

# Achieving Equity through Smart Growth:

Perspectives from Philanthropy

A Report by

PolicyLink



and

**Funders' Network  
for Smart Growth and Livable Communities**

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February 2001

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## About PolicyLink

*PolicyLink is a national nonprofit policy, research and advocacy organization established to advance, from the wisdom, voice and experience of local constituencies, policies that achieve social and economic equity and strong organized communities. The PolicyLink Community Based Regionalism (CBR) initiative works to ensure that regional and national smart growth efforts address issues of inequity and the concerns and priorities of low-income communities. PolicyLink research focuses on criteria for smart growth-oriented equitable development in low-income communities. PolicyLink advances equity efforts in partnerships with local practitioners and national organizations. The immediate goal of the initiative is to enable community leaders to effectively participate in regional policy discussions and promote equity. The long term goal is to advance a community-driven policy agenda that can be implemented at regional, state, and national levels.*

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## About Funders Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities

*The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities is a national organization that works to inform and strengthen philanthropic funders' individual and collective abilities to support and connect organizations working to improve quality of life, create better economies, build livable communities, and protect and preserve natural resources. It serves as an active resource for foundations, nonprofit organizations and other partners working together to create opportunities by positively impacting the range of environmental, social, and economic issues exacerbated by the phenomena of suburban sprawl and urban disinvestment. National, corporate, private and community foundations participate in the Funders' Network, which provides core services of strategic planning, convening, developing and sharing information, networking, refining grantmaking, and targeting support. The Funders' Network also undertakes collaborative action projects.*

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## Preface

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Across America, it is increasingly recognized that land use and development practices present risks to people, the environment, and the economy. Manifestations of these risks include growing traffic congestion, worsening air quality, the growing spatial mismatch of jobs and housing, increasing social and economic inequity, accelerating concentrations of poverty and the weakening of public schools.

Smart growth movements have emerged as a result of the growing awareness of these problems and of the consequences of unchecked sprawl. These movements—which may have a profound influence on the future shape of communities—are today largely driven by environmental and business concerns. The community concerns for social and economic equity are minimally represented at the planning and policy tables where smart growth agendas are unfolding.

Since 1999, the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) and PolicyLink have partnered to host a Learning Action Network of funders, academics and practitioners to examine social equity in America. Together we are identifying ways to more fully move equity concerns into the smart growth agenda.

To date, TFN and PolicyLink have convened four national meetings of the Learning Action Network (LAN). The meetings focused on the social equity dynamics of each region where the Learning Action Network met, including California, South Florida, greater Chicago and Maryland. LAN served to develop a deeper understanding of smart growth and its implications for promoting regional equity.

Together, LAN participants:

- explored issues faced by local practitioners who are seeking to address community issues within a context of smart growth and regionalism;
- developed a framework for how to approach “Equitable Development”—to ensure that private and public investment produces concrete benefits to low income communities of color;
- built new relationships among funders and local and national practitioners;
- developed a policy agenda that addresses racial injustice and advances equity across a range of critical topics related to smart growth, including education, transportation, housing and the environment;
- modeled how regional planning can be inclusive of issues of race and priorities of low income communities;
- advanced strategies for job-housing linkages in regional footprints;
- identified specific funding strategies for consideration by funders; and
- clarified alliances and partnerships that need to be developed to advance the field.

This publication builds on the work of LAN by sharing the experiences of philanthropic leaders who have been working to advance equity in a regional context. The work resulting from this collaboration, offers important insights, strategies and an action agenda to challenge and spur philanthropy to further advance this cause so vital to our future.

Angela Glover Blackwell  
President  
*PolicyLink*

L. Benjamin Starrett  
Executive Director  
*Funders' Network for  
Smart Growth and  
Livable Communities*

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## Executive Summary

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As American communities attempt to solve sprawling patterns of development and the resulting degradations in quality of life, philanthropy has played an important role in supporting the visibility and work of many innovators in these arenas. It has supported the development of urban growth boundaries drawn to save open space and agricultural land, the unification of transportation jurisdictions to improve air quality and mass transit systems, and new economy investments in urban core communities.

