and able to vote. In the 1990s, about three-fourths of state voters were white but that percentage has decreased over time. In 2016, it was around 60 percent, and experts believe that that number will continue to fall given demographic shifts.<sup>8</sup> Similar to demographic shifts overall, the racial breakdown of registered voters has evolved in the region—with proportionally more voters coming from communities of color. The growing presence of communities of color, specifically Black communities, has spurred targeted attacks against voter rights and accessibility to voting in an effort to suppress these emerging voting blocs.

Ahead of the contested 2018 governor’s race between Stacy Abrams and Brian Kemp, Georgia had a record number of registered voters—6.9 million out of the estimated 10.4 million total state population.<sup>9</sup> For this widely publicized gubernatorial race, 61 percent of registered voters turned out.<sup>10</sup> All of which happened amidst the former Secretary of State and now governor Brian Kemp coming under scrutiny for removing 107,000 “inactive” voters in July 2017 and a projected 1.4 million since he took office as secretary of state in 2010.<sup>11, 12</sup> This “Use it or lose it” law is similar to those of nine other states in that it effectively removes registered voters if they have not voted in recent elections. These laws, in addition to flagging voter registration applications that do not have an “exact match” within government databases, are tactics used in the state to suppress low-income voters and voters of color.<sup>13</sup>

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- 7 deMause, N. (2017, September 29). Why are Georgia taxpayers paying \$700m for a new NFL stadium? *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2017/sep/29/why-are-georgia-taxpayers-paying-700m-for-a-new-nfl-stadium>
  - 8 Blinder, A. and Fausset, R. (2018, November 16) Stacey Abrams Ends Fight for Georgia Governor with Harsh Words for Her Rival. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/16/us/elections/georgia-governor-race-kemp-abrams.html>
  - 9 Niese, M. (2018, November 5). Early voting turnout reached new highs for a Georgia midterm election. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. <https://www.ajc.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/early-voting-turnout-reached-new-highs-for-georgia-primary-election/C0sXccV7Qi9yRaofVXMUDN/>
  - 10 Wilkins, T. (2018, November 8). By the numbers: How the 2018 midterm elections compare to previous elections. *The Red & Black*. [https://www.redandblack.com/athensnews/by-the-numbers-how-the-2018-midterm-elections-compare-to-previous-elections/article\\_463da62e-e302-11e8-ae1e-c7a003ea9fa1.html](https://www.redandblack.com/athensnews/by-the-numbers-how-the-2018-midterm-elections-compare-to-previous-elections/article_463da62e-e302-11e8-ae1e-c7a003ea9fa1.html)
  - 11 Kauffman, J. (2019, April 11). Georgia governor signs law to slow ‘use it or lose it’ voter purges. *American Public Media Reports*. <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2019/04/11/georgia-brian-kemp-use-it-or-lose-it-voting-law-changes>
  - 12 Niese, M. (2018, October 25). Georgia cancels fewer voter registrations after surge last year. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. <https://www.ajc.com/news/local-govt--politics/georgia-cancels-fewer-voter-registrations-after-surge-last-year/fqT1bcSzGu33UEpTMDzMKV>
  - 13 Kauffman, J. (2018, October 22). 6 Takeaways from Georgia’s ‘Use It Or Lose It’ Voter Purge Investigation. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/22/659591998/6-takeaways-from-georgias-use-it-or-lose-it-voter-purge-investigation>

### **Capacities for Change**

Emerging and established organizations are building a set of capacities to create healthy communities and lasting change in Atlanta. Fair Fight Action is one of these. Following the 2018 election, Stacey Abrams and close allies formed the Fair Fight Action to counter voter suppression efforts in the state and nationwide.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with Georgia and in collaboration with Care in Action, a domestic workers organization, it was able to challenge voting laws in a 66-page lawsuit aimed at addressing “voter purges, registration applications put on hold, Election Day troubles at predominantly nonwhite voting precincts, and problems with voters’ absentee and provisional ballots.”<sup>15</sup>

In the *Vox* article titled, “The lawsuit challenging Georgia’s entire elections system, explained” the author further details the larger goal of the lawsuit, “Each of these issues [voter repression tactics listed above] fueled their own series of lawsuits (several of them successful) but this latest lawsuit cites them collectively to make a larger point: Georgia’s current election system created an unconstitutional series of obstacles that are disproportionately likely to disadvantage, and in some cases completely disenfranchise, voters of color.”<sup>16</sup> In April 2019, as a result of mounting pressure, in part due to the Fair Fight Action’s lawsuit, Governor Kemp signed a new law extending the period from seven to nine years of inactivity before names are removed from registration lists and increases the state’s notifications to two before inactive voters are removed from voter rolls.<sup>17</sup> As part of this new bill, new voting machines will be installed, and measures surrounding “exact match” are also being relaxed, in addition to other stipulations.

While this is not the entire set of reforms that organizers have fought for, community organizations continue to build capacities to secure voting rights in Atlanta. Community-based organizations such as the New Georgia Project registers hundreds of thousands of voters each cycle; in addition, they continue to file lawsuits in partnership with organizations like Fair Fight and the Advancement Project, and work with more than one hundred faith-based organizations to advocate for participation in elections. Similarly, other organizations in Atlanta are working together to advance a set of capacities across arenas to ensure fair and open elections. While the work continues, they have successfully built community power that is changing both Atlanta and the state as a whole.

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14 Elliot, D. (2020, February 21). Stacey Abrams Spearheads ‘Fair Fight,’ A Campaign Against Voter Suppression. *NPR*. <https://www.npr.org/2020/02/21/806103885/stacey-abrams-spearheads-fair-fight-a-campaign-against-voter-suppression>

15 Lockhart, P.R. (2019, May 30). The lawsuit challenging Georgia’s entire elections system, explained. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/11/30/18118264/georgia-election-lawsuit-voter-suppression-abrams-kemp-race>

16 Ibid.

17 Kauffman, J. (2019, April 11). Georgia governor signs law to slow ‘use it or lose it’ voter purges. *American Public Media Reports*. <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2019/04/11/georgia-brian-kemp-use-it-or-lose-it-voting-law-changes>

## CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

### **Conditions for Change**

Chicago is a diverse and dynamic city with a long history of efforts to build community power that sustains vibrant and healthy neighborhoods. It is also a city of contradictions - a place that is known for innovative approaches to solving problems and improving health outcomes while offering cautionary tales about ongoing racial disparities, persistent gun violence, and diminished opportunities for low income residents in particular zip codes. In a recent *Modern Healthcare* article, Illinois' Director of Public Health called Chicago a "tale of two cities" to describe this phenomenon and the struggle to make Chicago an equitable and healthy place for all of its residents.

Historically, Chicago has been a place of opportunity defined by Black in-migration from the South in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and as a long-standing port of entry for immigrants from across the world. Demographically, Chicago is a majority-minority city with more than 30 percent of the population being Black, 29 percent Latinx, and a rapidly growing Asian American population (6 percent).<sup>18</sup> Economically, Chicago is considered a strong market city having experienced significant investment over the past several decades that has improved living conditions in the city but has also led to widespread gentrification pushing out long-time lower income residents and seniors, and limiting opportunities for new immigrants to settle. This is, in part, why the suburbs around Chicago have been rapidly diversifying, a number of which are now majority-minority. In terms of political conditions, Chicago is known both for its history of "machine politics" and as a center of civil rights, labor and community organizing, and home to prominent national and local efforts. Typically, Chicago has high voter turnout in general elections and low turnout in primary and local elections and is likely to benefit from recent changes to Illinois' electoral system – which include the institution of automatic voter registration in 2017, same-day voter registration, and early voting in 2018.<sup>19</sup>

### **Arenas of Change**

As one of America's major cities, arenas of change are more scrutinized, and power is less obscured. For example, Chicago was the center of a national debate about how judicial and prosecutorial policies impact low income people and people of color. This played out in the race for the county's state attorney in 2016 as residents debated criminal justice reform and the issue of mass incarceration. Chicago's legislative arena has been defined by a strong mayor and city council (aldermen) system. From inclusionary zoning to raising the minimum wage, legislation has been advocated and passed on a wide range of issues that impact public health. Administratively, Chicago has spurred investment from developers through sets of taxing strategies like Tax Increment Financing (TIF)<sup>20</sup> which have resulted in increased investment but also decreasing revenue for schools and the city's general fund. In the last several decades, these kinds of mechanisms have shifted the tax code to be more regressive, with more of the



burden on the poor and working class.<sup>21, 22, 23</sup> Chicago has a significant corporate arena and is a hub for many national and international companies who exert influence over the city's directions and policies. Additionally, the communications arena in Chicago is a robust home to traditional and alternative media outlets and a landscape of organizations that work on narrative change.

### **Capacities for Change**

The *Changing States* framework puts forth a set of coalitional capacities necessary for impactful political change: a robust organizational landscape, base building, leadership ladders and lattices, alliances and networks, and a resource base. To advance systemic change and to govern in a particular place, organizations need a combination of all of these capacities. Chicago holds a notably good example of how alliances and networks can play a defining role in change.

In 2016, a broad alliance of community organizations and their allies successfully advocated for – and passed – the Illinois Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights. This campaign is an example of the effectiveness of community power and the critical capacity of alliances and networks for several reasons. First, the campaign garnered support from the both the Republican Governor and the Democratic controlled legislature<sup>24</sup> in a climate where bi-partisanship is increasingly rare. This is nearly impossible to do if groups working for change do not build alliances and networks as individual groups are – more and more – classified as partisan even when they are not. Second, it directly impacts front line workers who, as illustrated by the impact of a pandemic, are essential and critical to health outcomes. Third, groups worked across multiple arenas to secure the policy victory and are now fighting to see the law implemented through the administrative arena. We often compartmentalize change efforts into a single arena, but as this case study shows it was work in the electoral, legislative, narrative, and administrative arenas that led to lasting change. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, domestic workers and the people who receive care were at the center of the campaign (exemplifying the base building and leadership ladders capacity). Importantly, there was a broad array of organizations that worked in coalition to bring about the change (exemplifying the alliances and networks capacity).

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21 Groeger, C. (2019, June 19). Developers Want to Destroy Chicago. We Won't Let Them. *Jacobin Magazine*. <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/06/chicago-rent-control-housing-democratic-socialists>

22 CST Editorial Board (2018, December 8) EDITORIAL: No Matter Who's Mayor next, Property Tax Spending Is in for Overhaul. *Chicago Sun Times*. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/2018/12/8/18473478/editorial-no-matter-who-s-mayor-next-property-tax-spending-is-in-for-overhaul>

23 Joravsky, B. (2019, April 19). Chicago Poli-Tricks as Usual. *Chicago Reader*. <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/chicago-poli-tricks-as-usual/Content?oid=69708003>

24 Tareen, S. (2016, August 22). Illinois Gives Domestic Workers "Bill of Rights". *Associated Press*. <http://www.allgov.com/news/controversies/illinois-gives-domestic-workers-bill-of-rights-160822?news=859355>

The result of the passage of the bill is that more than 35,000 domestic workers in Illinois now will be covered by Illinois' Minimum Wage Law which requires employees receive at least 24 hours of rest in each calendar week and a meal period of 20 minutes for every 7.5-hour shift. Additionally, domestic workers will be covered by the Illinois Human Rights Act, which protects against sexual harassment, and the Wages of Women and Minors Act, which prohibits employers from paying women and minors “an oppressive and unreasonable wage.”<sup>25</sup>

At the center of this campaign was the Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights & Empowerment (AFIRE), a grassroots community organization that builds the capacity of Filipinos to organize around issues of social, racial, and economic justice affecting undocumented immigrants, domestic workers, seniors, and youth. They partnered with the National Domestic Workers Alliance, an advocacy organization, to build a multi-year campaign that involved on the ground organizing, narrative work with both citizens and decision makers, grassroots lobbying at the statehouse, and coalition building to develop – and eventually pass – the legislation. Key to the success of this five-year campaign was a broad and deep alliance of organizations that fought together for its passage. From community organizations to legal advocacy groups to the AARP, this effort would not have gained the bi-partisan support necessary for its passage in a divided government nor have been sustained over five years without the capacity of alliance building.<sup>26</sup> For example, the Jane Addams Senior Caucus organized and brought the voices of seniors needing care to the effort, making the issue about more than just the wages of workers.

Today this broad coalition of organizations is working with the Illinois Department of Labor to see the law fully implemented and enforced. As Magdalena Zylisnka, a housecleaner from Chicago and a worker leader from ARISE said, “After many trips to Springfield to advocate for the Illinois Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, I am so happy that domestic workers have been recognized under the law!”<sup>27</sup>

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25 Elejalde-Ruiz, A. (2016, August 15). Rauner signs law extending labor protections to domestic workers. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-rauner-signs-domestic-workers-bill-0816-biz-20160815-story.html>

26 Elejalde-Ruiz, A. (2016, August 15). Rauner signs law extending labor protections to domestic workers. *Chicago Tribune*. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/business/ct-rauner-signs-domestic-workers-bill-0816-biz-20160815-story.html>

27 For more, please see: <https://www.domesticworkers.org/bill-of-rights/illinois>.

## DENVER, COLORADO

### **Conditions for Change**

Denver is a boom-and-bust town. After an economic downturn in the 1980s, the 1990s marked a comeback. The city's economy transitioned away from production to become more diversified and driven by knowledge-based sectors. Job growth in the state and in the Denver metropolitan region has outpaced the nation. Investments in key infrastructure projects, like the Denver airport and a new convention center, were also made as a way to make the region attractive to businesses (Benner and Pastor 2012).

Over the same period, Denver's racial and ethnic demographics have also shifted. During the economic downturn in the 1980s<sup>28</sup>, whites left the city while a diverse immigrant population moved in starting in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 2000s, the demographic trends shifted with more whites and U.S.-born populations moving into the city (Rusk 2004). The City of Denver is still majority white (54 percent) and 31 percent Latino, 9 percent Black, and 4 percent Asian.<sup>29</sup> The largest Latino group is Mexican and are predominantly U.S. born (69 percent).<sup>30</sup>

As development continues, Denver sees Millennials as a key part of the region's path towards continued economic development and growth. A study commissioned by the Metro Denver Economic Development Corporation found that this influential generation is moving into the Denver and surrounding metropolitan region in large numbers, accounting for close to a quarter of the population and holding almost 33 percent of jobs in the area (Development Research Partners 2016). In fact, this dynamic is often called the "Colorado Paradox": The state has a highly-educated, newcomer workforce on one hand, yet low levels of educational attainment among native Coloradans.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the influx of people into the City of Denver has pushed out working class families and communities of color into the neighboring cities, like Aurora and Cherry Creek, and even outside of the Denver metropolitan region.

Organizers are working with those, predominantly low-income Black, Latino, and immigrant communities, whom the economic boom in the state and city have not reached. Interviewees shared that in all their conversations with residents, every conversation turns to the cost of rent or the fading prospect of purchasing a home. In addition to issues of housing affordability, other concerns and priorities are around living wages, affordability and accessibility of public transportation, and public education.



28 Haanen, J. (2016, May 12). Denver's Changing Economy: A Five-Minute History. *Denver Institute for Faith and Work*. <https://denverinstitute.org/denvers-changing-economy-1/>

29 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Denver, CO [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=06000000000008027>

30 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Nativity and ancestry Denver, CO [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Nativity-and-ancestry#/?breakdown=3&raceth=03>

31 DeRuy, E. (2016, May 25). The Colorado Paradox. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/05/a-city-that-imports-college-educated-workers-tries-to-grow-its-own-talent/484325/>

### **Arenas of Change**

Denver has a very strong corporate sector that exerts its influence in the legislative and administrative arenas often putting residents and workers at odds over local, regional, and state priorities. For example, there has been significant public investment in building out a light rail system but it took a four-year campaign to win discount passes for low-income riders—beyond those federally mandated for certain populations. Corporate interests are even more powerful at the state level. Many efforts to change structural conditions—for example around raising taxes for infrastructure and education spending—were rejected in the 2018 elections.<sup>32</sup>

In addition to an influential corporate sector, other dynamics in the state legislature create headwinds for community power groups. Political pre-emption is a key barrier to progress at the local level. For example, local elected officials may be supportive but have their hands tied because of a 1981 statewide legislation that outlaws local communities from allowing rent control—recent attempts to reverse the law have failed.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, in 1992 Colorado adopted a Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR), a constitutional amendment that creates limits on revenue growth for state and local governments and constrains tax increases—in effect, leading to deep cuts in public services (California Budget and Policy Priorities 2019).

At a deeper level, organizers in Denver are up against an underlying “Wild West” mentality of rugged individualism that is pervasive in Colorado. There is a belief that everyone can succeed on their own and should be self-reliant which fuels a distrust of government. This mentality has also made Denver ripe for the national education reform movement backed by billionaires such as Eli Broad, Walton Foundation, and Betsy DeVos.<sup>34</sup> For the past 15 years, Denver and Colorado have been fertile ground for the privatization of public education. Until recently, Denver Public Schools has been governed by a board pushing a “school choice” model that includes merit-based teacher pay, closure of underperforming schools, and creation of charter schools.<sup>35</sup>

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32 Gray, H. (2018, November 8). Colorado Is Still a Purple State—At Least for Now. *5280*. <https://www.5280.com/2018/11/colorado-is-still-a-very-purple-state-at-least-for-now/>

33 Wingerter, J. (2019, April 30). Bill allowing for rent control hits dead-end in Colorado Senate. *The Denver Post*. <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/04/30/rent-control-bill-colorado-senate/>

34 Bryant, J. (2019, October 20). “How Billionaire Charter School Funders Corrupted the School Leadership Pipeline. *Salon*. [https://www.salon.com/2019/10/20/how-billionaire-charter-school-funders-corrupted-the-school-leadership-pipeline\\_partner/](https://www.salon.com/2019/10/20/how-billionaire-charter-school-funders-corrupted-the-school-leadership-pipeline_partner/)

35 Mahnken, K. (2019, October 9). Is Denver’s Era of Education Reform Coming to an End? Outsider School Board Candidates Aim to ‘Flip the Board’ This November. *The 74 Million*. <https://www.the74million.org/article/is-denvers-era-of-education-reform-coming-to-an-end-outsider-school-board-candidates-aim-to-flip-the-board-this-november/>

### **Capacities for Change**

Organizations are having to adapt to the displacement of communities and their movement into the suburbs and throughout the larger metropolitan region. Gentrification, powerful business and developer interests, and a toxic individualist mindset create challenges for those who are dedicated to improving conditions for low-income Black, Latino, and white communities who are struggling in Denver. For some, it has been an opportunity to redefine what constitutes a community. For others, it has been an opportunity to make distinct connections between issues—like the affordability of public transportation and housing, and linking housing affordability to living wages.

While gentrification is pushing Black and Latino families out of the central city, the public schools remain majority people of color. Our Voice Our Schools is an organization that emerged to increase the decision-making of students within Denver public schools, specifically Aurora and Cherry Creek. It is focused on providing support for families navigating the public education landscape, connecting families with mental health supports, launching advocacy efforts, organizing within the grassroots, and base building. Our Voice Our Schools has doubled down on Denver schools as places where Black and Latino families can be part of a community effort in transforming a school into the kind of supportive, loving, and nurturing place they want for their community.

For the Colorado Chapter of the Denver-based national women’s organization 9to5, the forces of gentrification, displacement, and disinvestment have led to campaigns around mobile home parks. They have become a key focus for the preservation of vital housing and the need for improved living conditions for immigrant families and low-income people—as they face issues of unsafe drinking water and leaking sewage. But the parks are also spaces for community action, leadership, and governance. 9to5 is organizing leadership in the parks and forming resident-led associations that can decide how to manage their park—or even purchase it through a land trust. Residents have fought for—then served on—a task force with city elected officials and staff to look specifically at solutions to combat mass displacement of mobile home residents.

Looking to the future, building power at the state level will be critical—not only to remove barriers such as TABOR or the rent control ban—but, also, to counter a pro-developer agenda that is pushing out poor and immigrant communities. It will be critical for grassroots leaders to move into positions of authority around the future of public education and housing affordability.

## DES MOINES, IOWA

### **Conditions for Change**

Des Moines is a mid-sized city of just more than 200,000 people in America's Heartland. It is also Iowa's most populous city by a wide margin, younger, more diverse, and more progressive than the state as a whole. The state has experienced six-fold growth of its Latino population since 1990<sup>36</sup> as a result of its significant role in agriculture production. Des Moines' racial composition is 67 percent white, 12 percent Latino, 11 percent Black, 6 percent Asian, and 3 percent multiracial people.<sup>37</sup> This compares to Iowa as a whole which is 84 percent white, 6 percent Latino, 3.4 percent Black, and 2 percent multiracial people.<sup>38</sup>

Des Moines is one of the fastest-growing 'mid-cities' in the Midwest. Polk County, where Des Moines is located, holds about 15 percent of Iowa's population and accounts for 50 percent of the state's population growth from 2010 to 2018 (Eathington 2019). Statewide, this urban growth is countered by a decline in the rural population. Farm and dairy country census data show that the number of farms from 2015 to 2017 decreased by 3 percent and the number of dairies has also continued to significantly decline over the past 10 years (Lucht 2019). This largely reflects the struggling agriculture community which has had to deal with "depressed commodity prices" (Henderson 2019) in addition to the more recent trade war with China. The city of Des Moines' economy revolves around insurance, financial, and public services and while Des Moines is a mid-size city, it is a part of the growing urban rural divide in America.

Des Moines and the state of Iowa continue to play a defining role in the Presidential election as the first primary state in the nation. That condition has given the state a unique influence over national politics. Des Moines has advantages such as online voter registration and early and absentee voting. However, the legislature has restricted access to voter participation with policies like the passage of voter ID laws, which require voters to provide a government-issued identification on Election Day (Pfannenstiel 2019) which disproportionately impacts low-income voters in Des Moines. Finally, another notable condition is the privatization of Medicaid servicing in Iowa and how that has become a barrier on a number of fronts including people getting the care they need approved through Medicaid.<sup>39</sup>

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36 Kilen, M. (2017, September 21). Can Iowa's Rising Latino Population Save Some of its Dying Small Towns? Des Moines Register. <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2017/09/21/latino-population-denison-may-foretell-iowas-future/647264001/>

37 <https://statisticalatlas.com/place/iowa/Des-Moines/Race-and-Ethnicity>

38 National Equity Atlas. (2020). PolicyLink and the USC Equity Research Institute. <http://nationalequityatlas.org>

39 Davis-Cohen, S. (2019, April 25). *Iowa privatized Medicaid: It has been a disaster. Here's why.* Tarbell. <https://tarbell.org/2019/04/iowa-privatized-medicaid-it-has-been-a-disaster-heres-why/>

### **Arenas of Change**

When we apply the Changing States Framework to a place, we examine the arenas where power is contested and look at the actors who are influencing those arenas. There are six arenas that we examine: electoral, legislative, corporate, narrative, judicial, and administrative. Des Moines' electoral arena is closely contested with the mayor winning re-election in 2019 by less than three hundred votes in a race where 20,000 votes were cast. Des Moines holds a significant percentage of statewide votes but is also hampered by lower voter turnout rates. Legislatively, the city council has moved forward with a number of progressive policies around policing, health, and community revitalization. For example, Des Moines is working to pass a racial profiling bill in response to the Black Lives Matters movement.<sup>40</sup> But it is worth noting that Des Moines is politically a more moderate city than the coastal big cities.

In the corporate arena, Des Moines is heavily dominated by the insurance, financial, and publishing industries. These corporations have exerted more power and influence in recent years advancing state tax breaks that now add up to \$12 billion a year<sup>41</sup> and have made it more difficult to adequately fund public services such as education, health, and infrastructure.

In the administrative arena, Iowa is praised for its strict “revolving-door policy” (Holman and Esser 2019; Lynch 2019). State lobbyist rules order lawmakers—including legislative and executive public officials, and staff, including some university officials—to wait two years after leaving office to take on lobbyist jobs, activities, or “lobbying contacts” (contacting former legislature colleagues) (Schulte 2019).<sup>42</sup> However, elected state officials may lobby the legislature on behalf of their government agencies in certain circumstances at the state and federal level (National Conference of State Legislatures 2019).

In the judicial arena four counties including Polk County where Des Moines is located, piloted the Public Safety Assessment (PSA) tool in 2018, created by the Arnold Foundation, giving judges more information in deciding to release or jail defendants (Gruber-Miller 2018b). In hopes of reducing the use of cash bail and the number of pretrial jailed detainees, the assessment considers several factors in determining the risk of defendants not returning to their court hearings or in committing a crime upon release. The use of the tool was left to the discretion of judges. The use of the pilot program was approved through 2018 but was not reinstated, and in May 2019, the governor did not veto a provision that halts the use of PSA in the future (Belin 2019). In the communications arena, Des Moines has a wide variety of media outlets for a mid-sized city.

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40 Cannon, A. (2020, June 9). What you need to know: Des Moines takes first step toward racial profiling ordinance. Des Moines Register. <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/local/des-moines/2020/06/09/des-moines-racial-profiling-ordinance-gets-first-vote-george-floyd-protests-black-lives-matter/5326043002/>

41 Dorman, T. (2020, January 17). Billions in tax breaks - and Iowa still isn't competitive? The Gazette. <https://www.thegazette.com/subject/opinion/staff-columnist/todd-dorman-iowa-legislature-tax-cuts-government-spending-20200117>

42 Government Ethics and Lobbying. §68B.2 (2019, December 5) <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/code/68B.pdf>

### Capacities for Change

Des Moines has a number of grassroots organizations and advocacy groups working to advance health equity and better outcomes for its residents. These organizations focus on a wide variety of issues from supporting small farmers to racial equity to affordable housing. The most well-known of these is Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI) an organization that has been active for many decades and has members across the state. Its current campaigns revolve around raising wages, stopping racial profiling, environmental issues like clean water, and taking on corporate power. One of their members famously confronted Presidential candidate Mitt Romney at the state fair asking him if “corporations are people too?”

Organizations such as this are building a number of capacities to create change as can be seen through the recent example of a campaign in Des Moines to pass a higher minimum wage in Polk County. Organizers and leaders at Iowa CCI sought to lift wages across the urban and suburban metropolitan area of Des Moines and to decrease poverty. Through public meetings, grassroots lobbying, communications, and door to door persuasion, Iowa CCI built the momentum for change and engaged thousands of residents in this effort. They developed capacities in the form of base building, leadership ladders, alliances and networks, and narrative. As a result, the county unanimously passed a \$10.75 minimum wage for Polk County in 2016 to be phased in over three years. However, the state legislature responded and in early 2017 voted to ban cities and counties from setting their own minimum wage and stopped the implementation of the change.<sup>43</sup> Because of this, the minimum wage remains \$7.25 in Des Moines.

This is an example of the need to build capacities that are local and statewide simultaneously and the many pre-emption fights that are taking place across the country where cities work to pass policies such as earned sick time or stronger environmental legislation, only to see them undercut or stopped by state legislatures who don’t support change. Nonetheless, Des Moines is leading the way on advocating for change, has a strong base of community organizations, and is developing the capacities that have the potential to shape the state in the future.



<sup>43</sup> Schuman, A. (2020, January 1). Iowa remains stagnant in national push to increase minimum wage. *KCCI Des Moines*. <https://www.kcci.com/article/iowa-minimum-wage-wont-change-in-2020/30373461#>



## DETROIT, MICHIGAN

### **Conditions for Change**

According to the national narrative, Detroit and Detroiters are resilient and have made great strides regarding development in the city. However, Detroit Future City, a community-based organization, published a report entitled “139 Square Miles” that highlights a different reality: the vast majority of development, including luxury housing, has taken place in Midtown and downtown (Detroit Future City 2017). These particular areas appear vibrant and thriving. Outside of these areas, there are some pockets of revitalization, but the vast majority of Detroiters and surrounding residents have not benefited from developments in the city.

During the Great Migration, Detroit became a magnet for African Americans. The city later became an important place for the rise of the Black middle class even as they continued to face discrimination in housing and employment (Detroit Future City 2019). As desegregation movements took hold across the country, people moved to Detroit to work for auto companies like Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler; Detroit saw a population increase, reaching over 1.8 million people by 1950.<sup>44</sup> However, Black in-migration was accompanied by white out-migration into surrounding suburbs, which included the loss of employment opportunities for Black Americans and the disinvestment in local homes and schools. Throughout the 1960s and 70s, many white residents continued to move out of the city, spurred on by economic distress, civil unrest rooted in racial tensions, and the 1974 election of the city’s first Black mayor, Coleman Young.<sup>45</sup>

A growth in automation within the car industry, the energy crisis of the 70s, the economic recession of the 80s, and increased foreign competition all contributed to a decrease in industry profitability and the loss of thousands of jobs.<sup>46</sup> According to community organization Detroit People’s Party, the result was an economic shift that moved Detroit from a place that bred high-paying manufacturing jobs to low-wage service sector jobs where residents are often forced to work multiple jobs without benefits to meet their needs. Currently, Detroit is ranked the second poorest major city in America, losing its first-place ranking for the first time in 10 years.<sup>47</sup> Although older industrial cities, such as Detroit, were the drivers of their state economy decades ago, the population out-migration and restructuring of the economy has subsequently led to an out-migration of tax infrastructure, such that there is now no longer the tax base of individual homeowners and renters needed to sustain sewer lines, roads, and other necessary infrastructure.

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44 Padnani, A. (2013, August 17). Anatomy of Detroit’s Decline. *New York Times*. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/08/17/us/detroit-decline.html>

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 The Detroit News. (2020, September 17). Cleveland overtakes Detroit as poorest big city in U.S., census finds. *The Detroit News*. <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2020/09/17/cleveland-overtakes-detroit-poorest-big-city-u-s-census/3476269001/>

The decline in population over the years; growing economic and racial divides between cities, suburbs, and rural communities; and statewide demographics that do not reflect the city of Detroit impact power-building organizing on the ground in a number of ways. Interviewees from Michigan United shared that this has been accompanied by a loss of civic infrastructures such as unions, urban churches, rotary clubs, community centers, and many others. Second, cities have limited influence on statewide policy and a diminished role in setting the agenda for the state. Community organizations based only in Detroit have less ability to influence structural outcomes because the city itself has less power to make change for itself. Third, people of color, while concentrated in Detroit, have been moving out to the suburbs and some rural areas for a significant period of time. The suburbs are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of immigrant communities, requiring power-building organizations to have a strategy that bridges urban, suburban, and rural geographies.

### **Arenas of Change**

In response to mounting local issues, Michigan began appointing emergency managers to Detroit as of 2009 but most recently in 2013.<sup>48</sup> Interviewees from Detroit People's Party pointed out that much of the controversy surrounding emergency managers was due to the transfer of public wealth into the hands of corporations – which results in a lack of basic services and infrastructure that disproportionately impacts Black residents. For example, the lack of basic services has resulted in water shutoff for more than 23,000 homes, while water remained running for businesses and government-owned properties – both of which owed more money than residents did.<sup>49</sup> At the same time that this was happening, the emergency manager at the time introduced a plan to privatize water under the Great Lakes Regional Water Authority, despite criticism and evidence outlining the consequences of such a decision.<sup>50</sup>



48 Bosman, J. and Davey, M. (2016, January 22) Anger in Michigan Over Appointing Emergency Managers. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/23/us/anger-in-michigan-over-appointing-emergency-managers.html>

49 Azikiwe, A. (2016, April 26). The Privatization of Water in Detroit. Massive Water Shut-Offs. *Global Research*. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/the-privatization-of-water-in-detroit-massive-water-shut-offs/5521831>

50 Ibid.

Because emergency managers are given so much power, structures already in place that have been helpful in building power in Detroit were deeply affected. Judith Browne Dianis, voting-rights litigator and co-director of the Advancement Project, argues that emergency managers are, in fact, an attack on democracy through the circumvention of processes of public participation and voice.<sup>51</sup> In 2014, the Detroit City Council and Mayor Mike Duggan reached a deal with the Financial Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr: allow the bankruptcy process to be handled by the emergency manager but have the responsibilities for all other city operations returned to local officials.<sup>52, 53</sup>

In the electoral arena, another prominent issue is that the state of Michigan and, by default, Detroit has experienced a series of voter suppression efforts including voter ID laws, changes in ballot initiatives, and restrictions in early voting. In 2018, groups such as Michigan United were involved in a ballot initiative campaign to create earned paid sick leave in Michigan. Although the minimum wage and earned sick leave win was co-opted and subsequently defeated, Michigan recently passed three progressive ballot initiatives – one of which will have a huge positive impact on voting: same day and automatic voter registration. Over time, this measure is going to significantly contribute towards increased democracy in Michigan. The state also passed a redistricting measure that should also increase representation.

### **Capacities for Change**

Despite all the challenges facing the city of Detroit, interviewees expressed that the robust organizing infrastructure has allowed organizing groups to build significant power. For Michigan United, turning campaigns into electoral issues on the ballot has been a highly successful strategy. Along with groups like the ACLU, Michigan United turned “Ban the Box” into an issue in the municipal elections. They organized, turned criminal justice into a voting issue, and endorsed members to be part of the city council. This commitment to organizing community resulted in notables wins: an increase in Black voter participation (34 percent), winning a majority on the city council, and the passage of the “Ban the Box” policy for returning citizens.<sup>54</sup>



51 Dianis, J. (2011, September 29). How Conservatives Are Attacking Democracy. *The Root*. <https://www.theroot.com/how-conservatives-are-attacking-democracy-1790866093>

52 Resnikoff, N. (2014, September 25). Detroit city council votes to remove emergency manager. *MSNBC*. <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/detroit-city-council-votes-remove-emergency-manager>

53 Cweik, S. (2014, September 25). Detroit leaders vote to keep Kevyn Orr on as EM, limit his powers. *Michigan Public Radio*. <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/detroit-leaders-vote-keep-kevyn-orr-em-limit-his-powers>

54 City of Detroit, MI. (2010, February 15). Detroit City Council Passes Councilmember Ayers' Fair Chance Housing Ordinance. *City of Detroit, MI*. <https://detroitmi.gov/news/detroit-city-council-passes-councilmember-ayers-fair-chance-housing-ordinance>

Community power-building organizations have also strengthened their coalition-building capacity by banding together into the Coalition for Property Tax Justice that demands a stop to illegal assessments and foreclosures, as well as The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shut-offs.<sup>55, 56</sup> Due to issues associated with land grabs, foreclosures, and high application fees by landlords, the groups pushed for the implementation of the Detroit Affordable Housing and Preservation Fund in 2017. Under new inclusionary zoning policy, the city requires 20 percent of all yearly commercial real estate sales to go to the housing trust fund.<sup>57</sup>

Although low-income Detroiters face many external threats produced by years of local policy decisions that emphasize austerity, privatization, and corporate control, the uphill battle to rebuild and revitalize a place that has gone through decades of abuse and disinvestment – much of which is centered in racism – is happening. The potential for power building in Detroit lies with a set of emerging grassroots organizations led by people and women of color in particular, including Mothering Justice, Detroit Action, We the People, and Rising Voices. They are supported by aligned statewide networks that can organize people, shift the narrative, and carry out large-scale civic engagement.

### EAU CLAIRE, WISCONSIN

#### **Conditions for Change**

Nestled in the west of Wisconsin, Eau Claire is home to about 70,000 residents, 91 percent of whom are white.<sup>58</sup> A growing concern across the city is the large number of older workers expected to exit the labor force in the near future.<sup>59</sup> The reality of an aging workforce contributes to two prominent issues that community power building organizations have taken up in Eau Claire and statewide: the need for Medicaid expansion and the shortage of caregivers. Legislative roadblocks on these fronts have inspired community power building organizations to employ inside-outside strategies that aim to push effective policy by placing community members into elected offices and at the ears of those already in power.

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55 For more, please see: <https://illegalforeclosures.org/about>;

56 Azikiwe, A. (2017, August 2). Lessons From the Detroit July 1967 Rebellion and Prospects for Social Transformation. *Global Research*. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/lessons-from-the-detroit-july-1967-rebellion-and-prospects-for-social-transformation/5602228>

57 Anderson, M. (2017, Fall). Detroit Establishes Affordable Housing Development and Preservation Fund. *Community Change*. <https://housingtrustfundproject.org/detroit-establishes-affordable-housing-development-and-preservation-fund/>

58 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). QuickFacts: Eau Claire city, Wisconsin. *U.S. Census Bureau*, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/eauclairecitywisconsin>.

59 State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. (2019). 2019 Workforce Profile: Eau Claire County. *State of Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development*. [https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconsin/wits\\_info/downloads/CP/eau\\_claire\\_profile.pdf](https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/wisconsin/wits_info/downloads/CP/eau_claire_profile.pdf).

Building power in Eau Claire is largely affected by state level political and legislative conditions. Residents are currently represented by elected officials who, more often than not, vote along party lines on many issues that drastically affect daily life. Wisconsin, overall, is conservative leaning, though the Eau Claire Metro area leans liberal.<sup>60</sup> And although Wisconsin went Republican in the 2016 elections, it is still considered a toss-up state.<sup>61</sup> Given this push-and-pull context, Wisconsin power builders have much to navigate in order to build consensus and win policy that can create healthy conditions for their residents.

One challenge has been the existence of voter ID laws, which have existed since 2011 despite multiple lawsuits.<sup>62</sup> With close voting margins in the last presidential election—with less than 25,000 votes deciding the presidential race<sup>63</sup>—voter ID laws hold great particularity in the Milwaukee metro area.<sup>64</sup> Eau Claire community power-building organizations also elevated the crisis of heavily gerrymandered districts in the state. Efforts to address gerrymandering stalled in 2018 after the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed *Gill v. Whitford*, in which Wisconsin residents challenged the 2011 state redistricting plan on grounds of “partisan gerrymandering.”<sup>65</sup> Instead, the Supreme Court left the decision to the Wisconsin State Assembly, asserting that the manner was a political one instead of a challenge to the Equal Protection Clause.<sup>66</sup> One avenue through which the people could address the issue would be through a ballot measure; however, Wisconsin residents are not allowed to introduce statewide initiatives or referendums (Duros and Loeza 2020).

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60 Weigel, D. (2020, August 16). The seven political states of Wisconsin. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/politics/wisconsin-political-geography/>

61 Opoien, J. (2018, March 13). Tom Steyer group to spend \$2.5 million mobilizing young Wisconsin voters, targeting Republicans. *The Capital Times*. [https://madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/election-matters/tom-steyer-group-to-spend-million-mobilizing-young-wisconsin-voters/article\\_9f6d824c-6d82-517e-897b-4de06b7775cc.html](https://madison.com/ct/news/local/govt-and-politics/election-matters/tom-steyer-group-to-spend-million-mobilizing-young-wisconsin-voters/article_9f6d824c-6d82-517e-897b-4de06b7775cc.html).

62 Johnson, S. and White, L. (2016, September 26). As Voting Begins, A Look Back At The Fight Over Wisconsin’s Voter ID Law. *Wisconsin Public Radio*. <https://www.wpr.org/voting-begins-look-back-fight-over-wisconsins-voter-id-law>.

63 New York Times. (2017, August 1). Wisconsin Presidential Results: Donald J. Trump Wins. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/wisconsin-president-clinton-trump>.

64 Weigel, D. (2020, August 16). The seven political states of Wisconsin. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/politics/wisconsin-political-geography/>

65 Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law. (2019, July 3). *Gill v. Whitford*. *Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law*. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/court-cases/gill-v-whitford>.

66 Ibid.

### **Arenas of Change**

The effects of continued gerrymandering are especially evident in the fight for Medicaid expansion in the state's legislative arena. Consistent grassroots lobbying and relationship building with decision makers has demonstrated to community power building organizations the structural power that resides with Speaker of the State Assembly. Recently proposed funding would have made some 82,000 residents eligible for benefits, yet the State Speaker of the Assembly is vehemently against accepting federal money stating that it would be a 'massive welfare expansion.'<sup>67</sup> There is hope that alternative models that have been adopted in more conservative and rural states, like models in Arkansas and Utah, could lead to a breakthrough, but the outcome is bleak, as the two sides remain obstinate to compromise.<sup>68</sup>

One promising outcome of the 2019 legislative session was the funding that nursing home and personal care workers would receive.<sup>69</sup> Given this climate in the state's legislative arena, Eau Claire community power-building organizations turned their attention to gaining the support of unlikely legislative allies and to running in local races as an avenue to pursue the change they seek.

### **Capacities for Change**

In response to log jam at the state, Citizen Action Wisconsin and their base adjusted course to gain the support of legislators in related health-focused campaigns. In 2019, after mounting a campaign in response to the state's caregiving crisis, came a breakthrough in the creation of the Governor's Task Force on Caregiving. On the organizing side of the issue, Citizen Action Wisconsin designated members from each of their co-ops to collect caregiving stories to highlight the need for higher wages, health care coverage, and paid leave.<sup>70</sup> These members took the stories and Citizen Action's policy recommendations to the task force to ensure that they push them forward. During this long-term campaign, a prominent success was gaining the support of the Republican senator representing Eau Claire who became a prominent member of the Governor's task force alongside actual caregivers and recipients of caregiving services.<sup>71</sup>



67 Sommerhauser, M. (2019, May 2). Amid GOP opposition, Tony Evers says he'll 'fight like hell' to expand Medicaid. *Wisconsin State Journal*. [https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/amid-gop-opposition-tony-evers-says-hell-fight-like-hell-to-expand-medicaid/article\\_28fd85fd-a061-50d0-babf-0038b672211c.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/amid-gop-opposition-tony-evers-says-hell-fight-like-hell-to-expand-medicaid/article_28fd85fd-a061-50d0-babf-0038b672211c.html).

68 Bauer, S. (2019, April 29). Wisconsin Republicans seek compromise on Medicaid expansion. *Wisconsin State Journal*. [https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/wisconsin-republicans-seek-compromise-on-medicaid-expansion/article\\_e9c4c851-6fc1-5238-ba0c-e2c07463589a.html](https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/govt-and-politics/wisconsin-republicans-seek-compromise-on-medicaid-expansion/article_e9c4c851-6fc1-5238-ba0c-e2c07463589a.html).

69 White, L. (2019, June 4). Republican Lawmakers Approve \$588M Increase In Medicaid, Health Care Spending. *Wisconsin Public Radio*. <https://www.wpr.org/republican-lawmakers-approve-588m-increase-medicaid-health-care-spending>.

70 Zautke, C. (2019, August 29). Wisconsin's Caregiver Crisis. *Citizen Action of Wisconsin*. <https://www.citizenactionwi.org/health-care/wisconsins-caregiver-crisis/?emci=24d64861-24cf-e911-bcd0-281878391efb&emdi=d82c91c2-01d3-e911-bcd0-2818784d4349&ceid=15073>.

71 For more, please see: <https://gtfc.wisconsin.gov/content/caregiving-task-force-membership>.

As another way to inch towards change, community power-building organizations embarked on a broad campaign to elect their own membership to local offices that hold the power to ignite change for their constituents. To guarantee that their members make it onto powerful seats in Eau Claire and beyond, they facilitated a community-driven effort that included organizing volunteers to canvass, rally, and organize around their local candidates. In an impressive feat, the Citizen’s Action was successful in placing forty-nine of their members into offices during the 2018 elections—nine of which were in Eau Claire’s County Board and City Council.<sup>72</sup>

Local races emerged as an important strategy, in part, because of Eau Claire’s smaller size—a place where building a determined group of elected officials and a strategic base that holds them accountable yields considerable power to change conditions. The same is true for state-level elected officials that are dues-paying members of Citizen Action Wisconsin or who worked with the organization to get elected to their office. An interviewee shared that they work consistently with officials who they helped to elect. Instead of assuming that officials are making good policy or administrative decisions on their behalf, they hold officials accountable by engaging in political strategy alongside them. Thus, these relationships function as a pathway to achieving governing power in Eau Claire and at the state level for ongoing issues such as caregiving, Medicaid expansion, and others that still have obstacles to overcome.

## MIAMI, FLORIDA

### **Conditions for Change**

Miami is uniquely situated as a port of entry for immigrants, a trade partner with Mexico and Central and South America, and the economic and cultural hub of South Florida.<sup>73</sup> Demographically, Miami is 72 percent Latino, 16 percent African American, and 10 percent white.<sup>74</sup> The Miami population is composed of 58 percent foreign-born residents, many of whom remain interwoven with Caribbean politics.<sup>75</sup> As a result, Miami’s “Black” and “Brown” communities have historically been multi-layered, interconnected categories that defy a racially monolithic analysis. Located in the state of Florida, a perennial swing state for the presidency, Miami is divided politically with closely contested statewide offices. Like many other states, Florida has its districts drawn by the party in control at the time of redistricting, leading to gerrymandered districts aimed at keeping that party in power.

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72 Brusky, M. (2018, April 6). Citizen Action Members Win Local Elections Across Wisconsin. *Green Bay Progressive*. [http://newiprogressive.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=7918:citizen-action-members-win-local-elections-across-wisconsin&catid=38:the-state-news](http://newiprogressive.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7918:citizen-action-members-win-local-elections-across-wisconsin&catid=38:the-state-news).

73 Chan, L. (2015, July 28). Miami: A Springboard to Latin America. *Hong Kong Trade Development Council*. <https://hkmb.hktdc.com/en/1X0A34SW/hktdc-research/Miami-A-Springboard-to-Latin-America>.

74 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Miami, FL. [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=06000000000012045>.

75 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Nativity and ancestry Miami, FL. [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Nativity-and-ancestry#/?geo=070000000001245000>.

Miami's economy is driven by trade, communications, tourism, and is home to dozens of national and international corporations. It has a gross metropolitan product of \$288 billion (2016)—making the metro area the 12<sup>th</sup> largest in the United States for business activity (Florida and Pedigo 2018:6). However, economic disparities are widespread among the residents of Miami; many residents struggle to afford housing and basic needs. Miami's conditions and context mirror the country's challenges: the city is nestled in a state that is divided along partisan lines, economic success is not evenly felt across all of the city's communities, and Miami is home to a diverse and heavily immigrant community (e.g., Little Havana and Little Haiti). To address inequity and create healthier communities, local organizations in Miami are pursuing bold strategies for change.

### **Arenas of Change**

When we apply the *Changing States* framework to a place, we examine the arenas where power is contested and look at what actors are influencing those arenas. In Miami, the legislative arena is shaped by an elected mayor, five city commissioners representing specific geographic districts, and an appointed city manager who acts as the city's chief administrative officer.<sup>76</sup> Although city elections are nonpartisan, the current Miami city mayor is a registered Republican. Turning to the greater regional arena, Miami sits in Miami-Dade County, the state's largest and most populated county. The percentage of voter turnout from this county can determine who is and who isn't elected to statewide office. Miami-Dade County has voted majority Democratic in the last several presidential elections and is a Democratic stronghold in the state—where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans.<sup>77, 78</sup>

In Miami, the corporate arena is influential in decision making and shapes the legislative arena. In interviews, community organizations noted how policies are geared toward catering to developers and investors at the expense of addressing community needs such as affordable housing. The Florida International University's Metropolitan Center estimates a shortage of over 134,000 homes to meet the demand of low-income Miami-Dade residents—many that have been priced out of affordable housing as a result of new condos and homes developed for wealthy and international buyers.<sup>79, 80</sup>

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76 For more, please see: <https://www.miamigov.com/Government/City-Officials>.

77 Zirulnick, A. (2016, November 6). How Miami-Dade voted in the last five presidential elections. *The New Tropic*. <https://thenewtropic.com/miami-dade-voted-last-five-presidential-elections/>.

78 White, C. (2020, September 1). District Demographic Analysis: Miami-Dade County, FL. *Miami-Dade County*. <https://www.miamidade.gov/elections/library/reports/voter-registration-statistics-districts.pdf>

79 Rodriguez, R. (2019, July 14). Miami's solutions to affordable housing crisis may help. *Miami Herald*. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article231551978.html>.

80 Rodriguez, R. (2020, March 30). 'We are pricing everyone out of Miami.' How locals compete with foreign buyers. *Miami Herald*. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article229315294.html>.



### **Capacities for Change**

The *Changing States* framework puts forward a set of core capacities that states need to create lasting change and improve health outcomes: robust organizational landscape, base building efforts, resource base, alliances and networks, and leadership ladders and lattices. Organizations on the ground develop these capacities both individually and collectively and then deploy them across the arenas of change with an understanding that the conditions either accelerate or limit what change is possible.

The organizing infrastructure in Miami and throughout the state of Florida has played a key role in changing conditions at the state and local levels. Miami’s strong ecosystem of community organizations includes the Miami Workers Center, SOUL, Alliance for LGBTQ Youth, and 4Ward Miami; collectively, they have the capacity to engage thousands of every day Miamians. An important strategy in building power throughout Miami and Florida has been alliance and coalition building. For example, the Miami Workers Center partners with organizations like the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Florida Immigrant Coalition, New Florida Majority, and the Farmworkers Association of Florida, all of which tend to target state issues.

In 2018, Miami organizations displayed all five capacities (base building, robust organizational landscape, leadership ladders, and resource base) in constructing a campaign to overturn a Florida law that prevented people who are formerly incarcerated from voting. The campaign contested for power in the electoral, legislative, and communications arenas and successfully passed a statewide ballot initiative to amend the state constitution to allow formerly incarcerated residents to vote. This required getting two thirds of Floridians to vote for the proposal.

This significant win, seen as the largest act of voter enfranchisement since the 1965 Voting Rights Act, modified Amendment 4 and should have immediately restored voting rights for formerly incarcerated persons upon completion of their sentences, thereby impacting about 1.4 million Floridians (Morris 2019).<sup>81</sup> Additionally, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law found that following the passage of Amendment 4 “black men had been registering to vote at a rapid clip” (Morris 2019). However, in an effort to stem this increased registration, Florida legislators used a loophole in the language to interpret the completion of sentences to mean requiring the payment of exorbitant court fines and fees prior to voting rights being restored.<sup>82</sup> Opponents of this change used their power in the administrative arena to block gains made in the electoral and legislative arenas.



81 Iannelli, J. (2019, May 15). Florida’s New ‘Poll Tax’ Law Disproportionately Suppresses Black Vote, Study Says. *Miami New Times*. <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/florida-poll-tax-amendment-4-law-suppresses-black-vote-brennan-center-says-11172560>.

82 Ibid.

In response, organizations led by the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) filed a lawsuit on the grounds that individuals were being denied basic rights because of their income and inability to pay these court fines and fees.<sup>83</sup> Organizations pivoted to contest for power in the judicial arena to attempt to secure the policy change. In February 2020, a federal appeals court ruled it was unconstitutional to force Florida's formerly incarcerated people to pay off their financial obligations before registering to vote.<sup>84</sup> Although the decision initially only affected the 17 individuals within the lawsuit, the case was granted class certification in May 2020—enacting the ruling to apply to all formerly incarcerated persons who owe fines and fees and are unable to pay.<sup>85</sup>

This win illustrates that campaigns require multiple capacities to wield power across many arenas in order to obtain structural change. The campaign also shows the power of people directly impacted by the law in leading the campaign, building the alliances and networks necessary to pass the initiative, and in navigating the administrative and judicial arenas to secure the victory.

## MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA

### **Conditions of Change**

Minneapolis is a leader in building community power, setting a collective agenda, and cultivating the power needed to govern. Minneapolis has led the way on a set of community-led initiatives including paid sick leave, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and building systems to include residents in decision-making and policy implementation. At the state level, Minnesota has expanded Medicaid and has created the Center for Health Equity that have resulted in dramatically lowering the number of uninsured and addressing racial disparities in health outcomes. These victories, and many more, are a result of decades of organizing, building an interconnected ecosystem of organizations, and experimenting with new strategies—all towards the goal of building community power.

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83 Mower, L. (2020, February 19). Federal appeals court upholds ruling that limiting Amendment 4 is unconstitutional. *Miami Herald*. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article240429151.html>.