While smart growth and regional planning efforts have escalated through ballot initiatives, new metropolitan governance structures, and state and federal policies, philanthropy has supported the inclusion of advocates in the fields of human development and civil rights to engage in regional development planning processes. Job access, affordable housing, safe environments, transportation access and quality education can effectively be addressed within these new regional planning frameworks. Just as the last generation of growth patterns and economic investment abandoned urban core communities, new investments can play a key role in reversing these patterns. Increasingly, those that work for equity for low-income communities of color are playing leadership roles.

This report reflects the learning of foundation leaders who have supported the innovators of regional equity work and crafted new institutional mechanisms to advance comprehensive equity strategies. The compilation and analysis of their observations provides a blueprint for assessing practices in the field, including diverse stakeholders as partners in future regional planning efforts, and ensuring that current residents benefit by new investments in the region.

The study found that philanthropy has focused on supporting key regional “anchors” as the vehicles for advancing equity. Regional equity anchors are the intermediary organizations and coalitions that

- bring together diverse neighborhood-based organizations, civil rights, community development, environmental, labor, educational and business associations;
- provide leadership and strengthen capacity of member organizations to engage in regional planning and development activities;
- develop internal research capacity to map regional dynamics and track patterns of investment, ownership, and employment;
- develop public policy solutions to advance regional equity and new public and private investments based on community involvement in planning processes;
- lead allies in policy campaigns that bring new equitable development resources to disinvested communities in the region; and
- direct media attention to needs and solutions in their member communities.

These anchors successfully direct significant public and private resources to equity investments in the areas of transportation, increased wages, housing and education, and craft mutually beneficial alliances between environmental and equity advocates.



Philanthropy has to reorient its traditional practices of single-issue grantmaking to advance promising regional equity practices. The philanthropic leaders identified for this survey:

- worked in collaboration with other foundations through regional associations of grantmakers to build scale and momentum for regional equity strategies;
- created cross-issue teams within foundations to fund comprehensive regional approaches by bringing together environmental, economic development, racial equity and human services program officers;
- formed philanthropic affinity groups to identify needs and promote their fulfillment through strategic grantmaking initiatives (Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, Environmental Grantmakers Association, Neighborhood Funders Group, etc.); and
- made long-term investments in selected regions to better identify best practices for promoting and sustaining regional equity.

Those surveyed identified specific needs for advancement of the field and how philanthropy is working with advocates to meet those needs by:

- developing equity impact analysis tools for prospectively assessing the outcomes of investment on communities;
- conducting significant outreach and education work with civil rights, environmental, and community development organizations;
- building institutional structures to support cross-issue alliances;
- identifying and conducting research to inform new policies that can advance community equity in regional contexts; and
- supporting public policy campaigns that deliver equity.

While this study identifies promising practices of regional equity advocates and philanthropic investment in the field, the practices are nascent.

Regional equity represents a small part of the rapidly moving dialogue on regional planning and smart growth. With the majority of focus in these planning efforts on business associations and municipal governments, time is of the essence for engaging the advocates in the human and community development arenas.

This document is intended to help escalate the process of bringing equity efforts to scale. Significant further investments by philanthropy are urgently needed to support the full participation of equity advocates.



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## Introduction

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For five decades, philanthropy has focused on addressing challenging quality-of-life issues—how to provide affordable housing, access to jobs, skills training, workforce development, food security, safe environment, health access and equality of opportunity. Today, as American communities are examining how their development patterns affect quality-of-life issues, we see philanthropy playing an increasing role in advancing the practices of smart growth and regional planning as key means to address these quality of life concerns.