84 Ibid.

85 Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. (2020, May 24). FRRRC Celebrates Historic Win for FL Returning Citizens with U.S. District Court Ruling." *Florida Rights Restoration Coalition*. <https://assets.floridarrc.com/2020/05/WIN-Press-Release-for-11th-Circuit-Court-.pdf>.

The context of a place matters and Minnesota demonstrates how the often-unseen rules of the game can truly support community power. For example, Minnesota has very low barriers to voting, with wait times averaging only 6 minutes, absentee voting without needing an excuse, and same day registration.<sup>86</sup> The 2016 turnout was 81 percent of registered voter and 75 percent of eligible voters, the highest turnout in the nation. At the same time, Minnesota faces major challenges around race, age, and housing. For example, while overall voting rates are high, there are significant racial disparities in voting. In terms of votes cast, white turnout was 71 percent compared to 66 percent for Black voters and 37 percent for Latinx voters. While Asian voters had strong rates of registration, turnout was only 52 percent.<sup>87</sup>

The differences in voting rates are embedded in shifting demographic trends as communities of color are growing quickly across the state, particularly in the major urban center of Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI. In Minneapolis, people of color increased by 27 percentage points (from 13 percent to 40 percent) between 1980 and 2010.<sup>88</sup> In the neighboring city of St. Paul, people of color increased 33 percentage points (from 11 percent to 44 percent).<sup>89</sup> This trend will only increase in the years to come as projections indicate that people of color may reach near parity (48 percent) with white residents in the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI region by the year 2050.<sup>90</sup>

Minnesota is also emblematic of Midwestern states where there is a sharp urban-rural divide. This divide is characterized by socioeconomic gaps as compared to the urban centers, polarization, and conflict over changing demographics, including both race and immigration status. In the larger Minneapolis-St. Paul region, there is a larger population of Somali immigrants who face overt racism and Islamophobia. Some politicians have used racialized language and scapegoating that is rooted in anti-Black, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim hate to stoke fear. Documented hate crimes have increased.<sup>91, 92</sup> These sentiments spread and impact the everyday lives of community members.

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86 USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity. (2016). Politics – Minnesota [Tabular Data]. *Changing States*. <https://changingstates.org/conditions.php?state-selection=MN#-arena>.

87 Hargarten, J. (2017, June 10). Despite Minnesota's high voter turnout, youth and minority participation lagged. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/despite-minnesota-s-high-voter-turnout-youth-and-minority-participation-lagged/426828661/>

88 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Minneapolis, MN [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=06000000000027049>.

89 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity St. Paul, MN [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=06000000000027067>.

90 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=03000000000033460>.

91 Montemayor, S. (2019, November 6). Minnesota attorney general moves to combat hate crimes after statewide tour. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/attorney-general-moves-to-combat-hate-crimes-after-statewide-tour/564580422/>.

92 Montemayor, S. (2019, November 12). Attack on Minneapolis mosque comes as reports of hate crimes drop. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/attack-on-minneapolis-mosque-comes-as-reports-of-hate-crimes-drop/564818952/>.

### **Arenas of Change**

Based on these conditions, community power organizations in Minneapolis have developed a unique set of capacities to be able to create healthier communities. They are executing strategies across multiple arenas, with outstanding examples in the corporate and administrative arena.

Just one example was a campaign in 2010 to address conditions at the Target Corporation. Community organizations and labor unions came together to generate a shared analysis that then developed into a collaborative campaign—one corporate focus, with several asks—and shared commitment to stand together until everyone’s issues were addressed. By working collectively, they were able to secure a ‘Ban the Box’ policy for formerly incarcerated workers.<sup>93, 94</sup> For janitors employed by the corporation, the campaign secured neutrality in union recognition.<sup>95</sup>

Collective analysis, corporate research, and a shared corporate target—the Target Corporation—enabled a strategy that included work in administrative arena, protest, and eventually the cultivation of a relationship between the corporation and community members. In addition, coordination across organizations also allowed the broader campaign to tackle structural issues, like racism and sexism, in a way that a single organization working on a single issue could not do or would not win.

### **Capacities of Change**

One of the most unique capacities in Minneapolis is the sharing of resources and skills across the ecosystem. One example is the creation of “Mobile Teams” that can add staff capacity to the ecosystem around political education, research, campaign support, and communications. Mobile Team staff bring added skills and become housed and accountable to communities and organizations in need of support. Additionally, the ecosystem collectively created incubators designed to increase the capacity of emergent organizations through the provision of organizational development, seed funding, and support. As one of the organizations incubated by the ecosystem, Inquilinx, a housing justice organization, used that process to invest in community leadership development and base building. Those same residents then became leaders on housing issues across the entire ecosystem as they work to take housing off the speculative market and place it into a community land trust.

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93 Rosenblum, G. (2013, November 10). Rosenblum: TakeAction Minnesota helped Target ban the box. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/rosenblum-takeaction-minnesota-helped-target-ban-the-box/231304701/>

94 DePass, D. (2013, April 16). Target Corp. Faces complaints about hiring practices. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/target-corp-faces-complaints-about-hiring-practices/192087561/>.

95 DePass, D. (2014, June 10). Target changes policy, backs janitors. *Star Tribune*. <https://www.startribune.com/target-changes-policy-backs-janitors/262633361/>.

Another major strategy reverberating out of Minneapolis is a focus on co-governance or people-centered governance. Co-governance is the creation of enforcement and implementation mechanisms that are led by community members in addition to or instead of bureaucrats. Interviewees shared that enforcement is not a “sexy” issue, but it is critical to long-term power building. The earned sick and safe campaign was a key opportunity to put these strategies into place. The policy, which requires employers to provide sick time to employees, was developed by a Workplace Regulations Partnership Group (WPG).<sup>96</sup> The group was established by the City Council and included workers, business groups, unions, and other community members. Recommendations were developed through a consensus-based process where community outreach, education, and engagement were critical at every step of the process (Hernandez 2019). Members of the ecosystem were major players across every stage and created processes for continued community engagement and co-enforcement.

Although it occurred outside of the interview timeframe for this report, it is important to elevate the historic vote to disband the police in Minneapolis<sup>97</sup> and the struggle to implement that vote<sup>98</sup> in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. The bold policy response is directly connected to the local legacy of community power-building work, governance, and the need to address both the legislative and administrative arenas. Based on years of organizing and supporting community-accountable elected officials, the Minneapolis City Council responded to community demands in ways that other cities still struggle to emulate. Minneapolis’ national leadership did not happen in a vacuum, the legislative leadership mirrored bold community leadership, allowing them to meet the moment.

The question that is forefront on the minds of leaders and organizers in the field remains: How do we build governing power? There is clarity that winning a single policy doesn’t do much good if you don’t have the power to defend it, shifting the narrative can be undermined if you are not at the table deciding how to implement it, and good research and advocacy cannot supplant the day to day work of community-driven enforcement. The Minneapolis ecosystem insists that building power and shifting institutions are necessary for changing conditions.



<sup>96</sup> For more, please see: <http://sicktimeinfo.minneapolismn.gov/>

<sup>97</sup> Gustavo, S. (2020, July 9). What we know (and don't know) so far about the effort to dismantle the Minneapolis Police Department. *MinnPost*. <https://www.minnpost.com/metro/2020/07/what-we-know-and-dont-know-so-far-about-the-effort-to-dismantle-the-minneapolis-police-department/>.

<sup>98</sup> Williams, B. (2020, July 29). Mpls. Charter Commission rejects minimum funding change for MPD. *MPR News*. <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/07/29/mpls-charter-commission-rejects-minimum-funding-change-for-mpd>.

## PORTLAND, MAINE

### **Conditions for Change**

Portland, Maine is a city of just over 66,000 people and sits at the center of a metropolitan area of over a half a million (City of Portland, Maine 2017). For the states 1.3 million residents, the Portland metro area represents more than a third of the total population. Beyond its sheer size, Portland has played a defining role in shaping the state’s agenda and advocating for policies that will greatly improve health. Important to the discussion around creating change, Portland is home to most of the state’s community organizations and public health campaigns—notably, the successful push for statewide Medicaid expansion.

Demographically, Maine has an older and whiter population than nearly any other state in the nation, and is also expected to have the highest population above age 65 in the U.S. by 2026. The City of Portland tells a bit of a different story with those between the ages of 20-39 comprising the largest share of the city’s population (City of Portland, Maine 2017).<sup>99</sup> Portland’s relatively younger and white population is coupled with organizing efforts fighting for Medicaid expansion, local paid sick leave, and pushing to allow noncitizens to vote in city elections.<sup>100</sup> The campaigns coming out of the city have created a progressive Portland image. However, community power-building organizations observe that while the city has pushed forward on important issues that could improve conditions for communities, it has also struggled on implementing policy in reality.



99 Murphy, E. (2019, January 9). As Maine’s population ‘super ages,’ the state’s economy faces frailty. *Portland Press Herald*. <https://www.timesrecord.com/articles/business/as-maines-population-super-ages-the-states-economy-faces-frailty/>

100 Billings, R. (2018, August 14). Council puts off giving non-citizens right to vote in Portland municipal elections. *Portland Press Herald*. <https://www.pressherald.com/2018/08/13/portland-council-considers-allowing-non-citizens-to-vote-in-municipal-elections/>

Tapping into Portland's potential became essential in the push for paid sick days legislation at the city level. The City Council eventually voted down the 2019 ordinance, using the fact that the State would come down with its own legislation on the issue.<sup>101</sup> The actions of the City Council here highlight a serious political condition: Portland's elected Mayor and City Council-appointed City Manager. Portland's local government has long been led by the City Manager who has the responsibility of appointing all city department leaders.<sup>102</sup> The Mayor's office is much newer—starting in 2011 in order to “articulate the city's vision and goals” and “build coalitions.”<sup>103</sup> It has become clear to organizers and community members alike that the power to change conditions lies within the City Manager's responsibilities. There have been several points where these opposed executive roles have come into public view, most recently around the issue of welcoming asylum seekers.<sup>104, 105</sup>

### **Arenas of Change**

In addition to the local hurdles that Portland power builders face, statewide legislative work has proven essential to achieving change and connecting to rural residents. A state battle with many hills, valleys, and lessons was the fight for expanded Medicaid. After years of back and forth with state leadership, organizers in Portland and beyond realized that leadership would halt any bill they pushed through the legislature—made evident by the five vetoes on Medicaid bills by former governor Paul LePage.<sup>106</sup> So, they shifted strategies—and arenas—by creating a ballot measure.

Allowing Maine residents to speak for themselves via the ballot box became the avenue through which the state won Medicaid expansion. The people of Maine passed expansion through ballot initiative in late 2017—a huge win for both organizers who had consistently strategized around the issue and community members who were able to choose this important resource for themselves. Legislative hurdles still emerged as a challenge, however, given that it wasn't until January 2019 when newly-elected Governor Janet Mills came into office that expansion was finally implemented.<sup>107</sup> Preventative care services, medication for chronic illnesses, and mental health services became much more accessible for residents across the state.<sup>108</sup>

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101 Neumann, D. (2019, May 7). Portland City Council rejects paid sick days, worker advocates vow to fight on. *Maine Beacon*. <https://mainebeacon.com/portland-city-council-rejects-paid-sick-days-worker-advocates-vow-to-fight-on/>

102 For more information, please see: <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/475/City-Managers-Office>

103 Shepherd, M. (2019, September 13). Portland's full-time mayor has little formal power. Here's how 2019's candidates see the role. *Bangor Daily News*. <https://bangordailynews.com/2019/09/13/politics/portlands-full-time-mayor-has-little-formal-power-heres-how-2019s-candidates-see-the-role/>

104 Bever, F. (2017, August 1). Portland Mayor and City Manager Clash at Contentious Council Meeting. *Maine Public Radio*. <https://www.mainepublic.org/post/portland-mayor-and-city-manager-clash-contentious-council-meeting>

105 Glauber, J. (2019, July 24). City councilors accuse Portland mayor of spreading misinformation about relocation of asylum-seekers. *WMTW ABC 8*. <https://www.wmtw.com/article/city-councilors-accuse-portland-mayor-of-spreading-misinformation-about-relocation-of-asylum-seekers/28498679#>

106 Goodnaugh, A. (2018, July 24). A Vote Expanded Medicaid in Maine. The Governor Is Ignoring It. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/24/health/maine-medicaid-expansion-lepage.html>

107 Kaiser Family Foundation. (2020, August 17). Status of State Medicaid Expansion Decisions: Interactive Map. [Tabular Data]. *Kaiser Family Foundation*. <https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/status-of-state-medicaid-expansion-decisions-interactive-map/>

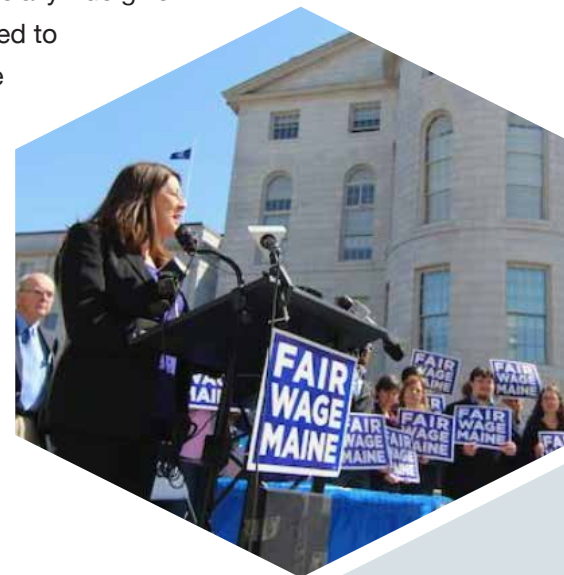
108 Mills, J. (2019, December 27). Gov. Mills: Two years after voters backed Medicaid expansion, we're on our way to a healthier Maine. *Portland Press Herald*. <https://www.pressherald.com/2019/11/07/gov-mills-two-years-after-voters-backed-medicaid-expansion-were-on-our-way-to-a-healthier-maine/#>

By September, almost 30,000 people had enrolled in the program. Additionally, the success in Maine inspired other states follow suit by placing comparable measures on their statewide ballots—initiatives that were similarly led by strong grassroots advocacy for expanded care.<sup>109</sup>

### **Capacities for Change**

Achieving Medicaid expansion necessitated organized community power. For grassroots organization, Maines People’s Alliance, that meant creating a leadership team with members from across the state who needed Medicaid. Their strategy involved intentionally creating a space for that team of community members to engage campaign leads, drive strategic campaign direction, and appear on traditional media to share their stories. Community involvement and direction were key contributions to the campaign’s eventual success. As shared by interviewees, the only way the organization was able to find most impacted community members was because of trained organizers who were on the ground and invested in the communities they worked with. Otherwise, the trust with current and potential Medicaid beneficiaries necessary to build momentum for the ballot measure would not have been cultivated.

Battling for wins at the state level has proven difficult yet fruitful with this type of direction from community. Medicaid expansion in Maine—though won in the electoral arena—ultimately exhibited the importance of the legislative and administrative arenas. Electoral victories are only as good as they are implemented by government at every level, which was made possible for Medicaid expansion only after a switch in governors. Overcoming the legacy of a state administration that blocked implementation and continuing to work under the current structure of local government may continue to be an uphill battle. This is especially true given that Portland appears to have a newer organizing infrastructure when compared to cities around the nation with histories of organizing strategy and wins. Despite this smaller infrastructure, the people of Portland pushed the needle by investing in relationship building, allowing community members to direct legislation, and creating lasting positive narratives in situations where the “big win” is delayed by legislative conditions.



<sup>109</sup> Norris, L. (2020, July 5). Maine and the ACA’s Medicaid expansion. *HealthInsurance.org*. <https://www.healthinsurance.org/maine-medicaid/>



## ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

### **Conditions for Change**

Once a manufacturing epicenter, Rochester now faces de-industrialization and “white flight” that have exasperated inequality and impacted the economic conditions of the city. In 1950, the city’s population peaked at over 332,000 residents and that population is nearly one-third less, standing at nearly 204,000 residents (Hevesi 2019). Demographics have also changed dramatically over the years. Nearly 40 percent of the population today is Black, followed by 37 percent white, and 18 percent Latino.<sup>110</sup> Even as the demographics of the city continue to change, Rochester remains a heavily segregated city.

During the 1950s, manufacturing opportunities paved the way for the creation of a middle class. Jobs drew people into Rochester, and also shaped segregation in the area. Suburbs were populated by management of companies like Kodak, while the city was inhabited by workers.<sup>111</sup> Later, these anchor industries suffered bankruptcy leading to overall economic downturn for Rochester.<sup>112</sup> As the city continues to transition away from manufacturing, high levels of poverty concentrated in the city are evident.<sup>113, 114</sup> In 2017, Rochester ranked third in overall poverty rate among 75 U.S. metro areas, with a staggering poverty rate of 33 percent.<sup>115</sup>

The history of housing segregation in Rochester that forced people of color, particularly Black families, into certain areas of the city has also contributed to stark inequalities. The Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC), for example, developed maps that coded the Rochester suburbs as safest for investment and coded areas of the city as “declining.”<sup>116</sup> As a result, Black families were forced to locate in certain areas and the only way to accommodate new arrivals was to further divide existing available housing, even as buildings were overcrowded and deteriorated.<sup>117</sup> Today, those practices continue to be the foundation perpetuating the city’s poverty and racial inequities.<sup>118</sup>

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110 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity Rochester, NY [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=060000000000036099>.

111 Ryssdal, K. (2016, October 2). Can manufacturing save America? *Longform*. <http://longform.marketplace.org/can-manufacturing-save-america>.

112 Ibid.

113 Paul Ericson, P. (2019, July 31). Rochester and the superstar cities. *Rochester Beacon*. <https://rochesterbeacon.com/2019/07/31/rochester-and-the-superstar-cities/>.

114 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Poverty Rochester, NY [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/poverty#/>

115 Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative and ACT Rochester. (2018, December 11) U.S. Census Data Show Rochester Poverty Rate and Child Poverty Rate Increases. *Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative and ACT Rochester*. <https://www.actrochester.org/tinymce/source/Census%20Update%202018.pdf>.

116 Murphy, J. (2020, February 21). How Rochester’s growing city and suburbs excluded black residents. *Democrat and Chronicle*. <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/in-depth/news/2020/02/05/rochester-ny-kept-black-residents-out-suburbs-decades/2750049001/>.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

### **Arenas of Change**

As of 2017, 62 percent of residents in Rochester were renters.<sup>119</sup> Rochester has an unusual yet challenging housing market in the sense that housing prices tend to be affordable— with a median home value of \$77,800 in 2016; have remained relatively flat; and the city’s housing supply exceeding demand have contributed to disinvestment (czbLLC 2018). The Rochester Citywide Study (2018) commissioned by the city of Rochester also found that very low incomes and income decline are at the root of housing affordability challenges, evident in the decline of median wages overtime (czbLLC 2018). In 1980, the median hourly wage for workers of color was \$20 compared to \$23 for white workers; fast forward to 2017, the median hourly wage decreased to \$20 for white workers and \$15 for workers of color.<sup>120</sup>

Structures in the administrative arena reveal opportunities that elected officials and organizers can take to address the unhealthy conditions burdening Rochester residents. The Rochester City Council has been a particularly important avenue through which community organizers have pushed for their needs. The council is a nine-member entity working alongside the Mayor’s Office and is comprised of five at-large members and four district members.<sup>121</sup> In 2017, Mayor Lovely A. Warren, the city’s first female and youngest mayor, was re-elected for a second term with an administrative agenda focused on building vibrant neighborhoods and forging partnerships across different sectors.<sup>122</sup> In 2019, when the council was looking to elect many new members, it was also facing mounting issues—including housing—that community members showed commitment to holding the council accountable to.<sup>123</sup> Continued organizing proved effective in August 2020 when organizations like City-wide Tenant Union of Rochester successfully pushed for citywide eviction relief due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>124</sup>

Many community-led efforts have contributed to structural reform both at the local and state level, and one effort that aimed to re-shape housing legislation in the city was particularly significant for changing conditions. After the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 passed statewide, Rochester still had hurdles to overcome. The city was required to meet the housing emergency threshold in order to opt in.<sup>125</sup> In December 2019, housing advocates, including the City-wide Tenant Union of Rochester, worked with city council to approve funding for a consultant to conduct an apartment

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119 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Homeownership Rochester, NY [Interactive Chart]. National Equity Atlas. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Homeownership#/?breakdown=6>

120 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Median hourly wage by race/ethnicity, Rochester, NY [Interactive Chart]. National Equity Atlas. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages\\_Median#/?geo=07000000003663000](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Wages_Median#/?geo=07000000003663000).

121 For more, please see: <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589938361>.

122 For more, please see: <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589938361>.

123 Towler, M. A. (2019, June 5). A changing City Council faces major challenges. *Rochester City Newspaper*. <https://www.rochestercitynewspaper.com/rochester/a-changing-city-council-faces-major-challenges/Content?oid=10375716>

124 Noelle E. C. Evans, N. (2020, August 19). Rochester City Council passes eviction relief legislation. *WXXI News*. <https://www.wxixnews.org/post/rochester-city-council-passes-eviction-relief-legislation>

125 Fanelli, G. (2019, December 17). Council approves vacancy study legislation. *Rochester City Newspaper*. <https://www.rochestercitynewspaper.com/rochester/council-approves-vacancy-study-legislation/Content?oid=11181144>.

vacancy study that would determine whether the city meets that threshold.<sup>126</sup> However, conditions in the area’s judicial arena simultaneously presented another barrier for housing issues, which was the city’s lack of a housing court.

### **Capacities for Change**

Given the fact that Rochester still lacks a dedicated housing court for evictions and other disputes, community-led efforts have recently embarked on addressing the poor and unsafe housing conditions that some renters face. One of the most recent wins for housing organizers was the implementation of a housing section in the Rochester City Court allowing tenants to bring small claims against a landlord.<sup>127</sup> The strategy behind this win began in 2018 when tenants organized around unaddressed housing repairs of properties owned by real estate broker Peter Hungerford. Tenants were fighting to remedy health and safety issues such as a lack of running water and gas services, bursting pipes, mold, and pests.<sup>128</sup> These issues had remained unaddressed for years. The lack of a housing court allowed such problems to continue as tenants were unable to take property owners to court; on the other hand, property owners were able to take tenants to court for damages and unpaid rent—further suppressing tenants from speaking out against negligent landlords.<sup>129</sup>

The community response was a multi-strategy campaign with members of organizations like City-wide Tenant Union, Take Back the Land Rochester, and Upstate-Downstate Housing Alliance. Members organized to hold a press conference on raising public awareness of code enforcement and stressing the need for a housing court in Rochester.<sup>130</sup> In addition, 25 elected officials, including Mayor Warren, members from the Rochester Board of Education, and all nine city council members wrote a letter to the administrative judge of the Rochester region asking for a judge to be assigned to adjudicate housing matters.<sup>131</sup> Two years later, these advocacy efforts resulted in structural reform in the judicial arena: the implementation of a new housing section in the Rochester City Court that allows renters who can demonstrate attempts to resolve housing with no results to submit claims action in City Court.<sup>132</sup> While this interim solution is one tool tenants can use to hold their landlords accountable, organizers and city officials are continuing advocacy efforts urging the state to pass a dedicated housing court for Rochester’s tenants.



<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Moule, J. (2018, January 8). City Court starts housing section. *Rochester City Newspaper*. <https://www.rochester-city-newspaper.com/rochester/city-court-starts-housing-section/Content?oid=11262310>

<sup>128</sup> Moule, J. (2018, January 8). Activists, tenants push for housing court. *Rochester City Newspaper*. <https://www.rochester-city-newspaper.com/rochester/activists-tenants-push-for-housing-court/Content?oid=5233119>.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> McDermott, M. and Andreatta, D. (2018, January 8). Rochester tenants seek housing court to iron out housing issues. *Democrat and Chronicle*. <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2018/01/08/rochester-tenants-seek-housing-court-iron-out-apartment-issues/1012582001/>.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Sharp, B. (2020, January 7). If you’re a renter in Rochester, you now have an easier way to sue your landlord. *Democrat and Chronicle*. <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2020/01/07/how-to-sue-landlord-rochester-ny-tenant-housing-court/2826535001/>.

## SANTA ANA, CALIFORNIA

### **Conditions for Change**

What we can learn from Santa Ana about answering the North Star question—How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities?—is through the lens of youth-led organizing, multi-racial alliances, and the use of arts and cultural change strategies. Resilience Orange County and El Centro Cultural de Mexico are part of a growing network of organizing groups working together towards a vision of Santa Ana that honors the rights and dignity of all people regardless of race/ethnicity, national origin, or immigration status. While both are rooted in the Latino community, they organize jointly with Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and labor unions. Through coalitions, they work towards stopping deportations, protecting renter’s rights to stay in their homes, addressing the lack of parks and recreational areas for youth, and reversing punitive practices that push students out of school.

The City of Santa Ana is a mid-sized city of 334,000 residents<sup>133</sup> and is located within Orange County, California. Similar to what is happening today in other parts of the country, during the 1988 election, partisan local officials stationed guards outside polling places in Santa Ana— which they said was necessary to ensure non-citizens were not voting. The presence of guards had a substantial chilling effect on the Latino community that stunted their participation. “The uniformed guards were placed in predominantly Latino neighborhoods of Santa Ana, holding signs that said in Spanish and English: ‘Non-Citizens Can’t Vote.’”<sup>134</sup> While a civil rights lawsuit ensued and settled nearly four years later, it sparked reforms in the state’s election laws—and captured national attention.

Today, demographic change continues to reshape the landscape in Orange County. One driver is, in part, due to a more diverse population. In the 1980s, the region experienced an influx of immigrants from Latin America and Asia (PolicyLink and USC PERE 2019). In 1980, 78 percent of the county was white—by 2016 the white population dropped to 42 percent (PolicyLink and USC PERE 2019). Today, just over one third of the population is Latino and nearly one-fifth is Asian American or Pacific Islander (PolicyLink and USC PERE 2019).



133 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Population by race/ethnicity, Santa Ana, CA [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?breakdown=2>.

134 Leshner, D. (1992, November 17). O.C. Poll Guard Case Ends in Settlement by State GOP. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-11-17-mn-694-story.html>

Today, the Latino population has seen a drop in new immigrants and growth in Latinos born in the U.S., while the AAPI community, the population growth is almost equally driven by native-born and foreign-born residents (PolicyLink and USC PERE 2019). Santa Ana is a young city—in fact, it is the 7<sup>th</sup> youngest in the nation.<sup>135</sup> The median ages for Latinos, the demographic majority, is 28 while the median age for whites and AAPIs is 48 and 43, respectively.<sup>136</sup>

### **Arenas of Change**

Such overwhelming demographic majority of the Latino population has translated into political representation. The City has a Mayor-Council form of government, with six City Councilmembers who are elected citywide yet represent different wards.<sup>137</sup> Santa Ana became a majority Latino City Council in 2006. In stark contrast to the anti-Latino sentiment in the 1980s and 1990s, one of the council's first actions was to require simultaneous translation of all city council meetings into Spanish.<sup>138</sup>

Currently, all of the Councilmembers and the Mayor are Latino.<sup>139</sup> The racial/ethnic composition of the council is likely to change with more Asian-American representation. In 2018, Asian Americans Advancing Justice filed a lawsuit against the city for violating the California Voting Rights Act and disenfranchising Asian-American voters through the at-large system. At the end of 2018, the Santa Ana City Council passed an ordinance to change to districted elections,<sup>140</sup> which goes into effect in 2020.

### **Capacities for Change**

Just one example of improving conditions for community came in the form of a defense fund for Santa Ana's immigrants. Community organization, Resilience OC, secured \$165,000 for Orange County residents, the first such public deportation defense fund in Orange County. Santa Ana is the first city in Orange County to pioneer an immigrant defense fund that ensures legal representation for immigrant families in the city facing detention and deportation. The Santa Ana City Council approved the program in 2017 right after the city declared itself a sanctuary city for immigrants and partnered with the SAFE Network from the Vera Institute of Justice, which is composed of 12 jurisdictions nationwide that have similar programs like Santa Ana. With the support of this program, Immigrant Defenders Law Center has provided legal representation to 29 immigrant residents of Santa Ana facing removal proceedings.

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135 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Median age, Santa Ana, CA [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Median\\_age#/?breakdown=4&geo=07000000000669000](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Median_age#/?breakdown=4&geo=07000000000669000).

136 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Median age by race/ethnicity, Santa Ana, CA [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Median\\_age#/?breakdown=1](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Median_age#/?breakdown=1).

137 Arellano, G. (2018). The Strange Case of Santa Ana's District Elections. *KCRW Orange County Line*. <https://www.kcrw.com/culture/shows/orange-county-line/the-strange-case-of-santa-anas-district-elections>

138 Nagourney, A., & Medina, J. (2016, October 11). This City Is 78% Latino, and the Face of a New California. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/12/us/california-latino-voters.html>

139 As of September 2019

140 For more, please see: <https://www.santa-ana.org/cc/city-elections>

Anti-immigrant sentiment, however, has existed in Santa Ana and surrounding communities for much longer than the elevated tactics of recent years. A response to this climate in the past was the creation of community organization El Centro Cultural de Mexico del Condado de Orange. It was founded in 1994 by a group of Mexican women to be a safe space for immigrant families during the anti-immigrant era of the 1990s. It has a horizontal decision-making structure to increase democratic participation of over 50 core-volunteer teachers and organizers. Not surprisingly, El Centro's leadership development has become a pipeline for other local nonprofits hiring organizers. These organizers have helped lead important policy wins such as the Santa Ana Sunshine Ordinance in 2012. El Centro has also become a home for organizing around worker and immigrant rights and against police brutality.

In a gentrifying city, housing has become a challenge for many, including El Centro. From 2001 to 2015, El Centro was forced to move four times. In 2015, the organization finally purchased its own building and today still combines cultural practices with community organizing. In 2017, in spite of ongoing housing obstacles, El Centro planted roots by launching Santa Ana's first community radio, Radio Santa Ana, broadcasting throughout the city on 104.7FM. This year, the organization hosted the Southern California Renter Power Assembly; is supporting a new local domestic workers organization; is helping form Santa Ana's first community land trust; and continues to host Noche de Altares, drawing over 40,000 attendees every Dia de los Muertos. El Centro continues to be a vibrant gathering space that hosts traditional music, such as son jarocho, and hosting local groups struggling for space in their city. Young punk musicians, artists, and cultural groups adopted El Centro to organize actions and conferences—further exemplifying that arts and culture can be used strategically to create healthy, inclusive, and powerful communities.

## SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

### **Conditions for Change**

Santa Fe is a story of land and earth. It holds a historical legacy and inextricable identification with Indigenous roots and peoples while simultaneously representing a Mexican land struggle. Situated in the American South West, the battles over land and immigration are papered over with a mythos – stories now commodified into cowboy’s hats and turquoise jewelry.

Santa Fe is a majority people of color city - 55 percent of the city is Latino and 2 percent are Native Americans.<sup>141</sup> As a whole, New Mexico has a very large population of Indigenous peoples; they make up nearly 11 percent of the state.<sup>142</sup> As a border state, immigration continues to dominate politics or be an undercurrent in other political conversations. Approximately, 11 percent of city residents are noncitizens.<sup>143</sup>

Gentrification and displacement are real concerns on multiple levels. Gentrification impacts families, their economic stability and their connections to place, family, history, and community. But gentrification is by no means an individual or family concern, it’s a societal level crisis that sends ripple effects through culture, community, politics, and power-building.

We also see the process of displacement exacerbating poverty throughout the city of Santa Fe. New Mexico is the second poorest state in the nation, with 21 percent of the state living below the poverty line.<sup>144</sup> Poverty disproportionately impacts Native Americans and Latinos followed by Black residents. In 2017, 36 percent of Native Americans, 26 percent of Latino residents, and 22 percent of Black residents lived below 100 percent of the poverty line.<sup>145</sup> For those who are working, escaping poverty is still an ever-elusive goal. In 2017, 26 percent of Latinos and 34 percent of Native American adults ages 25 to 64 were working full-time and living below 200 percent of the poverty level compared to 12 percent of White adults.<sup>146</sup>



141 U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). QuickFacts Santa Fe city, New Mexico. *U.S. Census Bureau*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/santafecitynewmexico,NM/PST045219>

142 Ibid.

143 U.S. Census Bureau (2019). Selected Characteristics of The Native and Foreign-Born Populations Santa Fe, 2013-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates [Database]. *U.S. Census Bureau*. <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Santa%20Fe%20city,%20New%20Mexico&tid=ACSST5Y2018.S0501&hidePreview=false>

144 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Poverty, New Mexico [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/poverty#/?breakdown=6>.

145 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Poverty, New Mexico [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/poverty#/?breakdown=1>.

146 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Working poor, New Mexico [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Working\\_poor#/](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Working_poor#/).

Additionally, research shows that displacement intensifies health inequity (Health Affairs Health Policy Brief 2020). As people move further away from health care centers, they encounter environmental harms and reduced access to healthy food, green space, and health care. Outside of Santa Fe and Albuquerque, New Mexico is a largely rural state. As gentrification affects more and more residents, families are being pushed into rural communities without the kind of physical and social infrastructures needed to grow and maintain community power.

Interviewees pegged one of the causes on the structure of the economy, asserting that Santa Fe's economy is overly dependent on tourism and the commodification and exploitation of Indigenous and Latinx culture. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, leisure and hospitality made up nearly 11.5 percent of the non-farm employment in February of 2020 prior to the pandemic.<sup>147</sup> By April of 2020, leisure and hospitality dropped by over 50 percent accounting for over half of the job losses in the metro area.<sup>148</sup>

### ***Arenas of Change***

In New Mexico, change strategies have been focused in the electoral, legislative, and administrative arenas. One of the strongest organizations in these arenas is Somos Un Pueblo Unido or Somos, an immigrant-led organization that focuses on racial and worker's justice. Beginning in 2002, Somos and allies began to push for a measure allowing undocumented immigrants to apply for driver's licenses. With the election of Democratic governor Bill Richardson in 2003, organizers saw an opening and had built the power necessary to win. The passage of the policy made New Mexico one of only two states in the nation to provide unrestricted driver's licenses to undocumented people (Escobar 2014:285).

In the year leading up to the driver's license bill passing (House Bill 173), Somos built relationships with staff and leadership in the Administrative Arena. These relationships ensured a successful implementation of the program and created alignment on values and priorities. Instead of the bureaucracy being positioned as an obstacle, the staff became leaders and allies in its passage.



<sup>147</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, September 11). Economy at a Glance – Santa Fe, NM. *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*. [https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.nm.htm#eag\\_nm.f.p](https://www.bls.gov/eag/eag.nm.htm#eag_nm.f.p)

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



Since the bill's passage, the New Mexico driver's license issue has seen major successes but also numerous attacks. For instance, the percentage of uninsured vehicles decreased from 33 percent to almost 9 percent.<sup>149</sup> Further, by accident and fatality measures, traffic safety improved in the years following the measure (National Immigration Law Center 2015). Despite its successes, Governor Susana Martinez attempted to repeal the law multiple times over the following decade, pushing community power-building organizations to contend for power in the legislative arena, across the political spectrum, and in rural communities where the number of immigrants were quite small.

### **Capacities for Change**

The foundation of Santa Fe's community organizations is membership led unlike a traditional advocacy model in which organizations advocate on behalf of communities. The community organizations in Santa Fe are beholden to their members and shift their focus based on the needs and decision-making of their member-leaders. Chainbreaker Collective started their work as a transportation organization that focused on the social and environmental impacts of inequality in bus service and active transportation. As a membership-based organization, members began pushing the organization to build connections between the need for expanded bus lines and housing displacement and unaffordability in Santa Fe. Therefore, based on the needs and vision of members, Chainbreaker expanded into housing.

Similarly, Somos started as a member-led immigrant rights organization. For over 25 years, they built a membership base and an impressive list of victories: sanctuary city policies in 1999; driver's licenses for undocumented drivers in 2003; and fighting family detention centers in 2014. After 25 years, members began to identify a need in their communities around workers' rights—specifically regarding the vulnerability of immigrants in the workplace, including workplace safety, wage theft, and discrimination. These shifts represent a deep commitment to addressing the conditions facing communities and the kind of leadership development needed to build power to change those conditions.

This member-led model illustrates one of the key tenants of community power—people should be able to uplift what is most important for themselves and their communities. Community-driven and member-led movements tend to be more durable and long lasting because they create deeper relationships, lasting personal transformation, and transform communities and neighborhoods. Even the most well-meaning advocate, bureaucrat, or politician seeks to change conditions on behalf of other people. Community-driven campaigns ensure people can change conditions for themselves and once that power is cultivated, it can be wielded and brought to the next collective challenge.

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149 Boyd, D. (2012). Effects on Insurance Unclear. *Albuquerque Journal*. <https://www.abqjournal.com/117273/effects-on-insurance-unclear.html>

## KENTUCKY

### **Conditions for Change**

In a place where industry and identity are inextricable for many residents, Kentucky community power-building organizations find themselves having to think strategically and compassionately to call-in unlikely supporters. The legacy of the corporate coal industry influences the state’s landscape in a myriad of ways. Generations of Kentuckians have quite literally found home in the coal industry since the late 1800s when companies built towns for miners’ families.<sup>150</sup> At times, mounting concerns over climate change and growing opposition to fossil fuels in favor of renewable energy have come across as disrespectful to Kentucky residents—individuals who have long toiled in the dangerous coal industry. This has become the shaky ground that impacts the political arenas no matter the political affiliation.<sup>151</sup>

With this context in mind, power builders emphasize calling-in urban and rural communities to achieve authentic representation of the state’s needs. In addition to these cultural conditions, Kentucky organizers must tackle the political conditions that create policies that are detrimental to healthy communities. For example, the Republican-led legislature recently overturned Democratic Governor Andy Beshear’s veto on Senate Bill 2, a measure that will require a government-issued photo ID in order to vote.<sup>152</sup> This becomes particularly challenging when considering the racialized impacts of voter ID laws—namely against Black communities.<sup>153</sup> Thus, organizing against voter ID laws requires a racial analysis and lens and should be seen as campaigning for a more inclusive democracy.

The same can be said of the transition away from Kentucky’s extractive economy. In response to drastic climate change, organizers across the nation have introduced the Just Transition framework—an effort very much alive in Kentucky. Locally, the effort is guided by Kentucky Coalition and the Climate Justice Alliance, with the goal of pushing forward an “inclusive, and place-based process to build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative one.”<sup>154</sup> Beyond a simple economic strategy, this process aims to fundamentally address the problems of power at play in the extractive economy that rests upon the exploitation of resources and people. The switch entails addressing climate-related, racial, and economic inequities created by this type of economy. It additionally requires tackling damaging ripple effects such as poor housing, unhealthy water, high incidents of lung and hearts diseases, and an underfunded education system that have been disproportionately felt throughout central Appalachia yet also impacted the region (i.e., southwest Virginia, southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky).<sup>155</sup>

150 Simpson, A. (2019, March 11). Former Coal Mining Towns Turn to Tourism. *Stateline Pew Trusts*. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/03/11/former-coal-mining-towns-turn-to-tourism>

151 Beam, A. and Raby, J. (2014, September 27). As Families Flee Coal Country, Schools Struggle. *The Times-Tribune*. <https://www.times-tribune.com/news/as-families-flee-coal-country-schools-struggle-1.1761726>

152 Viebeck, E. (2020, April 15). Kentucky legislature overrides veto of GOP voter ID measure. *The Washington Post*. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/kentucky-legislature-overrides-veto-of-gop-voter-id-measure/2020/04/15/dc23fa7a-7f29-11ea-9040-68981f488eed\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/kentucky-legislature-overrides-veto-of-gop-voter-id-measure/2020/04/15/dc23fa7a-7f29-11ea-9040-68981f488eed_story.html)

153 Millhiser, I. (2020, April 15). Kentucky just made it harder to vote during a pandemic. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2020/4/15/21222084/kentucky-voter-id-coronavirus-pandemic>

154 For more, please see <http://kftc.org/campaigns/just-transition>

155 Guilford, G. (2017, December 30). The 100-year capitalist experiment that keeps Appalachia poor, sick, and stuck on coal. *Quartz*. <https://qz.com/1167671/the-100-year-capitalist-experiment-that-keeps-appalachia-poor-sick-and-stuck-on-coal/>

### **Arenas of Change**

In 2015, the Obama Administration introduced plans for the Clean Power Plan, a project aimed for states to create their own alternative energy plans to reduce carbon emissions.<sup>156</sup> The Kentucky legislature pushed back on these efforts by restricting what could be included as part of its state proposal—something that power-builders saw as yet another failure to meet the needs of Kentuckians.<sup>157</sup> In a determined move to transition from extractive practices, Kentucky constituents—including coal miners—formed Empower Kentucky.<sup>158</sup> This Empower Kentucky Plan came as a result of leaders in the legislative arena refusing to compose and implement a plan for Clean Power (to reduce carbon emissions)—something that organizers saw as yet another failure of established power.<sup>159</sup> Thus, Empower Kentucky took the fight out of the legislative arena into the hands of Kentucky residents. They focused on establishing trust with, harnessing the power of, and bringing in the voices of residents most affected across the state.

Taking the reins to envision a better, healthier, and more inclusive future for their state and to create the Empower Kentucky Plan required great vision on the part of community leaders and organizers. The power built around this effort required extensive input from community members and resulted in “community conversations” taking place in each of the state’s six congressional districts (Kentuckians For The Commonwealth 2016). The way these events worked in Kentucky was by asking constituents to bring people from their own networks so as to cast as big a net as possible on this issue and bring in perspectives from beyond the likely participants. Gatherings included sharing knowledge about the current energy system in Kentucky, asking attendees to envision an alternative energy future for Kentucky and Kentuckians, and to describe what that looked like to them—a strategy that ensured the plan would be rooted in community and in true local experience. This culminated in the larger Empower Kentucky Summit where constituents from all regions came together to think through a drafted plan that included or at least was cognizant of issues that intersected with creating a healthier state and climate—such as issues of land use, job creation, and racial equity—with the goal of creating a full drafted plan (Kentuckians For The Commonwealth 2016).

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156 United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2015, August) Overview of The Clean Power Plan. *United States Environmental Protection Agency*. <https://archive.epa.gov/epa/cleanpowerplan/fact-sheet-overview-clean-power-plan.html>

157 Sadasivam, N. (2015, February 17) Coal States Building Wall of Red Tape to Resist EPA's Clean Power Plan. *Inside Climate News*. <https://insideclimatenews.org/news/17022015/coal-states-building-wall-red-tape-resist-epas-clean-power-plan>

158 For more, please see: <https://www.empowerkentucky.org/plan/vision-and-principles/>

159 Barton, R. (2015, August 25). State Legislators Slam EPA Clean Power Plan. *89.3 WFPL*. <https://wfpl.org/state-legislators-slam-clean-power-plan/>

### **Capacities for Change**

While the 2016 change in federal executive leadership poses a great risk to clean power, this cooperative effort by the people of Kentucky allowed for the development of leaders and “collective muscle” by staying rooted in local organizing. According to residents’ testimonies, organizing to build power amongst the most impacted Kentucky communities has led to healthier communities by virtue of empowering everyday residents who then pass that power on to their descendants. Kentucky Coalition builds sustained community power through a specific trajectory, starting with recognizing the inherited “private shame and moving to public connection and then moving to political imagination and then leadership and the shared responsibility for someone’s—for our community”.

In addition, Kentucky Coalition’s commitment to race and gender equity has led to an increase in participation of young people of color in the organization, many of whom are connecting the dots between public health and structural racism. One such connection has been the utilization of the public health frame to call for a decrease in the state’s carceral investment. Kentucky Coalition utilizes an inside strategy to combat racial divisiveness and further aid community power through its work to make leaders out of elected legislators by training them to understand how issues at the capitol are racialized or could lead to racialized impacts. These strategies and practices have become all the more important in recent months as the state is roiled with protests against the senseless killing of Breonna Taylor. A Louisville EMT, Taylor was tragically killed in her home by police officers who entered in search of a suspect. Her death in light of countless other officer-involved deaths across the country resulted in mass protests across the state of Kentucky. Rather than severing the state, Kentucky Coalition is finding a cohesion of political understanding and will. The multi-racial nature of protests and the willingness of white protestors to take leadership from Black organizers is a direct result of the years of community power building and leadership development that Kentucky Coalition has invested in both broadly and in their environmental work.



## OREGON

### **Conditions for Change**

Although the state of Oregon is primarily white, the percentage of people of color has increased over time. Between 1980 and 2017, Oregon’s composition of people of color increased from nearly 7 percent to about 25 percent.<sup>160</sup> The percent of people of color is projected to increase to 40 percent by 2050.<sup>161</sup> Between 2017 and 2050, Latinos are projected to have the highest population growth rate at 133 percent, followed by the Asian or Pacific Islander population at 100 percent, the Black population at 94 percent, the Native American population at 42 percent, and the white population at only 2 percent increase.<sup>162</sup>

Oregon has a long history of racial exclusion dating back to 1844, when the territory passed its first Black exclusionary laws before it became a state.<sup>163</sup> These laws are not a distant memory as exclusion continued through restrictive covenants, urban renewal projects that displaced residents, and gentrification that made housing unaffordable for many low income people of color.<sup>164</sup> In recent years, cities have tried to counter gentrification by investing in affordable housing; however, even those attempts further pushed existing residents out. For example, in the city of Alberta, economic development institutions gave developers a key piece of land in a primarily Black neighborhood that was intended to be part of an affordable housing project.<sup>165</sup> Organizers were able to stop the development and secure \$20 million for new affordable housing or assistance for homeowners.<sup>166</sup> However, the project still contributed to decreases in African American, Hawaiian-Pacific Islander, and Native American populations in the area.<sup>167</sup> This complicated history demonstrates the high stakes in addressing a long history of discrimination.

160 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Oregon [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/poverty#/?breakdown=6>.

161 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). People of color, Oregon [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/People\\_of\\_color#/?geo=02000000000041000](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/People_of_color#/?geo=02000000000041000).

162 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Population growth, Oregon [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/population\\_growth#/?year=1750](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/population_growth#/?year=1750).

163 Camhi, T. (2020, June 9). A racist history shows why Oregon is still so white. *Oregon Public Broadcasting*. <https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-white-history-racist-foundations-black-exclusion-laws/>.

164 Semuels, A. (2016, July 22). The Racist History of Portland, the Whitest City in America. *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/racist-history-portland/492035/>.

165 Theriault, D. (2015, March 4). A Leap of Faith: Is \$20 million enough to Defy History, Fight Gentrification, and Revive the Black Portland that Was? *Portland Mercury*. <https://www.portlandmercury.com/portland/a-leap-of-faith/Content?oid=15109659>.

166 Parks, C. (2016, November 5). Urban renewal hurt African Americans, officials say. Now Portland leaders want to make amends. *Oregon Live*. [https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2016/11/urban\\_renewal\\_african\\_american.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2016/11/urban_renewal_african_american.html).

167 Rogers, J. (2017, January 24). A new plan for interstate corridor. *Portland Tribune*. <https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/9-news/341456-221189-a-new-plan-for-interstate-corridor>.

### **Arenas of Change**

Oregon is a great example of the power in using the legislative arena to change conditions facing communities. For example, Oregon's tax structure, which was amended in the 1990's towards a regressive system, has contributed to budget deficits and inconsistent funding for programs and services, particularly in education (Oregon Department of Revenue 2009).<sup>168</sup> Organizers advocated for statewide legislation to fund educational programs that reduce these fluctuations and invests in young people. After a year-long campaign, The Early Childhood Coalition, along with K-12 students, educators, and community members worked together to pass the Student Success Act, a measure funding K-12 and early childhood programs through a new tax on businesses.<sup>169</sup> This example is one of many, illustrating the organizing capacity in Oregon, the importance of coalitions in passing statewide policies, and the value of using the legislature to tackle systemic challenges.

In the electoral arena, Oregon has structures that support power-building efforts in the state, like automatic voter registration, a mail in voting system, and direct ballot initiatives, resulting in one of the highest voter turnout rates in the country.<sup>170</sup> On the other hand, systems like at-large voting structures in school districts create underrepresentation of communities of color like in the Salem-Keizer school districts where a primarily white school board represent a student body that is 40 percent Latino.<sup>171</sup> Interviewees from organizations like Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), the Oregon farmworkers union, shared their efforts to change from at-large to district elections to enhance community voice. In 2019, activists used the legislative arena to address this condition by passing the Oregon Voting Rights Act. This policy provided two avenues for school boards to modify their electoral methods to change the dynamics of school board elections and ensure people of color can represent their constituents on school boards.<sup>172</sup>



168 Manning, R. (2016, April 15). Oregon School Funding Still a Challenge, 25 Years After Measure 5. *Oregon Public Broadcasting*.  
<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-education-measure-5/>.

169 Zero to Three. (2019, July 30). Oregon Passes Student Success Act. *Zero to Three*.  
<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2855-oregon-passes-student-success-act>.

170 Eberhard, K. (2018, December 13). Oregon Tops the Charts for Voter Turnout in 2018. *Sightline*. <https://www.sightline.org/2018/12/13/voter-turnout-oregon-tops-charts-2018-midterms/>.

171 Miller, E. (2019, May 19). Candidates Run to be First Latinos on Salem-Keizer School Board. *Oregon Public Broadcasting*.  
<https://www.opb.org/news/article/school-board-latino-candidates-salem-keizer-oregon/>.

172 Eberhard, K. (2019, June 13). Oregon Just Passed a Voting Rights Act. Here's Why it's a Big Deal. *Sightline*.  
<https://www.sightline.org/2019/06/13/oregon-voting-rights-act-passes-senate-june-12/>.

While Oregon has passed many statewide policies, legislating at the local level has been a key first step when scaling change to the state level. In 2013, the city of Portland passed paid sick leave for all workers.<sup>173</sup> Since municipalities had greater latitude, organizers focused their attention on the Portland City Council, assembling a coalition to support the ordinance under the leadership of Family Forward Oregon.<sup>174</sup> In 2014, the City of Eugene also passed paid sick leave by leveraging the win in Portland and by building local coalition alongside unions and business owners.<sup>175</sup> Following these local initiatives in 2015, the state of Oregon then passed a statewide paid sick leave law<sup>176</sup>, illustrating the importance of local work in evolving into statewide policy change.

### **Capacities for Change**

Turning to the base-building infrastructure, interviewees expressed that the Fair Shot for All Coalition, composed of multi-sector organizations, has been important for the state of Oregon in having a united front in the legislative session. Every year, coalition selects an agenda, aligns resources, and vets agenda items through a process. Members of the Fair Shot Coalition include labor unions, tenants' rights groups, and community organizations focused on a variety of issues.<sup>177</sup> This collective approach creates an ecosystem that creates a force for change that is stronger than any one organization.

Oregon's organizing infrastructure, collective agenda, and strong ecosystem translates to the ability to think about both policy and implementation. In 2019, Oregon implemented Paid Family and Medical Leave Insurance (PFMLI), the first bill in the nation to offer full wage replacement for minimum-wage workers.<sup>178</sup> Part of the bill included establishing an advisory committee to represent workers and employers across diverse communities and industries in the state to assist in the equitable development of this bill.<sup>179</sup> The passage and implementation of the PFMLI was a collaborative effort of Time to Care Oregon Coalition, a coalition of over 40 members and 13 steering committees who were involved in the decision-making process.<sup>180</sup> As they were advocating for paid family leave, the coalition worked closely with agencies that would administer the program like the Early Learning Division and the Department of Human Services to establish criteria on how the policy would function upon implementation. Creating opportunities for community engagement in implementation and co-governance will ensure that the lofty goals for the policy will truly benefit those who need it the most.

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173 McIntosh, D. (2013, April 3). Unanimous City Council: Portland workers will have sick leave. *Oregon Labor Press*. <https://nwlaborpress.org/2013/04/city-council-portland-sick-leave/>.