Over the last three years, movements to resist the negative effects of sprawl have gained tremendous momentum. Whether called “smart growth,” “livable communities,” “regionalism,” or “metropolitanism,” people are recognizing that to compete in the new economy, diverse interests within regions must work together to improve quality of life for all residents. Businesses need to retain workers and achieve sectoral efficiencies that are built on the strengths of a region. Communities need to educate, house, and move residents in ways that build strong and culturally vibrant environments. Governments need to work in coordinated ways to plan proactively for the future of their diverse communities. At the various levels where these decisions are advancing, the blueprints are being drawn that will shape the next several decades of life in American communities.

To date, the smart growth movement generally has focused on preserving the natural environment and farmlands by limiting growth on the fringe of metropolitan regions and promoting reinvestment in the urban and inner-ring suburban core. The movement’s proponents form part of a growing reorientation of interests focused on the region—rather than on cities or states—as the dominant economic universe and as the arena to develop solutions to stem the negative effects of sprawl. While smart growth

discussions have been innovative in their regional perspectives related to growth, substantive efforts to address equity concerns remain largely absent from most arenas of public policy and decision-making.

At the same time, social equity advocates and their philanthropic supporters continue their fifty-year mission to preserve or create resources and opportunities for low-income people and inner-city communities. Success in achieving equity within the continuing context of outward sprawl—activity that siphons businesses, jobs, civic leaders and educational and financial resources from urban centers into suburban communities—has been limited at best. The sprawl phenomenon has exacerbated inequities in urban-core and older suburban communities. It has resulted in jobs and resources moving further away from urban and low-income neighborhoods, leaving these communities with greater concentrations of poverty, racial segregation, economic isolation, and tax inequity.

Given this past decade of unprecedented prosperity, some may ask why they should care about equity. In the absence of a dialogue about equity as a component of smart growth, everybody loses. Recent studies show that regions grow healthier when all communities in the region are strong. Business and government leaders should understand that poverty in the central city and inequality across the region can actually drag down the entire region.<sup>1</sup> Environmentalists should understand that support for equity can engage a powerful constituency for urban reinvestment and racial equity outcomes, helping them to build the strength and the long-term viability of the smart growth movement and advance both communities’ urban goals—limiting growth in undeveloped areas while bringing community-focused reinvestment in the built environment. Finally, low-

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<sup>1</sup> See *Regions That Work: How Cities and Suburbs Can Grow Together*, Manuel Pastor, Jr., Peter Dreier, Eugene Grigsby III, Marta Lopez-Garza, University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

income community and civil rights leaders can seize a critical opportunity to address a primary cause of the problems that plague their communities, as well as an historic opportunity to substantively address issues of poverty within a mainstream public dialogue. Where these dialogues are occurring, new policy frameworks are emerging that both challenge preconceptions and build common ground. To date, philanthropy has played a catalytic role in providing the resources to make these new developments possible.

The central analysis that these dialogues share is that urban sprawl results from specific policy decisions and investment practices made at federal, state, regional, and local levels. These decisions in part result in incentive structures that draw investment from the urban core to the “greenfields” or undeveloped perimeters of metropolitan regions. At the same time, urban residents and their tax coffers are tapped to finance the expansion.

As diverse interests stop to take stock of the consequences of these practices and envision their regions for coming decades, philanthropy needs to do the same. While attention to housing, health, human services, education, community development, workforce development, environmental quality and conservation needs to be site specific, it also needs to be conceived and executed within the context of the region as a whole. While interests are gathering around the country thinking about how they will grow, philanthropy can play an important role in ensuring who is at the table and how the stakeholders of diverse communities can be represented in future planning.

Keen attention to the public policy incentives that either advance or hamper equity is the first step in reorienting the strategies and alliances of smart growth proponents. If philanthropy can help prioritize equity concerns and involve communities in creating public policy that spreads the benefits and burdens of growth fairly across a region’s communities, many of its missions will be met.