174 Ibid.

175 McIntosh, D. (2014, August 11). Labor steps up big-time to help pass paid Eugene sick leave. *Oregon Labor Press*. <https://nwlaborpress.org/2014/08/labor-help-pass-eugene-paid-sick-leave/>.

176 A Better Balance. (2020, July 16). Overview of Paid Sick Time Laws in the United States: Oregon [Tabular Data]. *A Better Balance*. <https://www.abetterbalance.org/paid-sick-time-laws/oregon/>.

177 For more, please see: <http://www.fairshotoregon.org/coalition>.

178 Zimmerman, S. (2019, August 9). Oregon passes paid leave law, covering minimum wage. *Mail Tribune*. <https://mailtribune.com/news/happening-now/oregon-paid-leave-law-1st-in-us-to-fully-cover-lowest-wages-08-10-2019>.

179 For more, please see: <https://www.oregon.gov/employ/PFMLI/Pages/PFMLI-Advisory-Committee.aspx>.

180 For more, please see: <http://www.timefororegon.org/our-fight/>.

## TEXAS

### Conditions for Change

Texas is defined by its rapidly changing demographics, its fast-growing metropolitan areas, and its emergence as a battleground state from both local and national politics. Between 1980 and 2010, the percent of people of color in Texas increased from 34 percent to about 55 percent.<sup>181</sup> Projections indicate that this trend will continue into 2050 as the white population in the state drops to 29 percent while the Latino population will increase to 49 percent.<sup>182</sup> Asian or Pacific Islander populations will increase to 9 percent while the Black population will hold steady at 11 percent.<sup>183</sup>

Geographically, Texas is one of the largest states in the nation with multiple metropolitan areas and it is leading the nation with some of the fastest-growing cities.<sup>184</sup> In 2019, four of the top 10 cities with the largest increases in population were in Texas, including San Antonio, Fort Worth, Austin, and Frisco.<sup>185</sup> The rapid growth is raising concerns that the state can keep up with the needs of residents, including infrastructure needs and access to schools.<sup>186</sup>

In terms of the economic conditions in Texas, one cannot discuss the economy in Texas without mentioning the “Texas Miracle” (Pastor, Ito, and Wander 2016). Business interests and national pundits often flaunt the fact the state’s GDP grew by 96 percent between 1990 and 2010, or point out the large number of Fortune 500 companies that moved to Texas. A contributing factor to the enduring quality of this myth is its concise framing that draws on some data but also relies in large part, to repetition in the public sphere (Pastor et al. 2016). However, upon closer examination, research shows that this “miracle” is rooted in an over-reliance on oil and gas, low-wage jobs, and income inequities (Pastor et al. 2016:31). For this reason, advocates note that long-term change in Texas requires targeting that narrative and cultivating an alternative one to shift both power and policy.

Because of the large stake in the economy, the oil and gas industry holds significant power and influence in state politics as well—too much. Besides oil and gas, politically, the state has garnered national news for its severe gerrymandering and increasingly competitive statewide elections.<sup>187, 188</sup> In



181 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Texas [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=02000000000048000>

182 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Texas [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=02000000000048000>

183 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Texas [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=02000000000048000>

184 Jayson, S. (2019, May 23). Everything Is Bigger in Texas, Census Data Shows. *US News & World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2019-05-23/everything-is-bigger-in-texas-census-data-shows>.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Mortiz, J. (2020, February 27). How Texas became ‘ground zero’ for gerrymandering, voter suppression. *Caller Times*. <https://www.caller.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/02/27/texas-republicans-democrats-gerrymandering-legislative-districts-voter-suppression/4545917002/>

188 Ford, Matt. (2018, June 25). How Texas Republicans Got Away with a Racially Discriminatory Electoral Map. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/149357/texas-republicans-got-away-racially-discriminatory-electoral-map>



addition, given Texas' population growth and progressive pockets in cities such as Dallas, Houston, and Austin, local leadership are often at odds with the state leadership.<sup>189</sup>

### **Arenas of Change**

Organizations in Texas have been working in multiple arenas to advance equity. In the electoral arena, low voter turnout remains a persistent problem in the state, particularly among Latinos and young people.<sup>190</sup> While voter turnout has increased in the past couple of years, voter suppression remains a significant barrier in the state. For example, strict voter ID and registration laws allow weapon licenses but not college ID's as valid forms of ID needed to vote (Pastor et al. 2016). Additionally, a history of gerrymandering and isolation of voters of color into singular districts has created barriers to full participate in elections.<sup>191</sup> This is gradually changing as organizers are working to mobilize a base of largely Latino voters.<sup>192</sup> During the 2016 presidential elections, nearly 9 million voters showed up to the polls; in 2018, during the midterm elections, which tend to have a lower voter turnout, that number was 8.3 million.<sup>193</sup>

In terms of the legislative arena, many interviewees shared that these structures often hinder power-building efforts in the state. First, Texas has a part-time legislature that only meets 140 days every other year.<sup>194</sup> This legislative structure gives tremendous authority to the governor and his administration, but also to major corporate interests like those in the oil, gas, and real estate industries (Pastor et al. 2016). These barriers to statewide change point to the local level as an important strategy in changing conditions particularly in the state's urban core; for this reason, groups have been building a strong presence in this area for nearly two decades. In cases where organizers have built enough power to pass policies, organizations have also inserted themselves into their implementation.



189 Milligan, S. (2018, October 11). Could Changing Demographics Turn Texas Politically Purple? *US News & World Reports*.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2018-10-11/in-texas-changing-demographics-could-have-political-implications>.

190 Montgomery (2018, October 30). Here's Why Texas Voter Turnout Was So Low, and Why It's Surging Now. *Pew Trusts*.

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/10/30/heres-why-texas-voter-turnout-was-so-low-and-why-its-surging-now>

191 Moritz, J. C. (2020, February 27). How Texas became "ground zero" for gerrymandering, voter suppression. *Caller Times*. <https://www.caller.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/02/27/texas-republicans-democrats-gerrymandering-legislative-districts-voter-suppression/4545917002/>

192 Nova Lomax, J. (2020, March 2). Diverse suburbs have reliably red Texas losing its GOP hue. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/diverse-suburbs-reliably-red-texas-losing-gop-hue-200302151115516.html>

193 Platoff, E. (2018, November 7). What happened in the 2018 Texas midterm elections. *The Texas Tribune*. <https://www.texastribune.org/2018/11/07/what-happened-texas-midterm-election-results/>

194 National Conference of State Legislatures. (n.d.). Legislative Length Session. *National Conference of State Legislatures*. <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/legislative-session-length.aspx#:~:text=The%20amendment%20equalized%20the%20length,the%20length%20of%20regular%20session.>

The judicial arena plays a prominent role shaping policy and outcomes for communities. In Texas, this arena has been a major focus of power-building organizations who saw their efforts to advance criminal justice reform tied to judges, prosecutors, and the overall judicial system. In 2018, in Harris County, seventeen new Black women that were part of the “Black Girl Magic” campaign were elected to judgeships, dramatically shifting representation in this arena.<sup>195</sup> Increasingly, the judicial arena has become a major focus for groups seeking to make change around sentencing, bail reform, implementation of ballot measures, and as a check on legislative and administrative power.

### **Capacities for Change**

In Texas, community-power groups are combatting the barriers at the state legislature by employing strategic coalitions that work in local jurisdictions— a necessary capacity in a state this size. A key example of this was the effort to pass and implement earned sick leave. In 2019, San Antonio, Dallas, and Austin were some of the first cities to adopt paid sick leave not only in Texas but also in the Southern U.S. The effort was spearheaded by a statewide coalition with members like the Texas Organizing Project, Planned Parenthood, Texas Votes, and the Texas Freedom Network.<sup>196</sup> In San Antonio, groups like the Texas Organizing Project organized and collected signatures to adopt the ordinance outright instead of having it go through the ballot.<sup>197</sup> Following this policy win, the state legislature attempted to overturn these local wins through preemption.<sup>198</sup>

Although the state legislature’s pushback failed, these local policies were nevertheless halted due to temporary injunctions in Austin and San Antonio.<sup>199</sup> More recently in Dallas, a federal judge blocked Dallas’s sick leave ordinance.<sup>200</sup> Interviewees discussed that litigation has become a stumbling block and important strategy in ensuring they can continue to build power in changing conditions throughout the state. There is a need to build additional legal capacity in the ecosystem so power-building organizations do not have to rely on legal capacity in the administrative arena to defend their victories.



195 Paul, D. (2019, January 2). In Texas, 17 new judges bring ‘Black Girl Magic’ to courthouses. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/01/02/texas-new-judges-bring-black-girl-magic-courthouses/>.

196 Morris, A. (2019, May 20). Paid sick leave ordinances stand in Texas, as bill to outlaw them crumbles. *San Antonio Express-News*. [https://www.expressnews.com/news/politics/texas\\_legislature/article/Paid-sick-leave-ordinances-stand-in-Texas-as-13864913.php](https://www.expressnews.com/news/politics/texas_legislature/article/Paid-sick-leave-ordinances-stand-in-Texas-as-13864913.php).

197 Ibid.

198 Ibid.

199 Harrell, A. (2020, January 27). Uncertainty Remains for Texas Paid Sick Leave Ordinances. *The National Law Review*. <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/uncertainty-remains-texas-paid-sick-leave-ordinances>

200 Associated Press. (2020, March 31). Judge Blocks Dallas Sick Leave Ordinance Amid Virus Outbreak. *US News & World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/texas/articles/2020-03-31/judge-blocks-dallas-sick-leave-ordinance-amid-virus-outbreak>.

## WASHINGTON

### **Conditions for Change**

Nestled in the Pacific Northwest, Washington State is well known for its progressive stance on social issues and policy. To understand the dynamics there, one must consider how rapidly and drastically the state has evolved over the years. In 2019 Washington State is one of the top 10 fastest growing states in the nation.<sup>201</sup> The state's population is 70 percent white, 12 percent Latino, 9 percent Asian American Pacific Islander, 5 percent Black, and 4 percent multiracial.<sup>202</sup> As a whole, however, Washington is slated to become less white, more AAPI, and older as the years go on.<sup>203</sup> Currently, the senior population represents 16 percent of the population and by 2028, one in five Washingtonians will be elderly (Office of Financial Management 2018). This context makes it clear why issues such as caregiving for elders are important in Washington. However, pushing for robust statewide caregiving policy was an uphill battle that necessitated the use of strong community-led narrative change strategies, ultimately achieving the Long-Term Care Trust Act.

Many hard-fought electoral and legislative wins have contributed to Washington's progressive reputation. It is one in only a handful of states to have an all-mail voting system (National Conference of State Legislatures 2019). In 2018, under Democratic Governor Jay Inslee, Washington joined a growing number of states, in passing automatic voter registration laws (Wilson 2018). In terms of legislation, the City of Seattle was the first city to mandate a \$15/hour minimum wage.<sup>204</sup> Many cities in the state and around the country have followed the example Washington organizers have led in the fight for a living wage. Additionally, the state has recognized its vast immigrant community—and the power builders at the margins—by declaring itself a sanctuary state for immigrants at risk of detainment and deportation.<sup>205</sup>

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201 United States Census Bureau (2019, December 30). 2019 U.S. Population Estimates Continue to Show the Nation's Growth Is Slowing. *United States Census Bureau*. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2019/popest-nation.html>

202 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Washington [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=02000000000053000>.

203 PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute. (2020). Race/ethnicity, Washington [Interactive Chart]. *National Equity Atlas*. <https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Race-ethnicity#/?geo=02000000000053000>.

204 Zeitlin, M. (2019, July 22). Laboratories of Democracy: what Seattle learned from having the highest minimum wage in the nation. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/7/13/20690266/seattle-minimum-wage-15-dollars>

205 Gonzalez O' Brien, B. (2020, January 1). Washington is safer because of its sanctuary status. *The Seattle Times*. <https://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/washington-is-safer-because-of-its-sanctuary-status/>

**Arenas of Change**

The legislative arena has been a powerful venue for change in Washington. In addition to the nation’s first \$15/hour minimum wage, in 2017 a long battle led by determined advocates in Washington passed a robust family leave bill that includes both parental and care-giving leave (WA Community Action Network).<sup>206</sup> The policy requires that all employers provide 12 weeks of guaranteed paid family leave to care for a family member when it is needed the most.<sup>207</sup> Just two years later, in 2019, Washington became the first state to approve publicly funded long-term care. Known as the Long-Term Care Trust Act, the bill creates a “new, employee-financed program to provide payment or partial payment for long-term services to qualified individuals who have paid into the program and need assistance”<sup>208</sup>— services such as caregiving, nursing home fees, meal delivery, and more. According to Washingtonians for a Responsible Future, the campaign started around 2010 when a group of aging advocates and long-term caregiver organizations came together to form the coalition. The statewide bill was finally passed as a result of the multiple strategies employed by organizers. In 2017, the first time that the policy was introduced it was lacking “intense stakeholder engagement” and the initiative fell short – all of which influenced how they approached the next legislative session.

Another imminently important issue for Washington has been affordable housing. Almost one third of Washingtonians are housing burdened—paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. A larger share of Black and Latino residents are housing burdened, with 59 percent and 48 percent, respectively (Washington State Department of Health 2016). Hearing the needs of Seattle community members who are being priced out of their neighborhoods, community organization Puget Sound Sage employed its research arm to advocate for a tax on Airbnb given the amount of Seattle units that were listed on the platform. The tax was secured after the organization published a brief on the rapid growth of short-term rentals in the area (Greenwich 2016). Puget Sound Sage and the communities they work alongside won a \$5 million annual tax from the company that would go into a fund to address anti-displacement. The fund is administered by a commission of community stakeholders—city officials, nonprofit developers, and community organizations—to determine how to distribute the resources.<sup>209</sup>



206 Associated Press (2017, June 30) Family-leave measure passed by Washington Legislature. *The Seattle Times*. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/washington-legislature-passes-paid-family-leave-measure/>  
 207 For more, please see: <https://paidleave.wa.gov/>  
 208 Sullivan, P. (2019, September 27). Long-Term Care Trust Act Brings Services and Support to Washington Residents. *Municipal Research and Services Center*. <http://mrsc.org/Home/Stay-Informed/MRSC-Insight/September-2019/Long-Term-Care-Trust-Act-Brings-Services.aspx>  
 209 Lloyd, S.A. (2017, December 12) Seattle will tax and regulate short-term rentals [Update]. *Curbed Seattle*. <https://seattle.curbed.com/2017/11/13/16646732/seattle-airbnb-vacation-rental-tax>

### Capacities for Change

How has Washington been successful in these efforts? The answer is extensive, but always includes two factors: a strong narrative that resonates with both community and lawmakers; and driven community power-building organizations that direct that narrative. The Family Leave Bill, for instance, was won as a direct result of diverse coalitions that built up community members to share their testimonials, which ultimately contributed to a narrative on employee morale that called in small business interests (Watkins 2017). The community power-building organizations who won the tax as a result of Puget Sound Sage’s brief also created a specific framing around the issue. The narrative was that the success of Airbnb in the area was, in actuality, harming Seattle area residents by taking 4,000 units off the market for rental—thus exacerbating the shortage of affordable places to live for residents.<sup>210</sup> Another example comes from the Tenants Union of Washington State who, as a result of tenant organizing, implemented a Just Cause Eviction Ordinance (JCEO) in Seattle that protects renters from being unfairly or improperly evicted. In order to further protect Seattle-area tenants, power-building organizations have fought alongside community for clear and fair tenant laws and organized their messaging around protecting good tenants from eviction as a result of being vocal against poor living conditions or for otherwise asserting their rights.<sup>211</sup>

The 10-year campaign that resulted in the state’s Long-Term Care Trust Act required long-term, intentional, and organized community outreach, education, research, and policy development surrounding this issue. It took advantage of the fact that long-term care is not a place-specific issue—it crosses county lines—and developed a coalition across the traditionally segmented state. The relationship building and cross-geography tactics were key to gaining statewide appeal by ensuring that voices in both urban and rural places were included. Creating a powerful narrative for caregiving policy starting with the fundamental need of engaging and following the voices of individuals directly impacted by caregiving issues. This necessitated organizers who knew their constituents well and who could mold the campaign to their needs. Which, in Washington, meant spreading information digitally since many people receiving care are isolated and mostly reachable through social media or telephone.



210 Cohen, J. (2017, May 4). Airbnb “Welcomes” Seattle’s New Rental Regulation Ideas. *Next City*. <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/seattle-airbnb-regulation-rentals-housing>

211 Seattle Department of Construction and Inspection (2018, October). Seattle Landlord-Tenant Laws. *City of Seattle*. <https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDCI/Codes/InformationForTenants.pdf>

In addition to thinking creatively to garner community buy-in and voice, the coalition engaged in extensive legislator engagement. This, too, involved strategic framing that highlighted the fiscal responsibility of supporting caregiving policy. The narrative presented to legislators asked them to consider the great fiscal burden of having large numbers of residents age into requiring long-term care. Part of this strategy required establishing a robust inside-outside strategy through legislative champions, as well as meeting with government agencies who would be administering the program. Lawmakers and agencies also heard from their constituencies and groups like AARP and the Alzheimer’s Association who affirmed that access to long-term care should be a priority—reinforcing the narrative coming from the coalition and further ensuring that the legislators pass the act once and for all.



## HOW COMMUNITY POWER SHAPES CONDITIONS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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How does community power catalyze, create, and sustain conditions for healthy communities? We take this central question for the Lead Local project and turn it into a simple frame for understanding the ways in which community power building impacts the social and structural determinants of health:

- ▶ Community power builders *catalyze* conditions by **setting an agenda** for change: bringing attention to issues and problems facing marginalized and historically disenfranchised communities; developing analyses of root causes that inform solutions to the problems; and building momentum through collective action and catalytic campaigns.
- ▶ Community power builders *create* conditions by leveraging that momentum toward **achieving an agenda**, winning—or protecting—funding, programs, and services; developing, passing and enacting policies and establishing alternative models or programs.
- ▶ Community power builders *sustain* conditions for healthy communities by **governing an agenda**, developing leaders for key decision-making positions; building mutual accountability between decision-makers and communities; and shifting the public discourse through narrative and culture-change work.

What this drives towards is the transformation of systems, structures, and worldviews necessary for healthy communities. We do not intend this to be a prescriptive set of sequential steps; however, we do think about this as a cyclical process that is on a pathway—however direct or meandering it may be—towards healthy communities. In other words, as groups are able to demonstrate success in setting, achieving, and governing over an agenda, they are able to put forth a bolder agenda towards a healthier future for all.

## Catalyze | SET AN AGENDA

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Bring attention to issues



Develop shared analyses  
and solutions



Build momentum

## Create | ACHIEVE AN AGENDA

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Develop and pass policies  
and legislation



Win—or protect—funding, programs and services



Establish alternative models

## Sustain | GOVERN AN AGENDA

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Develop leaders for key  
decision-making positions



Build mutual accountability  
Shift public discourse



## Catalyzing Conditions for Healthy Communities: Setting an Agenda

### **Bringing Attention to Issues**

Critical to changing conditions to achieve healthy communities is for those in positions of authority and decision-making to recognize and acknowledge the problems and issues that communities are facing. So, community power organizations often need to **bring attention to an issue that would otherwise be ignored or overlooked**. Simply making the case for an issue or that there is a problem can require a full-scale campaign—especially when those in decision-making positions are disconnected and not exposed to the everyday challenges facing residents of unhealthy communities.

For example, caregiving work can be isolating, so Citizen Action of Wisconsin is doing work in Eau Claire to bring caregivers together and elevate their voices to people in power who would otherwise not realize how large of a constituency they are and what an important and widespread issue caregiving is. Similarly, the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans, out of efforts to protect the Comprehensive Care Program (CCP), sparked a dialogue around universal long-term care during the 2018 gubernatorial primary campaigns. By elevating the issue of long-term care through these conversations, there was a collective realization that community members and state legislatures alike experience the same issues.

Places that are focused on business attraction, investments in public transportation, and revitalization of central cities need to balance those priorities with the pressures of rising rents, unaffordable housing, and good-paying jobs. By being close to their constituencies and communities historically excluded from public policy making and agenda setting, community power-building organizations are able to expand the public dialogue and debate to put their problems on decision makers' radars.

For example, in Washington State, Puget Sound Sage produced a report and worked with allies to raise awareness of the imminent risks to Seattle-area residents posed by unregulated Airbnb units. Affordable housing itself is a prominent issue in the state with almost 50 percent of Washingtonians being housing burdened—or, paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. The organization framed the success of Airbnb as a harm to Seattle residents by taking 4,000 units off the rental market. Due in part to this effort, in 2017, the City instituted a \$5 million annual tax on short-term rental companies, like Airbnb, to fund anti-displacement work.



How do community power-building organizations put the issues on decision makers' radars? It starts with the foundation of **base building and organizing**. They bring the most impacted communities together—through conversations in neighborhoods and apartment buildings and through institutions like schools and churches—to learn and strategize about how to make, as multiple interviewees described, “material changes in their living conditions.” Across place, they employ a diversity of strategies to nurture leadership from impacted communities—from organizing trainings to political education sessions to healing circles—in order to address community issues. The larger aim in bringing people together is that they make connections across their lived experiences and conditions. Indeed, base building is the foundation of community power building, and so it is the foundation of the work described hereafter that catalyzes, creates, and sustain conditions for healthy communities.

### ***Developing a Shared Analysis and Narrative***

In addition to facilitating connections and helping build relationships among community members, community power-building organizations help people develop a **shared analysis of the systems** that are responsible for the unhealthy conditions in their community. They often challenge people to look below the surface of their problems to the underlying causes and actors: an over-emphasis on corporate profit and power, land speculation in Denver, decline of manufacturing in Detroit, international policy making and migration in Oregon, and overseas, corporate landlords in Austin. This, in turn, **shapes the narrative** around how people are defining problems and their root causes.

These organizations also help to build a shared understanding of the structures in place that they can use to influence decisions. As an interviewee explained, organizers “help people connect the dots for themselves...between election results, a policy agenda, and the material conditions in their lives that they want to see changed.” Having a deep understanding of causes of their collective problems rooted in power imbalances—and understanding their problems are not due to personal mistakes but larger systems and structures—they are able to **develop solutions** and formulate strategies needed to achieve such solutions.

Kentucky Coalition organized communities and workers across Kentucky to develop and propose formal clean power policy after state leadership refused to do so as part of the Clean Power Plan introduced by then-President Obama. Kentucky Coalition did this by building trust among a base of residents and coal miners so they could collectively envision an alternative to Kentucky's current energy system. Through public hearings and a culminating summit, they co-created an alternative energy plan for Kentucky—which accounts for issues from land use, to job creation, to racial equity (Kentuckians For The Commonwealth 2016).

The shared analyses and solutions also rely on an **understanding of decision-making structures and processes**. In Minneapolis, Right to the City Alliance member Inquilinx Unidxs organizes tenant assemblies that meet weekly to do just this. Tenants come together to share experiences—such as cockroach infestations or mold on and inside walls that cause asthma and other health problems, particularly for children. They unpack their problems together, which means realizing that these deplorable living conditions are not the faults of individual tenants but rather a result of systemic neglect by landlords and government agencies—and so these are the entities tenants must target to change their conditions.

### ***Building Momentum***

Bringing attention to issues—and community-led solutions—to catalyze conditions for healthy communities requires **mobilizing the base**—to hearings at city council or school board meetings—and **developing leaders** who come into direct relationship with decision makers. This includes attending and giving testimony at rallies and marches, signing letters and petitions, canvassing and phone banking, and more—and these tactics make waves and often grab the attention of decision makers. But it also includes mobilizing for critical interventions—based on a shared analysis of decision-making structures and processes—that may seem less exciting than a mass march or a vibrant protest.

United for a New Economy (UNE) took on a housing campaign after high rents and poor rental housing conditions surfaced as priorities from residents in Westminster, a northwest suburb of Denver. To push the City to fund free legal clinics for renters to address problems with landlords who are not maintaining their rental properties, UNE brought residents in direct communication through meetings with city councilmembers; UNE won this campaign in 2018. In Aurora, another suburb of Denver, the Colorado chapter of the national women’s association 9to5 developed leadership among residents of mobile home parks who attended meetings of and eventually participated in a city council task force to study the issue of displacement of mobile home park residents.



In Des Moines, to address the predatory practices of payday lending, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI) cultivated and trained members to speak in public to council members and state legislators to raise awareness and present solutions—a strategy that helped build pressure on the Des Moines City Council to pass zoning ordinances. Indeed, members speaking directly to decision-makers—rather than Iowa CCI staff—is a metric of success; a common metric mentioned by many interviewees.

Key to this type of communication with decision-makers—and a key part of leadership development and training—is **story telling**. In Portland, Maine, for example, the Southern Maine Workers' Center trained and mobilized its members to describe living without paid sick time at hearings during the development of what would become LD 369, which includes paid sick time and paid time off.

In the Seattle suburb of Auburn, Washington Community Action Network (Washington CAN) organized residents to fill city council chambers to provide testimony about living in fear of their families being targeted by ICE. After the City refused to allow community members in to share their stories, Washington CAN organized its own town hall to which they invited council members to attend and listen. Not only did this help lead to a Sanctuary City Resolution, but Washington CAN established itself as an influential force—evidenced by Auburn council members attending its annual fundraiser later that year.

Other types of interventions community power-building organizations make to get the attention of those in power can involve the **strategic use of litigation**—especially in places where community power builders may meet more hostility. In Miami, the Miami Workers Center, SMASH, and Legal Services of Greater Miami organized tenants to launch a campaign called “Smash the Slumlords,” through which they developed a media strategy to expose their horrible living conditions in the Miami Herald—which led to a successful City-led lawsuit against two of Miami’s worst slumlords who were forced to repair their unsafe units.

In Atlanta, the state’s “Use It or Lose It” law removes registered voters from the rolls if they have not voted in recent elections (whatever the reason). In 2017, Georgia’s Secretary of State used this rule to oversee the purging of 107,000 voters before going on to (narrowly) win the state’s 2018 gubernatorial election. Additionally, precinct closures have adversely affected voter turnout, particularly among Black voters who were 20 percent more likely than white voters to miss an election because of long distances. For this reason, New Georgia Project, among other community power-building organizations, spends its time not only mobilizing voters, but litigating to remove structural barriers to voting.

Another way to think about catalyzing conditions for healthy communities is through the **catalytic campaigns** or moments that give fuel to propel efforts forward. Sometimes they come as a result of intentional plans; sometimes they are openings due to external factors; and many times it is the result of a combination of both. In Denver, through a succession of victories—first in support of the teachers strike, then in pushing out the superintendent after six months—a broader, multi-racial, multi-sector coalition came together to run a grassroots campaign for three open seats in the 2019 school board elections—and successfully “flipped the board” from being dominated by pro-charter members.

### **Creating Conditions for Healthy Communities: Achieving an Agenda**

#### ***Developing and Passing Policy and Legislation***

The long-term goal of community power-building organizations is to substantially improve the everyday lives of their constituency and the broader community. A critical step towards this are the **policy and legislative solutions** that are waged through **advocacy campaigns** and/or **community-led ballot initiatives**. This, of course, is arguably one of most well-worn ways to make change, and there are examples across all 16 Lead Local places of how community power-building organizations have been part of efforts that resulted in policies and initiatives that improve their communities’ lives. While we have already referenced some of those efforts, here are more examples from the last few years...

In 2017, the Maine Peoples’ Alliance helped make Maine the first state to mandate Medicaid expansion through a ballot measure, which was the only pathway that organizers and supporters saw as feasible given their view that the then-governor would veto any measure coming through the legislature. In 2018, Building and Strengthening Tenant Action (BASTA) helped pass a \$250 million affordable housing bond in Austin, Texas—as well as new regulations on affordable housing and tenant protections. In 2019—but after a 10-year campaign—Washingtonians for a Responsible Future helped pass the Long-Term Care Trust Act, making Washington the first state to approve publicly funded long-term care.

That same year, in Oregon, Pinos y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) helped pass SB 370, requiring employers to notify employees about audits, a law impacting undocumented workers, and the Community Alliance of Tenants, through its Stable Homes for Oregon Families Campaign, helped pass SB 608, the first statewide rent stabilization law in the nation.

But to preview a key finding: implementation and administration of policies is just as important as—if not more important than—passing the policies themselves. And so the work of implementation in the administrative arena is key to moving from creating to sustaining conditions for healthy communities.

### ***Winning—or Protecting—Funding, Programs, and Services***

Another set of interventions is through coordinated and targeted efforts to **demand and protect funding, programs, and services—or reinstate cuts.**

For example, in the realm of public transportation, the Detroit People’s Party organized bus riders to get the Q-line restored, a critical transit line that gave bus riders access to downtown job centers. In Atlanta, groups won a bus route in Clayton County which exhibited the power of alliance building between Georgia STAND-UP and other groups supporting transit access. In Santa Fe, the Chainbreaker Collective led a successful fight against public transportation cuts (although then had to face the cuts to parks and libraries that came as a result). Also in Santa Fe, in 2013, a decade after Somos Un Pueblo Unido had won driver’s licenses for undocumented New Mexicans, the organization successfully protected the rule from attempted repeal.

In Detroit, groups including the Detroit People’s Platform, Community Development Advocates of Detroit, Coalition on Temporary Homelessness (COTS), and the United Community Housing Coalition came together to advance a housing trust fund that would provide affordable homes for low-income families and families at risk of displacement due to development. The city is required to allocate 20 percent of all commercial real estate sales every year to this housing trust fund. Similarly, in Seattle, the Tenants Union of Washington State not only works to ensure that the City implements the Just Cause Eviction Ordinance, but organizes to ensure renters know their rights under the ordinance. And in Oregon, Family Forward Oregon came together with other organizations, students, and educators, forming the Early Childhood Coalition to pass the Student Success Act, a measure funding K-12 and early childhood programs—and the state established a new tax on businesses, estimated to generate \$1 billion annually, to fund this measure.

Winning not only includes getting government to provide services and programs, but corporations, too. In the economic arena, communities in Minneapolis put forward a demand for economic justice to Target—yes, the global corporation headquartered there. This emerged when community power-building organizations like TakeAction Minnesota, ISAIAH, labor unions, and others came together in 2010 to generate a shared analysis of decision-making structures and entities directly impacting the conditions facing their communities—and Target ended up being, well, their target. The groups developed a collaborative campaign with several demands that would improve conditions across their constituencies and communities—and a shared commitment to not make any deals until everyone’s issues are addressed; as one organizer described, “None of us are done until all of us win.” By working collectively, the coalition was able to secure a ‘Ban the Box’ policy, neutrality in union recognition for janitors, and increases in wages—a remarkable development both for the gains themselves but also because it constituted a direct intervention in the economic or corporate sphere rather than simply an appeal to state regulators or authorities.

In some cases, this work includes **expanding funding, programs, and services to include more constituencies, sectors, and communities**. For example, through the organizing and advocacy work of the Farmworker Association of Florida, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency updated worker protection standards to include farmworkers exposed to pesticides—as previous provisions excluded farmworkers from certain protections.

### ***Establishing Alternative Models***

Another dimension of creating conditions for healthy communities is **establishing alternative programs and models** to expand the realm of what is possible beyond the status quo. Caring Across Generations calls this “modeling power: which invites us to dream, ideate, and innovate to push past what we think is currently possible—and to seize actual opportunities to live in the world we want to create, even if they are experimental and small-scale.” Indeed, Caring Across Generations’ report illustrates how grassroots and power building coalitions can innovate initiatives and projects and be a leader in forecasting what we need to build.



In Denver, Our Voice Our Schools created the Loving Community Schools system in response to the depletion of public schools and in the wake of the rise of the reform school (i.e., charter) movement. In Atlanta, in response to concerns around the sale of Turner Field and surrounding properties, the Housing Justice League helped establish a first-of-its-kind Stadium Neighborhoods Trust Fund to support economic and community development initiatives like affordable housing and job training.

Sometimes establishing alternative models means community power-building organizations stepping in where existing institutions—including government agencies and non-profits—fall short. In Oregon, community power-building groups like Family Forward Oregon are having to work with county governments to implement paid family leave because the counties are not equipped to implement or enforce this state-level policy. In Illinois, community power-building groups like AFIRE and the Jane Addams Senior Caucus are thinking through the implementation of the state’s Domestic Worker Bill of Rights—the result of their joint organizing and advocacy work in 2016—as the Illinois Department of Labor has little experience doing so.

### Sustaining Conditions for Healthy Communities: Governing an Agenda

#### ***Developing Leaders for Decision-Making Positions***

As many interviewees explained, power building to make significant gains toward healthier communities is not just about winning policies and elections, but *running* institutions—or, governing—and having the skills, capacity, and clarity to do so. Indeed, achieving this type of **governing power** is key to implementing change and sustaining conditions for healthy communities. And a key part of this is **changing the composition of who is in power and the values upon which they are making decisions.**





Of course, that sort of change is not quick and takes a commitment to developing a line of leaders who can successfully run and hold positions of authority. What this might look like is “getting grassroots, everyday people from the movement to run for [elected] offices”—like in Denver when three school board candidates aligned with Our Voice Our Schools’ agenda were elected to the board, or in Washington where volunteers who had been trained by community power-building organizations helped to elect a local leader of an immigrant rights group, Pramila Jayapal, to state senate—and who has gone on to be a prominent member of the U.S. Congress.

It could also look like the establishment of and community participation on key taskforces and committees. In Miami, after Miami Workers Center and SMASH organized tenants and succeeded in getting the City and County to assemble a taskforce to hold slum property owners accountable for despicable housing conditions. Similarly, the City-wide Tenant Union of Rochester organized with allies to force the City to establish and implement a new housing court, allowing renters to submit claims against landlords for issues like outstanding building repairs.

But it could also look like community members getting appointed to boards and commissions that oversee the agencies in charge of policy and program implementation—or getting hired into the government staff positions directly. In Minnesota, for instance, ISIAH helped position one of its members to become second in command at the state health department, and so had much influence over the multi-million-dollar health equity budget.

In Kalamazoo, Michigan United also helped appoint one of its own members, a long-time housing advocate, as Vice Mayor in the Kalamazoo City Commission—who promptly proposed amendments to the city’s housing ordinances to prohibit landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants and to ban blanket housing rejections based on race. In Chicago, the Grassroots Collaborative trained and got its members appointed to the Community-Driven Zoning and Development committee—which works with the city’s 35th Ward Alderman to make zoning and development decisions—and because of their presence, the needs of workers and residents experiencing poverty in these neighborhoods are at the center of the conversation.

And remember the \$5 million annual tax on Airbnb that Puget Sound Sage and its partners won to help curb displacement in Seattle? As part of that, they also ensured that the fund is administered by a commission of community stakeholders—city officials, nonprofit developers, but also, representatives from community-based organizations. These are examples of governing power: of getting into the details working to monitor concrete solutions.

### ***Building Mutual Accountability***

It is not enough for elected officials and government agency staff to come from communities most impacted. Once on the “inside” of government, they should make **decisions in partnership with communities** from which they come. In fact, when grassroots leaders successfully assume these types of “insider” roles, many express feeling isolated or disconnected from the community power-building ecosystem that helped put them there in the first place.

As one interviewee eloquently put it, this means developing “[mechanisms] to **be in constant communication** with the communities that they represent so that they know what the priorities are of the communities...and that they are always accountable to the communities.” When policy makers are accountable to and engaged with organized bases of people, policies are much more likely to be designed and implemented in a way that actually improves community conditions.

Different structures require different **relationships of mutual accountability**. Minneapolis, for example, is governed by a strong council system, meaning that organizations have had to build strong relationships with the council president who can be more important to moving an agenda than the mayor. Community power-building organizations in Detroit are dealing with an emergency manager who was appointed by the state in 2013—and who has the power to change the ordinances in the city charter and dismantled many things like worker’s rights and the ability of residents to participate in the city’s planning and development decisions.

In Santa Ana, El Centro Cultural joined the Santa Ana Collaborative for Responsible Development (SACRED) to overcome structural hurdles to government accountability and transparency—and together helped pass the Sunshine Ordinance in 2013—which, among many requirements, mandates that elected officials and department heads keep their calendars open and accessible to the public, that developers meet with community at the early stages of projects, that the public have access to bids on city services contracts and requests for proposals, as well as campaign finance disclosure forms and statements of economic interest on the city’s website, and that city budget outreach be more inclusive of the community.

For officials in elected positions, **voter engagement and mobilization** is one way to keep their attention and to keep them accountable to the community. There is a growing field of community power-building organizations seeking to build sufficient power in the electoral arena, particularly at the state level. Community power-building organizations in Oregon and Washington focus on voter education and mobilization, in Georgia, organizations cannot just focus on education and turnout; they also have to be prepared to fight the state around voter suppression with litigation.

As one interviewee noted, those that they stand in opposition to, approach change differently: they first gain decision-making power, then they set the agenda. Of course, that approach makes sense when your side has the financial resources and relationships with the political elite to do so. On the other hand, community power-building organizations “have to do with people what they do with money.”

### ***Shifting Public Discourse***

Critical to sustaining conditions for healthy communities is **shifting the public discourse to reset cultural norms**. As one interviewee described: “...we won a campaign, but we’re still fighting the same fight because we didn’t actually change the story and expand what people thought about our democracy and how they understood these attacks...We actually need to be intentionally moving narrative and cultural strategies that begin to tell a new story about who we are and it’s actually an old story.”

Shifting narrative is often an overlooked part of change, but it is critical—**the story sets the default interpretation**. Framed as “Dreamers,” immigrant youth advanced their interests; framed as “marriage equality,” LGBTQ advocates won the right to have their families recognized; framed as a “living wage,” labor organizers were able to push forward increases in the minimum wage.

Caring Across Generations (CAG) has been exploring this question for years—particularly, what does it take to build “narrative power”—or, as CAG describes in its report, “the ability to tell the story of where we are now and to shape the public narrative of where we can be.” And what CAG has found is that changing narratives starts on the ground—not from top-down nationwide messaging campaigns. Rather, local contexts of place—historical, demographic, economic, political, geographic—are critical to consider in shaping narratives that resonate and stick.



Furthermore, dominant narratives and mindsets tend to place the blame on people's own behaviors and choices for poor health, unsafe living conditions, and other problems they face. This can have the effect of furthering people's sense of powerlessness. Yet the challenge is that government is often called upon as the solution—at least as part of the solution—and there is a strong anti-government sentiment.

Therefore, groups talked about **helping to restore faith in government** and **exploring effective ways to work with government** (e.g., health departments to support enforcement of safe working conditions, DMVs around driver's licenses for undocumented, building and safety departments around enforcement of maintaining humane housing conditions).

All this is especially critical in the current moment. The story we tell ourselves about the COVID-19 pandemic—whether we are all in this together or we would be better off just protecting our own, whether life is precious and to be protected or whether workers can be sacrificed to jump-start GDP, whether inequality is unacceptable going forward or whether recovery means reversion—will define how we structure our economy and society for decades to come.

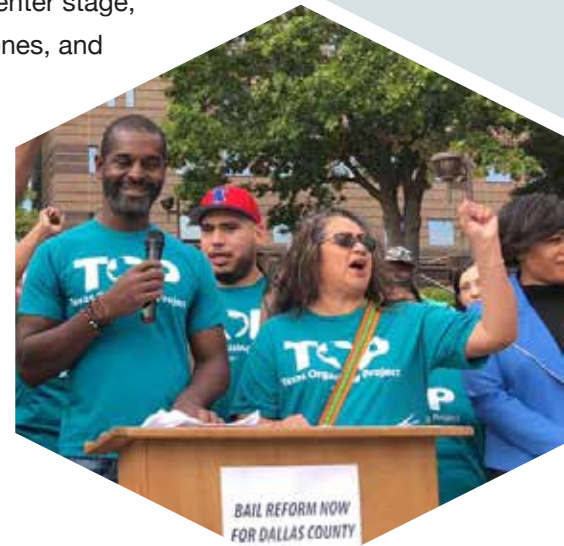
## WHY BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER MATTERS FOR BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

There are many ways to approach change and many roles required in the work to build healthier communities for all. One could look at what we have just laid out about catalyzing, creating, and sustaining conditions for healthy communities and ask: Isn't it more effective to hire a communications firm to bring public attention to an issue? Isn't it faster to achieve policy gains when it is led by policy experts who also have relationships with decision-makers? Can't we just fund a government agency directly to reform its public participation processes?

We would argue that victories have deeper roots and seed greater change when led and anchored by community power-building organizations. And this is due, in part, to their deeply-seated belief that nothing short of transformational change is needed. When working with “people closest to the pain,” in the words of a Faith in Action organizer, one cannot help but see what dramatic changes are needed—and, furthermore, communities hold organizers accountable to what's needed, rather than to what's feasible. And they seek transformational change at multiple levels: starting with each individual, to the organizational, to cross-organizational, and ultimately at societal scale.

What has become clear through our research is that the most valuable role that community power-building groups play is often the least visible, hardest to measure, as well as the most challenging to resource. Under an assumption that these factors are inter-related, we have done some work in this area to make the behind-the-scenes work front and center stage, place equal (if not more) weight on transformational metrics as transactional ones, and translate the work to philanthropy.

In prior sections, we have already discussed much of this work: It is building an organized and engaged base around a common issue and action plan. It is the community education process to develop a shared analysis that then leads to collectively-developed solutions. In this section, we dive a little deeper into what organizers share as perhaps the most important aspects of their work—and discuss how it brings about deeper and bolder change. For the purposes of this project, we focus on leadership development, strategic alliances, and cultural change, yet we recognize that this is only a starting list and is not comprehensive.



## WHY BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER MATTERS FOR BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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### Focus on people's internal transformation

Across our interviews, we repeatedly heard that community power stems from “realizing you’re not alone.” As one interviewee put so succinctly: “Building power to us means bringing people together.”

By coming together to share stories, realize commonalities, and develop a shared analysis of their conditions—a type of transformation occurs: People understand that their problems are not unique and not due to any personal shortcoming or mistake—that their problems are ones facing their entire community. It’s a **shift from private shame, to the desire to make their problems public and collectively build and wield power to change their conditions.**

An organizer from the Maine People’s Alliance illustrated this type of transformation in a story about organizing farmers to protect Medicaid: One in particular felt embarrassment and guilt for going on Medicaid—even though it had provided life-saving care for his wife—as then-Governor Paul LePage repeatedly labeled it “welfare,” which he equated to “entitlement” to “free health care paid for by the taxpayers.” This underscores the power of narrative.

But when the organizer showed him a video of another farmer describing the same struggles with health care, a “light bulb went off.” He realized his lack of access to adequate and affordable health care was not due to some mistake he had made personally, but a structural problem facing all farmers—with whom he would go on to stand side by side at rallies and in a meeting with the governor directly.

And while someone’s first public stand may be around a specific demand—like protection of Medicaid, it is likely that **they will continue to fight as the needs and issues shift.** In Denver Meadows, 9to5 sees the legacy of the fight to protect residents of the mobile home park not just about passing bills but rather: “When a resident speaks to media and tells their story, they’re taking a risk. Because they’ve done the work, been themselves, and with our support, they’ve gotten to a point where they want to advocate for themselves: ‘I am empowered.’”

Building this lasting capacity among a community is particularly important in hyper-local efforts: The tragic irony is that successful efforts to demand neighborhood improvements can then result in increased rents that end up pushing out those long-time residents and business owners who fought for the changes in the first place. A well-organized and powerful community is more likely to push for new policies and practices that help protect affordability and their ability to stay in place.

## WHY BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER MATTERS FOR BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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### Practice new ways of decision making

Earlier, we highlighted how groups develop grassroots leaders for key decision-making positions as part of efforts to sustain conditions for healthy communities. Equally important is the work that they do to **instill new values and practices towards more inclusive decision-making**.

Resilience OC in Santa Ana takes a transformative justice approach by **“changing what the systems around us are doing, while also realizing and changing ourselves in that process.”** In the heat of a campaign, organizers place just as much importance in changing systems and practices as they do their own organizational systems and practices. That means also checking oneself and not taking up a “super hero” complex. Instead, it means taking the steps to build trust with people in the community; setting intentional time to listen and learn from them; engaging people at every step in the work; empowering people and providing a space for people to develop new skills—in short, people’s participation is authentic and not tokenized.

Several interviewees talked about the importance of **not replicating oppressive decision-making processes within their organizations** that they are fighting against. It is similar to the ways in which organizations are establishing alternative programs to demonstrate the possible—like Loving Schools or neighborhood land trusts. It is just as important to model new ways of inclusive decision making—and leaders learn the skills of inclusive democracy that they continue to hone and employ as they move up in positions of responsibility and authority. This is yet another way to **shift systems from the ground-up**—by preparing leaders skilled to usher in new ways of working with others, especially with communities most impacted.

### Seek to build lasting alliances

Key to community power-building organizations transforming such systems toward healthy communities is **building alliances for the long haul**. Alliances between community power-building organizations help them **connect different constituencies across neighborhood and issue to discover interconnections** between their problems and develop a collective analysis of the root causes. From there, alliance members can create and strengthen their shared solutions and strategies—and cumulate their capacities to achieve such solutions. In this way, alliances are more than the sum of their parts as they help members **expand their individual identities and interests toward a larger, longer-term vision** for healthy communities (Pastor, Ito, and Ortiz 2010).

## WHY BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER MATTERS FOR BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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A critical distinction is between long-term alliances and short-term coalitions. The latter—short-term or “tactical” coalitions—come together around an individual policy or campaign, then disband after the win (or the loss). On the other hand, long-term **alliances come together around interconnected issues and work together again and again toward a shared vision for healthy communities**. As a veteran organizer explained: “It is being rooted in staying clear on...what’s the bigger thing that we’re trying to move, and that each policy fight is supposed to set us up for the next one.”

Alliances provide a vehicle for communities to do just this: continue their work together *after* individual policy campaigns and elections toward a shared vision. This is why alliances are a critical element in our healthy communities equation—particularly the “sustaining” piece. For example, the Fight for 15 in Seattle and SeaTac brought together organizations who, after their landmark victory, leveraged their momentum and relationships to launch their Clean and Safe Ports campaign to mandate both environmentally sustainable and worker-friendly practices at the port.

And in Austin, Texas, the Workers Defense Project, the Texas Organizing Project, and United We Dream came together under an informal coalition called “Fuerza Texas” (“Strength in Texas”) to pass the “Freedom City” resolution in response to SB 4, anti-immigrant legislation allowing local law enforcement to cooperate with immigration enforcement agencies. Leveraging their momentum and relationships, organizers have been able to wage additional campaigns to protect immigrant families in other cities like Dallas and Houston.

Much of what it boils down to is **trust**. Similar to base building, knowing that others will have your back and are driving toward a shared vision for healthy communities is the lifeblood of long-term alliances. In Atlanta, Georgia STAND-UP is working to do just this: Community power-building organizations are helping to bring together Black and Latinx communities—particularly women leaders—to **build relationships and trust as the foundation for future and sustained work together**.

### Change the culture of civic engagement

While we have already discussed the importance of cultural shifts and narrative change, what we highlight about the transformational work of the community power-building field is the impact that they are having on changing the culture of civic engagement. Key to this work is expanding the notion of what civic engagement is: This includes setting a vision of governance that transforms and expands who votes and on what issues.





## WHY BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER MATTERS FOR BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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One way community power-building organizations do this is by going beyond the often short-term and narrow get-out-the-vote (“GOTV”) programs. While elections are important moments to engage with voters on issues and on the importance of voting, the most impactful work of **expanding and diversifying the electorate**—those who actually vote—is the on-going and year-round work of engaging voters *in between* election cycles. For example, in between elections, New Georgia Project organizes those groups who are disproportionately under-represented among the electorate—namely people of color, those between the ages of 18 and 29, and unmarried women—specifically around this voter representation gap. And indeed, some of this “in between” work includes efforts to reform structures like “Use it or Lose it” the bar certain populations from the polls.

So, to underscore a key point: building a base that is engaged and activated to move the needle on a particular issue happens at all times—before, during, and after elections—and in more arenas of contestation beyond the ballot box—such as in city hall, in the public square, and in corporate board rooms. And to raise another point: having the issues defined by the community—by centering the concerns and voices of the most impacted—can **activate and mobilize the under-mobilized**.

For example, in a 2016 city council election in Portland, Oregon, Chloe Eudaly beat the incumbent by more than 24,000 votes—and did this by running on a tenant protection platform. Because of the on-going, year-round organizing work of groups like the Oregon Community Alliance of Tenants, there was already an organized base of tenants focused on improving housing. And it paid off: In her first term, Commissioner Eudaly championed several tenant protection bills, including a bill requiring landlords to pay tenants a relocation fee when tenants are evicted without cause or when rents are raised by more than 10 percent.

Finally, community power-building organizations not only mobilize the under-mobilized to vote—but also to motivate others to vote. The Texas Organizing Project (TOP) is developing the leadership of community members while mobilizing voters through its year-round electoral organizing. Through its electoral training programs, community members learn more about electoral processes and canvass to encourage their fellow community members to vote by telling stories and connecting over shared problems—and shared solutions.

## INCREASING COMMUNITY POWER FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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So, what does this all mean and what actions does it suggest? As we started this report with the top five lessons from this project, so we circle back to them now before turning to our top ten list of recommendations:

**Lesson #1: Community power-building strategies and capacities are inextricably tied to place.** The historical, demographic, economic, political, and geographic conditions and contexts of a place shape and are shaped by community power. Systematic application of the *Changing States* framework allows us to explore both the specificities of community power in 16 very different places—as well as the commonalities across people and places.

**Lesson #2: Community power has multiple dimensions, including setting the public agenda, winning that agenda, *and* ultimately governing to realize that agenda.**

Governing power—not just the ability to advocate for and win policies and structural reform but also the ability to oversee their implementation—is crucial. While organizers and communities understand the critical need to shape mindsets and the mainstream narrative, there is often limited capacity to generate narrative change. And while some power builders demonstrate skills at navigating administrative and economic arenas of change, there is room to grow in this aspect of governing power.

**Lesson #3: Community power is an end goal in and of itself—in addition to being a way to achieve outcomes.**

It is important to address structural barriers to healthy communities but the process itself builds organization and leadership within impacted communities in ways that have lasting impact. Because of this, more resources and coordinated efforts are needed to lift up leadership and organizational development and the metrics of success need to focus not just on transactions, such as particular policy shifts but also on transformation at the individual, organizational, inter-organizational, and societal levels.

## INCREASING COMMUNITY POWER FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS *continued*

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**Lesson #4: Base building and community power building exists within an ecosystem of organizations.** This work does not happen in a vacuum. There is an important ecosystem of advocacy groups, legal supporters, research centers, and intermediaries that play an important role. Still, power building should be at the center and while professional advocates, government reformers, or media/communications experts have much to contribute, the most important contribution of power-builders to building healthy communities is often less visible, less frequently measured, and less resourced. In particular, the role of a skilled organizer is critical. For historically-excluded residents to engage in strategies and campaigns that drive towards healthy communities, they must be mobilized.

**Lesson #5: The time to invest in power building is now.** It is appropriate to think of community power building as a long-term strategy—but that does not mean it is an activity to be postponed in favor of emergency relief or quicker policy advocacy. Whether talking to statewide groups or hyperlocal groups, all acknowledge that conditions were precarious even before COVID-19: housing was scarce, health was neglected, immigrants were threatened, wages were inadequate, incarceration was rampant, education was failing, and social distance was growing. Post-COVID-19, the needs are even starker, but they will only be met if we collectively recognize our connections *and* if communities are able to force their way into the conversation about the road ahead.

So what investments in power building should be made? We would be remiss if we did not state the obvious: **Fund community power-building organizations with multi-year and general operating grants.**

While we certainly hope that foundations and those that invest in and fund work to advance health equity see ways in which they can increase grantmaking to community power-building organizations, we also want to acknowledge that every one of us can set into motion a series of steps that will help strengthen the field. As we discuss in this report, there are different roles in building healthy communities, so there are different roles that everyone can play in increasing community power—from government agencies, legal and policy advocates, national civic organizations, and even academic researchers and research centers.