## What it Means to “Advance Equity”

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The advancement of equity in regions means linking residents of all neighborhoods to institutions outside of their immediate communities and addressing the racial barriers to regional participation. It means creating transportation investments that connect urban residents to opportunities to work, shop, study, invest, and play in the region—undoing the current practices of isolating certain communities. Equity-focus means assuring economic development subsidies and public education investments do not divest the urban core of jobs and good schools, but instead improve them—while not displacing the communities who reside there through gentrification. It means that area residents own assets and become beneficiaries of reinvestment and positive economic change in their communities.

Where innovative philanthropy is engaged, it is ensuring that community-focused institutions are reshaping the smart growth dialogue to promote equity as part of their regional solutions. Advocating for equity has led to public infrastructure investments in low-income and inner-city communities; shifts in transportation spending to public transit from highways; affordable housing developments that do not concentrate poverty; workforce development and employment opportunities that address income inequality; and environmental clean up and creation of open spaces that enhance life for urban-core residents.

## A Survey of Philanthropic Approaches

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The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) was founded by philanthropic leaders who were advancing these new policy frameworks within their own regions. TFN came together with PolicyLink in 1999 to launch the Learning Action Network for Smart Growth and Equity, with the purpose of moving equity more centrally into the smart growth movement nationally. Advancing this goal has involved bringing together leaders from foundations; from local community development, community building and civil rights organizations; from intermediary and national networks; and from research institutions engaged in work that touches on smart growth, regional and equity issues.

This publication brings together the observations and practices of philanthropic leaders who have engaged in this effort and made inroads in the regional equity arena. PolicyLink conducted interviews with foundation leaders who advance a regional equity analysis within their grantmaking. Those interviews form the foundation of this document.<sup>2</sup> While few foundations have formally designated regional portfolios, all those selected for interviews brought regional analyses to their diverse grantmaking activities.

Collectively, these philanthropic leaders have invested in community efforts to put forward regional solutions that address equity concerns. They have identified and contributed to successes,

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<sup>2</sup> The funders interviewed during April-May 2000 represented mostly private, national foundations. They included Peter Beard, Fannie Mae Foundation; Hooper Brooks, Sordna Foundation; C.J. Callen, Tides Foundation (a public charity); Dayna Cunningham, The Rockefeller Foundation; Robert Giloth, The Annie E. Casey Foundation; David Harris, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Katherine McFate, The Rockefeller Foundation; Margaret O'Dell, The Joyce Foundation; Jeff Olson, Ford Foundation; Alvertha Penny, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Victor Quintana, Unitarian Universalist Veatch at Shelter Rock; Rebecca Riley, former Vice President, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and Lori Villarosa, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

where community-based organizations have achieved equity outcomes within a regional context. Investment in these strategies has shown that communities can bridge some of the race, class and geographic stratifications that have been insurmountable in the past. Some of these community-based efforts have begun to change the smart growth discussion in fundamental ways.

Promoting equity within regionalism proves to be a creative and iterative process. Funders support, observe, and evaluate projects across a broad spectrum of organizations and regions. At the same time, organizations continually craft new practices that define the field. No one funding portfolio combines all of the strategies discussed in this document, but the strategies included in this report were cited by several foundation leaders as crucial components to successful regional equity practice. The insights, strategies, and experiences recorded here illustrate the breadth and scope of activity possible between funders, practitioners and other partners. They are meant to:

- document philanthropic support of successful regional equity strategies; and
- illustrate promising practices within philanthropy that help advance a regional equity agenda.

While the equity practices presented in this document are promising, they should also be viewed in context. The regional equity field is in an early and fragile stage. These efforts represent a small part of the rapidly moving dialogue on regional and smart growth issues. They need to be brought to scale quickly to significantly advance and leverage equity outcomes. Decisions are being made every day that will shape the regions that will define the lives of our and future generations. It is time to get busy.