## **INCREASING COMMUNITY POWER FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS** *continued*

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The following are our top ten recommendations:

- 1. Take steps to center community power.** While there is an ecosystem of change actors, the dynamics within that system are often such that community organizing and base building is treated—and funded—as being in service to an agenda determined by professional lobbyists, by funders, or by others outside of the community. To reset such power dynamics and lines of accountability, funds can be given to the base-building organizations to re-grant to policy allies, evaluators, or researchers.
- 2. Center racial equity in health equity.** As we have seen the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 virus on communities of color, in particular, and the upswell of popular protest against violence on Black people, they are yet more reminders that unless we tackle racial disparities in all systems, our whole society’s health and well-being are at risk. Addressing race and racism in all its forms and in all our structures must be part and parcel of any health equity initiative.
- 3. Strengthen organizations and networks that are rooted in communities most impacted by unhealthy conditions, particularly Black and Indigenous communities,** which were under-represented in this project. In equity work, paying attention to who is not in the room is often just as important as paying attention to who is. A lack of capacity to organize a community leaves their issues off the table, thus allowing problems to persist and worsen over time.
- 4. Understand the specificities of a place** in order to determine what strategies and capacities are needed—and how to support or partner with local community power-building organizations. Changing States is one tool that can be adapted to any particular line of inquiry and should be used to engage in dialogue directly with people living and working in the place of interest.
- 5. Support groups in organizing a constituency base.** We often hear from organizers that their funding is tied to campaign outcomes—which is important yet does not fully resource the work that it takes to build, maintain, and grow a membership and leadership base. From Seattle to Atlanta to Denver, in places experiencing high levels of urban displacement due to gentrification, organizational bases are being pushed into the suburbs. Such groups could use resources and space for experimentation to organize this constituency and build urban-suburban-rural connections.

## INCREASING COMMUNITY POWER FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS *continued*

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- 6. Increase the field’s capacity to organize toward governing power.** Organizations working with those communities most impacted have specialized understandings of capacities, outcomes, and timeframes for building community power—and that knowledge should be valued and resourced. Groups need the resources, time, and space to envision and plan for how their demands will get implemented and who will be held accountable for its implementation—and to reimagine how they could hold that power themselves—and how they would govern differently.
- 7. Support experiments and efforts in cultural and narrative change—particularly around restoring people’s faith in government.** Groups see this work as essential but have little capacity to engage or experiment. And that strategy has to bubble up from the local context. National messaging and communications strategies often do not resonate at the local level. It should also be driven by the groups themselves—or at least in authentic partnership with the communications and other consultants.
- 8. Explore ways for community power-building organizations to partner with government agencies**—and how to leverage agency resources to counter corporate power and influence. For example, how groups can work with building and safety around the enforcement of safe housing conditions, with departments of labor around wage theft and worker health and safety enforcement, or with health departments to advance healthy living and working conditions.
- 9. Build a network of scholars with the skills and capacity to partner with—and to bolster the work of—community power-building organizations.** There are mutually beneficial ways in which universities can partners with groups, such as joint training institutes in community organizing like Our Voice Our Schools and the University of Denver and how New Georgia Project develops scripts for their campaigns that emerge from the community and are also vetted with attorneys and social science researchers to ensure they make the intended impact.
- 10. Develop clear measures of community power—including the less visible and less frequently tracked measurements of transformation that are of paramount importance to the field.** There are clear outcomes that groups are achieving as discussed in the report—yet to distinguish the added contribution of the community power-building field is critical to achieve our first recommendation of centering community power.

## CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES AHEAD

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At the start of this project, we could not have predicted such a turning point and transformative moment in our world's history. That a virus could bring the world to a stop. That a virus could wake up more people to see that even pre-COVID-19, conditions were precarious for too many: housing insecurity, disinvestments in public education, and dangerous conditions for isolated caregivers. Still tomorrow, it could be a hurricane, a wildfire, or an earthquake that brings devastation to a community. While we cannot predict the future, we can take steps to protect the most vulnerable and to remake our communities into places where all can live, play, learn, and thrive. And that begins with building the kind of community power, systems disruption, and story about ourselves and this nation that, in fact, reminds us of the American ideals we lifted up to the world even as we never quite lived up to their promise.



## APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

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The following are interviewees we conducted with organizations that are part of the Lead Local Project:

### **Atlanta, Georgia**

- ▶ Jordan Brown, Development & Strategic Partnership Manager, Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies (Georgia STAND-UP)
- ▶ Alison Johnson, Executive Director, Housing Justice League
- ▶ Deborah Scott, Executive Director, Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies (Georgia STAND-UP)
- ▶ Nsé Ufot, Executive Director, The New Georgia Project

### **Chicago, Illinois**

- ▶ Jeanne Cameron, Executive Director, Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans
- ▶ Lori Clark, Executive Director, Jane Addams Senior Caucus
- ▶ Hannah Doruelo, Community Organizer, Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE Chicago)
- ▶ Amisha Patel, Executive Director, Grassroots Collaborative
- ▶ Ryan Vilorio, Interim Executive Director, Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE Chicago)

### **Denver, Colorado**

- ▶ Andrea Chiriboga-Flor, Co-Director, 9to5 Colorado
- ▶ Cesiah Guadarrama Trejo, Housing Organizer, 9to5 Colorado
- ▶ Cassandra Johnson, Co-Director, Our Voice Our Schools
- ▶ Carmen Medrano, Executive Director, United for a New Economy
- ▶ Soul Watson, Co-Director, Our Voice Our Schools

### **Des Moines, Iowa**

- ▶ Matthew Covington, Organizer, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI)
- ▶ Andrew Mason, State Policy Director, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI)

### **Detroit, Michigan**

- ▶ Ryan Bates, Executive Director, Michigan United
- ▶ Linda Campbell, Co-Director, Detroit People's Platform

## APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES *continued*

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### ***Eau Claire, Wisconsin***

- ▶ Robert Kraig, Executive Director, Citizen Action of Wisconsin
- ▶ Claire Zautke, Healthcare Campaigns Director, Citizen Action of Wisconsin

### ***Kentucky***

- ▶ Jessica Hays Lucas, Organizing Co-Director, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth
- ▶ Burt Lauderdale, Executive Director, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth

### ***Miami, Florida***

- ▶ Trenise Bryant, Executive Director, Miami Workers Center
- ▶ Jeannie Economos, Coordinator of the Pesticide Safety and Environmental Health Project, Farmworker Association of Florida
- ▶ Kamalah Fletcher, Board Member, Miami Workers Center
- ▶ Benita Lozano, Community Health Worker, Farmworker Association of Florida
- ▶ Adrian Madriz, Executive Director, Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH)
- ▶ Antonio Tovar, Executive Director, Farmworker Association of Florida

### ***Minneapolis, Minnesota***

- ▶ Jennifer Arnold, Co-Director, Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia (United Renters for Justice)
- ▶ Elianne Farhat, Executive Director, TakeAction Minnesota
- ▶ Doran Schrantz, Executive Director, ISAIAH

### ***Oregon***

- ▶ Lili Hoag, Political Director, Family Forward Oregon
- ▶ Katrina Holland, Executive Director, Community Alliance of Tenants
- ▶ Reyna Lopez, Executive Director, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)

### ***Portland, Maine***

- ▶ Rachel Ackoff, Campaigns Director, Maine People's Alliance
- ▶ Drew Christopher Joy, Executive Director, Southern Maine Workers' Center
- ▶ Jennifer Pirkl, Organizing Director, Maine People's Alliance

### ***Rochester, New York***

- ▶ Liz McGiff, Executive Director, City-wide Tenant Union of Rochester

### ***Santa Ana, California***

- ▶ Oswaldo Farias, Director of Operations and Communications, Resilience Orange County
- ▶ Claudia Perez, Executive Director, Resilience Orange County
- ▶ Gema Suárez, Co-Director, El Centro Cultural de México

### ***Santa Fe, New Mexico***

- ▶ Marcela Diaz, Executive Director, Somos Un Pueblo Unido
- ▶ Tomás Rivera, Executive Director, Chainbreaker Collective



## APPENDIX A: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES *continued*

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### **Texas**

- ▶ Jose Garza, Co-Director, Workers Defense Project
- ▶ Ana Gonzalez, Director of Better Builder and Policy, Workers Defense Project
- ▶ Shoshana Krieger, Organizing Director, BASTA (Building and Strengthening Tenant Action)
- ▶ Michelle Tremillo, Executive Director, Texas Organizing Project

### **Washington**

- ▶ Maddie Foutch, Campaigns Manager, Washingtonians for a Responsible Future
- ▶ Violet Lavatai, Executive Director, Tenant Union of Washington State
- ▶ Mary Le Nguyen, Executive Director, Washington Community Action Network
- ▶ Nicole Vallesteros Keenan-Lai, Executive Director, Puget Sound Sage

Supplementary interviews were conducted with the following individuals:

### **Chicago, Illinois**

- ▶ Regina McGraw, Executive Director, Wieboldt Foundation

### **Denver, Colorado**

- ▶ Mike Kromrey, Director, Metropolitan Organizations for People

### **Detroit, Michigan**

- ▶ Kevin Ryan, Program Officer, Ford Foundation

### **Eau Claire, Wisconsin**

- ▶ David Liners, State Director, WISDOM

### **Kentucky**

- ▶ Alicia Hurle, Deputy Organizing Director for Democracy and the Saturday Black Citizenship in Action Group, Kentuckians For The Commonwealth

### **Miami, Florida**

- ▶ Andrea Mercado, Executive Director, New Florida Majority
- ▶ Santra Denis, Interim Executive Director, Miami Workers Center
- ▶ Quanita Toffie, Senior Director, Groundswell Action Fund

### **Rochester, New York**

- ▶ Mary Lupien, City Councilmember, City of Rochester

### **Santa Fe, New Mexico**

- ▶ Robby Rodriguez, Program Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

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### INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

1. Could you please tell us a bit about yourself, your organization, and how long you have been working / living in <insert place>?
  - a. What are your long-term goals / your agenda / what are your issues areas?
  - b. *Probe:* Is your organization a base-building organization? If so, how does your organization define its base? How does your organization define and quantify its membership?
2. What conditions face your community(ies) that you are trying to change? (*Probe for social, economic, physical, political.*)
3. What do you see as being the underlying causes of those conditions?
  - a. *Probe:* What are the barriers to achieving healthy communities? Demographic? Economic? Political? Geographic?

### WHAT POWER BUILDING IS

4. How do you define power building?
5. How do you see power building as a means to address inequity and create healthy communities?

### WHERE POWER BUILDING HAPPENS

6. What structures and cultural norms exist in <insert place> that are conducive to building power to create and sustain healthy communities?
7. What structures and cultural norms block such work? Why? What is needed to eliminate those barriers?
8. What are examples of times when community power builders dramatically influenced decision making and shifted norms?
  - a. How did this change conditions in the communities in which you work?
  - b. *Ask only if there is time:* Did this external power-building work help build power internally (within organizations)? If so, how? If not, why?
9. What are examples of when community power builders were pushed out of decision-making arenas? (*Note that these arenas include the cultural arena.*)

### WHAT POWER BUILDING TAKES

10. Describe your organization's power-building work.
  - a. How are you achieving your goals? What are your strategies [e.g., base building, leadership development, policy advocacy, research, legal services, civic engagement, strategic communications, storytelling, forming a c4, etc.]?
  - b. At what geographic scale(s) [local, regional, statewide, national] do you work, and why?
  - c. Who do you partner with, and why?
    - i. *Probe:* Formal and/or informal alliances with similar organizations? Multi-sector alliances? Unlikely allies? Government agencies?
  - d. *Ask only if there is time:* Based on learnings from past work, have you altered your strategies and/or your understanding of what power building takes?
11. What organizational capacities are necessary to build power, and why? What about ecosystem-wide capacities? What about individual capacities?
  - a. What feels unique to your community and the kinds of capacities needed to build power?
  - b. What does it take to develop these capacities?

### IMPACTS

12. How do you measure success of power-building work?
  - a. What would you draw out as the most important components of your success in power building?

### CONCLUSION

13. Anything else you would like to add, or questions we should have asked?
14. What other resources could we draw on for this project? If time allows, who else would you recommend we speak to?

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL *continued*

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In our interviews with Right to the City and Human Impact Partners' subcontractors, we asked the following additional questions focusing on housing justice and health equity:

- ▶ How do the conditions you're trying to change currently impact your community's health and well-being?
- ▶ What formal and/or informal alliances or networks is your organization an affiliate or member of?
- ▶ Do you partner with any unlikely allies? Government agencies—particularly health departments? Hospitals? Clinics?
- ▶ How would you describe your strategic alignment with other base-building groups in your geographic area?
- ▶ How do you build the capacities of your organizers internally?
- ▶ Probe: Do you have a systematic way of providing political education for your organizers and members? What roles do others (e.g., SOUL and other movement schools or intermediaries) play in supporting political education development?
- ▶ Have you used health and/or health equity data, framing and stories, or expertise in your work?

In our interviews with Caring Across Generations' subcontractors, we asked the following additional questions about cultural change work:

- ▶ What are the narratives—short-term and long-term—that sustain and reinforce structures and norms?
- ▶ What are examples of times when community power builders changed public perceptions, attitudes, and narratives?
- ▶ How do you frame your issue around care? What narratives do you pull from around care—workers and consumers fighting together, rural development, families deserve better, people deserve to age with dignity, etc.—to move universal family care/universal long-term supports and services?
- ▶ What framing of the issue resonates most with your base, with new members? (Probe: How do you connect the framing to other social determinants of health?)
- ▶ What have you learned about your members when talking to them around care that informs how you build the campaign narrative?

In our interviews with Change Elemental's subcontractors, we asked the following additional questions about capacities:

- ▶ *To be asked by Change Elemental:* In our work with partners and clients, we are seeing groups lift up a set of key elements that are critical to their efforts to build power. We've discussed them before with you, but a reminder that they are (1) equity; (2) innerwork (our interior conditions as people and groups); (3) honoring multiple forms of knowledge/knowing (e.g., ancestral wisdom, experiential knowledge, emotional awareness etc.); (4) building both individual and collective leadership; and (5) thinking systemically and holding a vision for systems level change.
  - In what ways might these elements inform the capacities you shared about?
  - How might they shape or redefine what is critical about those capacities?

## APPENDIX C: LEAD LOCAL PROJECT PARTNERS

### CARING ACROSS GENERATIONS

Caring Across Generations is a national campaign that brings together all people touched by care – family caregivers, care workers, older adults, and people with disabilities – to transform the way we care in this country and to create an inclusive society that helps all of us reach our full potential, live well, and age with dignity. This year and into 2020, Caring Across Generations is entering our ambitious next phase: launching a national campaign for Universal Family Care (UFC), which is a new framework to cover care at every stage of life. Everyone contributes and everyone benefits to receive access to benefits ranging from childcare to paid family and medical leave, to elder care to supports for people with disabilities, all through one easily navigable, financially stable system. Universal Family Care is forward-looking, rooted in smart economics and common sense, and fundamentally committed to advancing gender, racial, and economic justice.

### CHANGE ELEMENTAL

At Change Elemental, we envision a world where the planet and all who inhabit it experience love, dignity, and justice and where resources and power are shared in ways that provide everyone the opportunity to realize their potential, live life fully, and contribute to the well-being of people and planet. Building upon nearly 40 years of work in the field, we partner with individuals, organizations, and networks to co-create and catalyze what is needed for lasting, equitable change. Whether working as consultants, convening spaces for experimentation and learning, or collaborating on projects with our peers, our approach centers on deepening practices around the key elements of transformative change.

These elements include: advancing deep equity; cultivating leaderful ecosystems; valuing multiple ways of knowing; influencing complex systems change; and creating the space for inner work. At Change Elemental, we are collaborators and champions, conveners and practitioners, committed to authentic partnerships with our clients, partners, and peers. We are continually working to more deeply align ourselves with our core values in ways that challenge and advance our own relationships and approach. By embodying and practicing our values and the elements of transformative change together, we can, and must simultaneously live in and create organizations, movements, and a world of love, dignity, and justice. Our offerings include: transformative strategy; deep equity; leading change; thriving networks; and learning projects. Join us in co-creating power for love, dignity, and justice.

## **HUMAN IMPACT PARTNERS**

Human Impact Partners brings the power of public health to campaigns and movements for a just society. Human Impact Partners is a national nonprofit organization using capacity building, advocacy, and research to challenge the inequities that harm the health of our communities. Its mission is to transform the policies and places people need to live healthy lives by increasing the consideration of health and equity in decision-making. Human Impact Partners works with its partners across the following strategies:

- ▶ **Research:** Human Impact Partners conducts policy focused and participatory research to evaluate the health impacts of policies across a range of issues including criminal justice, economic security, immigration, housing, land use, and transportation.
- ▶ **Capacity Building:** Human Impact Partners provides training, technical assistance, and leadership development to build the capacity of public agencies to take action on the social determinants of health and equity.
- ▶ **Advocacy:** Human Impact Partners amplifies the use of public health research, expertise, and framing to support targeted campaigns and movements.
- ▶ **Field Building:** Human Impact Partners mobilizes the public health community to contribute its power – knowledge, skills, and resources – and engage in social justice movements to advance health equity.

## **JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SNF AGORA INSTITUTE and P3 LAB**

The SNF Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins University was founded in 2017 and is under the leadership of Inaugural Director Dr. Hahrie Han, Professor of Political Science and Faculty Director of the P3 Lab. SNF Agora Institute is a multi-disciplinary academic and public forum dedicated to strengthening global democracy by improving and expanding civic engagement and inclusive dialogue, and by supporting inquiry that leads to real-world change. By building integrated partnerships with scholars, practitioners, students, and the public, the institute uses research to identify and sharpen strategic choices that members of the public and civic and political stakeholders around the world can make to realize the promise of democracy. The institute draws its name and inspiration from the ancient Athenian *agora*. Originally designed as a marketplace, the *agora* grew to become the heart of democratic governance in Athens. It provided a structured forum for debate, disagreement, and deliberation, and a place where Athenians learned both the rights and responsibilities of democracy, and where they developed capacities for participation in public life. Building on the unique strengths of Johns Hopkins—its world-class faculty, its interdisciplinary focus, and its dedication to bold experimentation—the institute seeks to reinvigorate the ethos of the ancient *agora* for the 21st century. Its scholars study the behavioral, organizational, and institutional foundations of democracy; develop and test interventions to reverse trends toward decline; and share lessons learned to promote civic engagement and inclusive dialogue around the critical issues of our time. Ultimately, it seeks to recreate agora-like spaces that are critical to deliberative democracy.

### **RIGHT TO THE CITY ALLIANCE**

Right To The City Alliance (RTTC) emerged in 2007 with a strong and powerful vision to 1) halt the displacement of low-income people, people of color, LGBTQ communities, and youth of color and 2) protect and expand affordable housing in tandem with a broader movement to build democratic, just, and sustainable cities for the 21st century. Since its inception, Right To The City has quickly grown to encompass 81 community-based racial, economic, gender, and environmental justice organizations located in 43 cities and 26 states. Representing true grassroots power and leadership of the most impacted, RTTC's member organizations weave together local on-the-ground policy advocacy campaigns to build a robust and unstoppable national movement for housing, land, and development justice.

### **UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EQUITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

USC Dornsife Equity Research Institute (ERI) is a research unit housed within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California. USC ERI is the new name resulting from the combination of two institutes: the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE) and the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII), which were founded at USC in 2008. Under the leadership of Director Dr. Manuel Pastor, ERI produces data-driven analysis and rigorous research, leads convenings, and engages in strategic collaborations. ERI's current priorities are in the following areas:

- 1) Economic Inclusion and Climate Equity: We support the building of new coalitions around economic, social, and environmental justice by linking economic prosperity, environmental quality, and civic health with the bridging of racial and other gaps.
- 2) Immigrant Integration and Racial Justice: We challenge and nuance common narratives by applying a racial justice lens; by promoting the mutual interests of immigrant and native-born communities in the U.S.; and by supporting interethnic, intersectoral, and cross-movement collaborations in all of our research processes and products.
- 3) Social Movements and Governing Power: We work to advance an understanding of, dialogue about, and funding towards building power among historically excluded communities by developing data-driven frameworks and tools for key learning and strategizing opportunities. ERI is also committed to being a collaborative research center and works with cross-sectoral partners from a range of nonprofits, community organizations, foundations, research centers, government agencies, the university community, and businesses who align with our mission, vision, and approach to data and analysis.



### **VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY**

Located within the Peabody College at Vanderbilt University, the Department of Human and Organizational Development (HOD) and program in Community Research and Action (CRA) are grounded on a core belief in human development as the freedom to create and choose among real opportunities for realizing human potential. We also believe that human development is achieved only through the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, interpersonal, and collective needs within the context of social justice. Based on these beliefs, HOD and CRA aim to prepare students for the promotion of human, organizational, and community development through rigorous, critical, experiential, ecological, systemic, and multidisciplinary modes of learning. We work to emphasize qualitative and quantitative research methods, interpersonal skills, organizational and small group dynamics, community interventions, applied participatory research, leadership development, consultation, and social policy formation. Further, CRA is grounded in a contextual and interdependent understanding of lifelong learning, interpersonal and social efficacy, and developmental change in the community. We blend intellectual rigor with practical and emotional intelligence for the promotion of effective and ethical interventions. We recognize that families, groups, organizations, communities, and nations emphasize certain values and needs more than others. We seek to help balance self-determination with respect for diversity and social justice and individualism with cohesion and solidarity. In our teaching, research, and action, we strive to reinforce equilibrium wherever it is found and to detect lack of equilibrium and teach students to think and act critically and creatively in ways that address the desired balance. CRA trains researchers for academic or policy-related careers in applied community studies – for example, community psychology, community development, social program evaluation, organizational change, public health or health policy, prevention, urban change, and social policy.

## APPENDIX D: LEAD LOCAL FIELD PARTNERS

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### Atlanta, Georgia

**Georgia Strategic Alliance for New Directions and Unified Policies (Georgia STAND-UP)**, a think and act tank for working communities, is a Georgia alliance of leaders who represent community, faith, academic, and labor organizations that organize and educate communities about issues related to economic development. With the goal of alleviating poverty and encouraging regional equity through the empowerment of leaders and the inclusion of community benefits, STAND-UP empowers residents to ensure economic development meets the needs of their neighborhoods and uses community benefits agreements and policies to assist communities, developers, and redevelopment agencies in working together to create successful development projects.

**Housing Justice League** understands the core issues of our work to be interconnected forms of oppression that privilege an elite few while systematically depriving most people of material needs and psychological well-being. Our campaigns and work are centered on families of color that have been directly affected by policies that have targeted the extraction or prevention of wealth in communities of color since the creation of the United States, especially here in the South. We work to deconstruct structural oppression by coming together within our communities through participatory democracy and nonviolent direct action to resist the racism and economic exploitation depriving low income folks and people of color of homes across the United States and internationally. We challenge dominant ahistorical assumptions of self-induced poverty that perpetuate our society and strive to win strong policies to protect homeowners and renters from displacement. Housing should be affordable and based on need rather than the demands of the market. Housing is a human right, and as such, people should be able to pay what they can and have stable housing.

**The New Georgia Project (NGP)** is a nonpartisan effort to register and civically engage Georgians. In 2014, NGP launched an ambitious voter registration program resulting in roughly 69,000 new voters making the rolls. That work continues today. NGP's goal is to register all eligible, unregistered citizens of color in Georgia by the end of the decade. Our research shows that citizens of color register through voter registration drives at twice the rate of whites. As of September 2019, NGP has registered almost half a million Georgians, in all 159 of Georgia's counties. We meet new voters where they are – in churches, on college campuses, and in their neighborhoods – to share information about how to register and how to vote. We are turning new registrants into informed and engaged voters,

## APPENDIX D: LEAD LOCAL FIELD PARTNERS *continued*

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many for the first time ever. With the Voting Rights Act gutted, election officials are no longer required to obtain preapproval for voting changes. We are currently seeing issues like precinct closures and reductions to early voting periods, which disproportionately affect communities of color. Other issues affecting our communities have ranged from Georgia’s discriminatory “exact match” voter registration processing system that prevented thousands from making the rolls to voter purges that knock millions off the voting rolls every year, criminal charges against those who participate in voter registration activities, unsafe and insecure voting machines, and Georgia’s most recent stolen election. It’s clear that our rights are under attack.

### **Denver, Colorado**

**9to5 Colorado** is a grassroots, member-based organization dedicated to lifting up women and families both inside and outside of the workplace through local and state policy. All of our work is done through an anti-oppression lens, and a significant portion is dedicated to training community leaders to learn how to advocate for themselves and their families. 9to5 is a national organization founded in 1973 and has other chapters in Wisconsin, Georgia, and California. The Colorado chapter has been around since 1996 and focuses on policies related to equal pay, paid family leave, housing justice, and other policies through a gender and racial justice framework.

**Our Voice Our Schools** mission is to rebuild school systems to be rehumanizing and liberatory for children, families, and communities through five pillars: Love, Educate, Organize, Agitate, and Advocate. Our vision is to democratize education through liberatory pedagogical policies and practices that ensure: equitable education; fair and just representation in school materials; fundamental education rights; anti-bias education; and meaningful, accurate representation within the classroom. Our vision will have been achieved when the educational system and cultural environment results in connected communities, fair economy, racial justice, and human rights for all people and lifts up the voices of communities of color, low-income families, low-wage workers, LGBT communities, women, and all those whose voices are raised but remain unheard.

**United for a New Economy (UNE)** is a multiracial community organization building people power and developing community leaders in the cities and counties surrounding Denver through community organizing, voter engagement, and strategic research to create a thriving economy in Colorado. We believe a thriving economy includes livable wages, workers’ rights, equitable access to dignified housing, and the ability to live free of racism and fear.

### **Chicago, Illinois**

**Alliance of Filipinos for Immigrant Rights and Empowerment (AFIRE Chicago)** is a grassroots community organization that builds the capacity of Filipino/a/xs\* to organize on issues of social, racial, and economic justice that affect undocumented immigrants, domestic workers, seniors, and youth. We envision and work toward a Filipino/a/x community that centers the leadership of people who are most affected by structural injustice and organizes toward progressive social change. We believe in anchoring our work in the Filipino/a/x principles of bayanihan (people working together), kapitbahayan (neighborly concern), and damayan (community mutual help). We believe in creating programs that are grounded in popular education and address issues through an intersectional lens to deepen our understanding of the unique experiences of our community. We believe in maintaining diverse spaces for civic reflection that cultivate collective action and a shared vision for systems change. We believe in supporting the leadership of people who are most affected by structural injustices so they can lead movements toward freedom and liberation for all people. \*We use Filipino/a/x as shorthand for Filipino/Filipina/Filipinx to honor all gender identities.

**The Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans (IARA)** is a statewide organization, founded in April 2002, with 145,000 members working together to make their voices heard in the laws, policies, politics, and institutions that shape our lives. Today, IARA has grown to over 257,000 members and 80 retiree chapters with a primary objective to enroll and mobilize retired union members and seniors in the community into a nationwide grassroots movement advocating a progressive political and social agenda that respects work and strengthens families. The mission of the Illinois Alliance for Retired Americans is to ensure social and economic justice and full civil rights for everyone so that they may enjoy lives of dignity, personal and family fulfillment, and security. The Illinois Alliance believes that all older and retired persons have a responsibility to strive to create a society that incorporates these goals and rights and that retirement provides them with opportunities to pursue new and expanded activities with their unions, civic organizations, and their communities.

**Grassroots Collaborative** builds power through coalition organizing in Chicago and Peoria, Illinois. In Chicago, we unite 11 community organizations and labor unions to take on corporate power and racial inequity. We have won significant improvements in working families' lives in the areas of immigration, health care, human services, and living wages. The Collaborative takes on entrenched corporate and political power structures to effect policy change and return wealth to impoverished communities.

**Jane Addams Senior Caucus** is a grassroots organization led by seniors. We cross neighborhood, racial, religious, and socioeconomic lines to find common ground upon which to act on our values. Through leadership development, organizing, and popular education, we use the power of our collective voice to work for economic, social, and racial justice for all seniors and our communities.

### **Des Moines, Iowa**

**Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI)** is a statewide power-building community organization founded in 1975. The mission of Iowa CCI is to empower and unite grassroots people of all races to take control of their communities; involve them in identifying problems and needs and in taking action to address them; and be a vehicle for social, economic, and environmental justice. Iowa CCI believes that community organizing is the most effective means for engaging people in true democracy to bring about broad, progressive social change. We want to make our communities more just, more humane, more (small-d) democratic – and we want to make life better for a lot more people. Our guiding principles and beliefs are that people directly impacted by an issue should be in the driver’s seat when it comes to addressing that issue – making decisions, crafting solutions, taking action – and that policymaking should be the people’s business, not done behind closed doors by political and industry insiders.

### **Detroit, Michigan**

**Detroit People’s Platform** was founded in 2013 by a group of resident leaders, activist, advocates, and ally groups in the wake of the Emergency Manager/State takeover. The Detroit People’s Platform (DPP) is committed to working for a fair and just Detroit, the nation’s largest majority-black city. DPP believes that each and every Detroiter has a voice in deciding the future of the city, and the work of DPP is rooted in community-based groups and institutions that reflect the long-standing civic infrastructure in neighborhoods across the city. DPP centers the needs and priorities of Detroiters and is focused on winning material gains for working and low-income residents. Our work includes community organizing and advocacy; local, state and national coalition memberships that reflect trusted relationships and alliances; and a robust media and communications strategy. DPP members are front and center in leading and winning on key platform issues, such as transit justice, high-quality and permanently affordable housing, good jobs, equitable development, and participatory democracy.

**Michigan United** organizes to build the power our communities need to win the justice they deserve. We are working for an equitable and sustainable world that reflects our values of economic and racial justice. We are a coalition of labor, business, social service, and civil rights members all across Michigan, fighting for the rights of homeowners, renters, immigrant families, and students.

### **Eau Claire, Wisconsin**

**Citizen Action of Wisconsin** is dedicated to economic, racial, and environmental justice and achieving a Wisconsin and an America where every human being has an equal opportunity to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. We believe that organizing is the only true pathway to unlocking the true potential of democracy to fundamentally transform our society in the human interest. Founded in 1983, Citizen Action of Wisconsin is a statewide membership organization. We use cutting-edge organizing, communications, and policy to create a multiracial community of interest across urban, rural, and suburban Wisconsin for the purpose of achieving fundamental reform.

### **Kentucky**

**Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC)** is a community of people, inspired by a vision, building grassroots power in Kentucky – with a more authentic democracy, a just and sustainable economy, and a clean energy future. At KFTC, we offer a pathway for Kentuckians to work with others who share their vision and values to impact issues at the local and state levels, develop leadership skills, build community and grassroots power, and win changes that make Kentucky a healthier and more just place to call home. Since our founding in the mountains of eastern Kentucky over 38 years ago, we have worked successfully and rigorously on a wide range of issues at the national and state levels and in scores of local communities. Our earliest organizing victories were holding coal companies accountable for the extraction of wealth, resources, and power from Kentuckians. In the mid-1990s, we broadened our organizing focus to include more issues related to economic justice, including changes in welfare programs, access to education, and tax reform. And in the last decade, as our energy landscape has shifted, we've been engaging our communities to organize for a Just Transition by successfully opposing the development of a new coal-fired power plant, engaging 1,200 Kentuckians to shape a people's energy plan, helping develop an innovative community energy efficiency program, and much more. We currently have thousands of members from Paducah to Pikeville and from Covington to Bowling Green who are organized into fourteen county or multicounty chapters across the commonwealth.

### **Miami, Florida**

**Miami Workers Center** is working and committed to a vision to organize and empower women toward alleviating conditions of poverty and ending the feminization of poverty. This vision is called The Femme Agenda. We know women are disproportionately poor relative to the poverty rates of men. This disproportionate poverty is not limited to income and wealth but includes less education, fewer opportunities, and the lack of representation in positions of power. The disproportionate burden carried by women is known as the feminization of poverty. In black and brown communities throughout the United States, poverty rates are higher than in their white counterparts. In white, black, and brown communities, poverty disproportionately impacts women. In addition, poverty and violence are disproportionately visited upon transgender people. We cannot understand poverty in America without examining race, class, sex, and gender. And we cannot understand the feminization of poverty without examining individual and institutional violence against women.

**Struggle for Miami's Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH)** has tasked itself with developing expedited affordable housing units for these families on a Community Land Trust (CLT). Unlike other affordable housing projects, this one would be unique for its prioritization of extremely low-income families and the community-driven design and management process through the CLT model. This would not only provide the slum-affected families of these buildings with the transitional housing units they need, but it could also be reused for every set of families that find themselves in similar circumstances. Once they families are relocated, their original buildings can be condemned, destroyed, and rebuilt into permanent affordable housing where the families have a right to return.

**Farmworker Association of Florida (FWAF)** is a 36-year-old statewide organization with five offices in Florida. Each office was created based on work around natural disasters impacting farmworkers: from the freezes in Central Florida of the '80s to the impact of hurricanes like Storm Andrew in Homestead. Each area office's work is community-driven and accountable to their base, with local leadership committees that steer the local work and the overall work of 2019 the organization. We are proud of and work to ensure that FWAF is an organization of, by, with, and for farmworkers. Our guiding vision is a social environment where farmworkers' contribution, dignity, and worth are acknowledged, appreciated, and respected through economic, social, and environmental justice. This vision includes farmworkers being treated as equals and not exploited and discriminated against based on race, ethnicity, gender, or immigrant or socioeconomic status. Most of the FWAF 10,000 members work on different sectors of the agricultural industry, from field crop harvesters to nurseries and packing house workers, but a growing number of members are working in the construction industry and in the service sector, including landscaping work, the hospitality sector, and food processing work. Some pillars of the organization are: 1) civic engagement and political education; 2) occupational health, safety, and workers' rights; 3) social and environmental justice; 4) immigration rights; and 5) climate change and agroecology. The board of directors is composed of farmworkers and other workers present at the organization from the five office areas and the three racial groups of our membership: Latinx, Haitians, and African Americans.

### Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia (United Renters for Justice)** convenes Minneapolis tenants to analyze their housing problems; to strategize, organize, and mobilize around those problems; and to create affordable and dignified homes. We work with tenants of the largest landlords in some of the worst housing in the city; these tenants experience mold, insect infestations, freezing temperatures, and insecure apartment buildings. We work with landlords whenever possible, but when they refuse to address problems in their buildings, we create pressure through court, public education campaigns, and direct action. We work for permanently affordable democratic housing and structural changes: tenant unions, rent control, stronger enforcement, and cooperatively owned housing.

**ISIAIH** is a community institution-based and faith-based community organizing organization in Minnesota. ISIAIH is a vehicle for people to act collectively and powerfully for racial and economic justice in Minnesota. ISIAIH works to develop deep, grassroots, and community-based leadership in communities across Minnesota to effect systems and policy change at the local, regional, and state levels. ISIAIH has been at the forefront of many significant campaigns, such as defeating a voter restriction amendment, the strong foreclosure mediation policies, expanding access to affordable health care, expanding affordable childcare, immigrant inclusion and defense policies, raising the minimum wage, and working to pass paid family and medical leave statewide.



**TakeAction Minnesota** is an alliance of organizations and individuals committed to social, racial, and economic justice. We were founded 13 years ago through the merger of two predecessor organizations and have emerged as a movement hub and point of connection for our busy social justice ecosystem. Today, we have 20 organizational members, 60,000 supporters. Our organization is part of a movement changing who makes decisions and who benefits from those decisions. Because racial inequality, gender hierarchy, and corporate power prevent many people from leading full, joyful lives, we aim to dismantle those structures and promote a more fair, inclusive, and egalitarian society. We train grassroots activists to become community leaders and engage them in the work of pursuing meaningful change. We use short-term fights around health care and other issues to hold corporations accountable, change the public conversation, mobilize our communities to have a strong voice at the ballot box, and win policy changes that make life better for those who have been excluded from power and privilege. TakeAction plays a leading role in the state's health care advocacy field. Since 2006, our organization has convened a table of health care advocates to improve access and affordability for all Minnesota health care consumers, particularly those from marginalized communities. The Healthcare Advocates Table is an informal alliance of unions and community-based organizations, including the Minnesota Nurses Association, SEIU Health Care, Land Stewardship Project, Main Street Alliance, AFSCME Council 5, the AARP, and Planned Parenthood. In previous years, these partners participated in ACA design and implementation, extended Medicaid to more than 110,000 people, and established MinnesotaCare as a Basic Health Plan under the ACA. In 2019, this coalition protected the health care of one million Minnesotans by saving the provider tax and stopped for-profit insurance companies from privatizing \$7 billion in public assets.

## **Oregon**

**Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT)** is Oregon's only statewide renters' rights organization. With a mission to educate and empower renters to demand safe, stable, and affordable housing, CAT is led by 6,000 members across the state. CAT is guided by a vision that asserts the wisdom and resilience of most-impacted communities leading a housing justice movement that will address and reverse harmful rental market dynamics that undermine the health, well-being, and economic condition of Oregonians. CAT is a hybrid services and advocacy organization that supports renters in crisis through education, individual counseling, evictions support, and issue-based local and state advocacy. CAT's model of organizing centers neighbor-to-neighbor engagement in buildings, neighborhoods, and regions, emphasizing assertive engagement and self-determination. CAT's tenant leaders have accomplished wins like making income discrimination in housing illegal, reforming housing access policies through screening criteria and security deposit laws, raising over \$1 billion in affordable housing development funds in coalition, and passing the nation's first statewide rent-stabilization and just-cause protections policies in 2019.

**Family Forward Oregon** is focused on advancing economic security for mothers and caregivers. Far too often a person's family caregiving responsibilities jeopardize their economic security – and that of their family. This is primarily true for women, who still provide the vast majority of care in most families and paid care work. This is why Family Forward works to change systems in ways that both acknowledge and value the importance of caregiving and that create economic and other supports for those who provide care.

**Pineros Y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN)** founded in 1985 by 80 farmworkers taking action against exploitation and all of its effects. Our mission is to empower farmworkers and Latinx working families through community building, increased representation in elections, and systems change at the state and national levels.

## **Portland, Maine**

**Maine People's Alliance** is one of the largest community organizations in America. One in 13 Maine households receives our newsletter. Our 32,000 dues-paying members come from 170 towns and live in every Maine county. At peak capacity, MPA has face-to-face conversations with over 1,000 Mainers a day and can reach hundreds of thousands online each month. Our five community organizers work to support volunteer leadership in local chapters, especially from low-income communities and communities of color. We founded the Maine Small Business Coalition several years ago; MSBC has 3,500 small business members and out-polls all other business groups in Maine, including the State Chamber of Commerce and the NFIB. In 2015, we founded Maine Student Action, which is recruiting new progressive student activists on college campuses across Maine. Moral Movement Maine (MMM) is a multidenominational group of faith leaders founded in 2017 and began working with MPA after their civil disobedience in Senator Collins's office during the fight over the Trump tax bill in late 2017. Our Maine Beacon news site website has become the most-shared political news website in Maine and the most shared state-focused progressive news website in the country. The site garners more shares on a regular basis on Facebook and other social media than any state newspaper politics or opinion page and more than any other daily political blog in Maine.

**Southern Maine Workers' Center (SMWC)** is a member-led organization that uses an innovative combination of education, advocacy, and community organizing to improve the lives, working conditions, and terms of employment for low-income and poor people in Maine. Our programs provide immediate support to people struggling to meet their basic needs while empowering directly impacted grassroots leaders to impact state and local policy. We use a human rights framework to focus our work on the need for systemic change. SMWC has three programs: Work With Dignity (WWD), Health Care is a Human Right (HCHR), and Political Education (PE). WWD leads campaigns to improve public policy for low-wage workers and also runs our Worker Support Hotline and Workers' Rights Legal Clinic (a partnership with the Volunteer Lawyers Project). The PE Committee creates trainings to deepen the knowledge and build the skills of our members. HCHR organizes people directly impacted by the health care crisis into a long-term systemic change campaign for universal health care and shorter-term advocacy campaigns to protect and expand access to high-quality, comprehensive, publicly funded health care in Maine.

### **Rochester, New York**

**City-wide Tenant Union of Rochester (CWTU)** arose out of the need for housing protections.

The CWTU was birthed out of Take Back the Land Rochester due to the increasing number of tenants being forced into homelessness. TBTL was founded in 2010 and became City-Wide Tenants Union in October 2017. This is a grassroots organization led by the folks most impacted. CWTU is democratically run from the bottom up. Mission: The City-Wide Tenants Union of Rochester is a grassroots housing justice movement to elevate housing to a human right and secure community control over land and housing by building tenant power and expanding the rights of all tenants. Tenant Power: We aim to build power by organizing tenants across the city into a) building tenant unions and/or tenant unions of all tenants with the same landlord and b) uniting tenants across buildings and landlords into one big union (the CWTU). The CWTU aims to expand tenants' rights by exercising the tenants' economic, political, and public power.

### **Santa Ana, CA**

**El Centro Cultural de México** was founded in 1994 by a group of Mexican women, many of them mothers, who saw the need of safe space for immigrant families in Santa Ana during a time of anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies such as Proposition 187, "English Only," and others. Their cultural and educational programming built the community cohesiveness that permeates Centro's work today. In 2001, as Santa Ana became one of the youngest cities in the nation, youth leadership at Centro grew. New volunteers led Centro into its first space, a cultural hub hosting free weekly workshops on traditional music, such as son jarocho, and hosting local groups struggling for space in their city. Young punk musicians, artists, and cultural groups adopted Centro to organize actions and conferences. El Centro became a home for organizing around worker and immigrant rights and against police brutality. In a gentrifying city, housing such a space became a challenge. From 2001 to 2015, Centro was forced to move four times, despite having grown into a strong, intergenerational community organization. El Centro's leadership development became a pipeline for local nonprofits hiring organizers. It also developed a one-of-a-kind horizontal decision-making structure to increase democratic participation of over 50 core-volunteer teachers and organizers. Centro organizers helped lead policy wins such as the Santa Ana Sunshine Ordinance in 2012. In 2015, Centro finally purchased its own building and today still combines cultural practices with community organizing. In 2017, Centro launched Santa Ana's first community radio, Radio Santa Ana, broadcasting throughout the city on 104.7FM. This year, Centro hosted the Southern California Renter Power Assembly; is supporting a new local domestic workers organization; is helping form Santa Ana's first community land trust; and continues to host Noche de Altares, drawing over 40,000 attendees every Dia de Muertos.

**Resilience Orange County (Resilience O.C.)** has organized and challenged local policies that erode and deny basic human rights to immigrant communities by developing a strong and resilient youth leadership pathway for the long-term sustainability of immigrant rights and youth work in Orange County. ROC's mission is to engage in the critical work of nurturing and sustaining youth leadership for social-systemic transformation while promoting healing, trauma-informed, and culturally relevant practices that are inclusive of all members of the community. Our collective vision is a transformative movement that nurtures resilient youth engaged in efforts toward systemic transformation and toward an equitable and just society in which human rights and dignity are honored regardless of immigration status or national origin.

### **Santa Fe, New Mexico**

**Chainbreaker Collective** is a membership-based economic and environmental justice organization. We work to expand access to affordable transportation and sustainable communities for working people in the Santa Fe, New Mexico, region. We believe that all people have a right to have full access to the city in which we live, work, and play. But as our cities grow, many of us are forced to move farther away because we can no longer afford to live in more central neighborhoods. At the same time, our public transportation systems lack the funding necessary to be effective ways to get around. This leaves many of us with no alternative to driving. As the costs of commuting by car continue to rise, it becomes harder to make ends meet, and the cycle continues. Longer commutes by car hurt not only our wallets but our environment as well. We're building a membership of people directly affected by these issues. The more of us who stand together, the more we can make the changes needed to break this cycle of poverty and hold our elected officials accountable to our community.

**Somos Un Pueblo Unido**, founded in 1995, is a statewide community-based and immigrant-led organization that promotes worker and racial justice. With an active membership of 2,500 people in eight counties, Somos Un Pueblo Unidos offers community education about rights and remedies; forges leadership opportunities for immigrants and low-wage workers; provides legal services to wage theft victims and initiates impact litigation to defend worker's rights; engages Latinos in the political and electoral process; and leads and supports grassroots campaigns for local and national policies that strengthen our communities.

## **Texas**

**BASTA (Building and Strengthening Tenant Action/Buscando Acción y Solidaridad que Transforme el Arrendamiento)** is a project of Texas RioGrande Legal Aid and is based in Austin, Texas. Founded in 2016, BASTA is the only tenants' rights organizing project in Austin and one of the few housing justice organizations in Texas. BASTA organizes renters to work with their neighbors in tenants' associations to fight for healthy and safe housing. BASTA trains leaders and works with them to collectively prioritize pressing issues and strategize on the best solutions to address their issues and build a base that is powerful enough to get the desired result. Since its formation, BASTA and its tenant leaders have secured thousands of repairs; prevented dozens of evictions; stopped the imposition of bogus fees and fines; combatted management harassment; won long-term affordable housing contract renewals; obtained relocation assistance for displaced tenants; and pushed for newly enacted robust tenant protections that attach to any City financing.

**Texas Organizing Project (TOP)** is the largest grassroots progressive organization in the state of Texas with the capacity to both engage in year-round community organizing and significantly grow the electorate. Since our founding in 2009, TOP has grown to a staff of more than 40, with a base of over 275,000 grassroots supporters. We work on the ground and in the neighborhoods of the emerging population of Texas (or the New American Majority – people of color and millennials). Our work, concentrated in the largest and fastest growing counties of Harris, Fort Bend, Dallas, and Bexar, has consistently targeted 200,000 low-propensity voters and has empowered them to see the impact of voter participation and community organizing. These counties are where the majority of infrequent voters of color live and where we have the greatest ability to advance progressive policies that, when implemented, will have a positive impact on millions of people. TOP's mission is to improve the lives of low- and moderate-income Texas families of color by building power through community organizing and civic engagement. Leadership development is the cornerstone of TOP's organizing model. We develop networks of community leaders and organized residents in target neighborhoods, equipping them to address the priority issues they identify for their community, thus increasing their power in key decision-making and the electoral process. By providing people with the opportunity, resources, and tools to fight for justice for their communities, we have seen tangible results and are laying the groundwork for long-term change. Further, developing the skills and capacities of low-income individuals transforms everyday people into community leaders and outspoken representatives of their community.

**Workers Defense Project (WDP)** is a statewide membership-based immigrant and workers' rights organization that builds power for construction workers in Texas. Since its founding in 2002, the organization has gained notoriety for its ability to translate direct services and grassroots organizing into concrete policy wins. The New York Times named WDP as "one of the most creative organizations for immigrant workers in the country." Through its flagship Better Builder® Program, WDP concentrates its efforts on winning better working conditions in the construction industry, which is one of the largest industries, and consequently most powerful special interest groups, in Texas.

### **Washington**

**Puget Sound Sage** brings together labor, faith, and community to build an economy based on shared prosperity. We ensure all families benefit from economic growth, all workers are free from discrimination in the workplace, and all development meets the needs of our communities. We envision an economy in which all jobs provide hard-working people the wages and benefits needed to grow and support a family. We foresee a time when growing inequality has been reversed and democracy strengthened with the participation of all people. We anticipate a region where safe, clean, and affordable housing and communities are available to everyone. To achieve this future, the institutions that represent regular people – unions, faith congregations, and community organizations – must work in partnership with government and business to plan responsibly for the future. Sage will help bring about this future by building stronger institutions for working families, creating policy that balances the drive for economic growth with economic justice, and engaging directly in the day-to-day decisions of government that affect our communities.

**Tenant Union of Washington State (TU)** is to create housing justice through empowerment-based education, outreach, leadership development, organizing, and advocacy. Founded in 1977, the TU carries on a proud legacy of work to create concrete improvements in tenants' living conditions and challenge and transform unjust housing policies and practices. As a membership organization, the TU's work is grounded in the strong conviction that tenants must be the leaders of efforts to transform our housing conditions and communities. The TU embraces the values of equality, hope, tenant leadership, respect, direct action, civic courage, racial and economic justice, and self-determination in our work.

**Washington Community Action Network (Washington CAN)** is the state's largest grassroots organization with 44,000 members. Fighting for racial, gender, and economic equity, we center historically marginalized communities directly impacted to design policy and lead our work in the following issue areas: health care, housing, mass liberation, and immigration. Our year-round issue-organizing and base-building is enhanced by our electoral work that shapes the political context in which we operate.

**Washingtonians for a Responsible Future** is a broad-based coalition of 21 member organizations representing aging and disability advocates, businesses, long-term care providers, labor, consumer rights organizations, and families working to start this important conversation. After years of coordinated effort, the Coalition successfully campaigned to pass the Long Term Care Trust Act in Washington State this spring. The Act established the first social-insurance program to pay for long-term care in the nation.

### **Other**

**Jews for Racial and Economic Justice** has pursued racial and economic justice in New York City by advancing systemic changes that result in concrete improvements in people's everyday lives. We are inspired by Jewish tradition to fight for a sustainable world with an equitable distribution of economic and cultural resources and political power. We believe that Jews have a vital role to play in the movement for a better world. The future we hope for depends on Jews forging deep and lasting ties with our partners in struggle.

**Hand in Hand** is a national network of employers of nannies, house cleaners and home attendants, our families and allies. We believe that dignified and respectful working conditions benefit worker and employer alike. We envision a future where people live in caring communities that recognize all of our interdependence. To get there, we support employers to improve their employment practices, and to collaborate with workers to change cultural norms and public policies.



## APPENDIX E: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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### **Community Power**

Community power is the ability of communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity. (USC Equity Research Institute)

### **Community Power Building**

Community power building is the set of strategies used by communities most impacted by structural inequity to develop, sustain and grow an organized base of people who act together through democratic structures to set agendas, shift public discourse, influence who makes decisions and cultivate ongoing relationships of mutual accountability with decision-makers that change systems and advance health equity. Community power building is particularly critical for underserved, underrepresented, and historically marginalized communities who have been excluded from decision-making on the policies and practices that impact their health and the health of their communities. (USC Equity Research Institute)

### **Health Equity**

Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.

(<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>)

### **Social Determinants of Health**

Commonly referred to as the social determinants of health, these are the “conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age” that influence health. ([https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)) Such conditions include “economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and neighborhood and built environment” (Definition from Healthy People 2020). Political and economic factors, power imbalances (for example, racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, and ableism), and systemic injustice also constitute the conditions that determine health inequity. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK425845/>)

### **Base Building**

A diverse set of strategies and methods to support community members to: be in relationship with one another; invest in each other’s leadership; share a common identity shaped by similar experiences and an understanding of the root causes of their conditions; and to use their collective analysis to create solutions and strategize to achieve them. (USC Equity Research Institute)

### **Community Power-Building Organizations (CPBOs) Groups**

Organizations that may be identified by geography (local, state, regional, national), demography (e.g. youth, workers, multi-racial) or issue(s) (e.g. workers’ rights, environmental justice, multi-issue) who conduct a range of activities including base-building. Other terms sometimes used to describe CBPOs include but are not limited to: grassroots organizing groups, social movement groups, movement-building organizations, community-based organizations, community organizing groups, base building groups.

### **Community Organizer**

Community organizers, one type of staff person working at CPBOs, bring the most impacted communities together—through door knocking in neighborhoods and apartment buildings and through institutions like schools and churches—to learn and strategize about how to make, as multiple interviewees described, “material changes in their living conditions.” While organizers across place and issue employ diverse ranges of tactics and strategies—from leadership development trainings to political education curricula to healing circles—it’s about bringing people together to help them make connections across their lived experiences and conditions. (USC Equity Research Institute)

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