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## Building Blocks for Regional Equity

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*“Regional equity work requires building the capacity of a whole set of new leaders. Foundations need to remember that these leaders are building communities and organizations at the same time.”*

David Harris,  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

Philanthropic leaders from diverse programmatic areas identified a number of common components or building blocks critical to advancing a regional equity agenda. Because comprehensive regional initiatives require the active engagement of a broad cross-section of community actors, philanthropic efforts to advance regional equity rely on the involvement of a spectrum of grantmaking programs, including land use planning, civic engagement, housing, the environment, civil rights, race relations, children, youth and families, and community, economic and workforce development. This section will document the practices that surveyed foundations utilize to engage communities in identifying regional inequities and taking action to produce equity-promoting regional outcomes. Those practices include:

- building strong regional anchors that can involve communities, develop leaders, provide continuity, and bring partners together to advance a proactive agenda;
- conducting sophisticated and technical research and analysis to ground regional equity work;
- developing public policy and development campaigns that result in equity outcomes; and
- implementing, monitoring and enforcing outcomes.

### Building Block #1: Strong Regional Anchors

#### Regional Anchors Create Partnerships, Bring New Interests to the Planning Table

Significant research and policy sophistication along with organized community power are required to successfully redirect the momentum of development and investment in a region. Recognizing the potential for strength associated with regional coalitions, a primary goal of equity funders has been to identify and build the capacity of key regional “anchors.” These anchors take the form of either intermediary organizations that coordinate diverse community stakeholders into metropolitan equity advocacy, or coalitions that share an anchor role. At their most comprehensive, anchors draw the participation of community-based housing and jobs-focused organizations, labor and faith-based institutions, local colleges and universities, businesses, and environmental groups. Some metropolitan communities have strong existing anchors that can play new leadership roles in this arena. In many communities, the infrastructure of regional equity anchors needs significant development to build them into eligible power brokers.

Philanthropy can play a key role in building anchor capacity for regional leadership roles. This means supporting a range of organizational development capacity.

The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock promotes the capacity development of anchor organizations in low-income, faith-based, and communities of color nationally. Veatch Program Officer Victor Quintana said his institution looks to help organizations “build the policy leaders, the funding resources, the media savvy, and the advocacy skills

## Strong Regional Anchors Lead Annie E. Casey's Six State Jobs Initiative

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative seeks out anchor intermediaries with a deep sense of the region and the issues affecting low-income and urban communities. They evaluate potential grantees for characteristics that include being entrepreneurial, results-oriented, anchored to the community, and able to connect with and represent low-income communities. "The thing we found most often in neighborhoods was not the reluctance to go regional, but the underinvestment of community-based organizations to connect deeply with residents," said Robert Giloth, program director of The Annie E. Casey Jobs Initiative. "...We've been trying to increase the capacity [of intermediaries] to connect and engage with residents."*

*The Jobs Initiative funds intermediaries that connect low-income, mostly inner-city neighborhoods with regional economies. The primary anchors in each regional initiative engage local networks of community colleges, community development corporations, employment networks, neighborhood residents, and labor unions. Lead intermediaries range from government entities to faith-based community organizations and have developed powerful regional strategies such as the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership that prepares workers for the 50,000-job-strong metal industries in the region.*

needed to counteract or confront the power that keeps so many communities disenfranchised."<sup>3</sup> The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation focuses geographically to promote shared agendas among environmental and community organizations in the Chicago and South Florida regions. And regional associations of grantmakers increasingly play key roles in directing resources to capacity building of regional anchors.

## Anchors Can Bridge Racial, Jurisdictional and Constituency Divides

Bridging urban and suburban communities requires anchors that can bring together organizations that represent both and help them focus on opportunities that benefit both. Where anchors have helped community-based organizations analyze the dynamics of regional development and sprawl—and the resulting realities of disinvestment and geographic isolation—they have been able to undertake work that leads to more equitable outcomes.

This cross-jurisdictional work requires that anchors address the particular dynamics of race and political power in their region. In regions where the dynamic of urban core disinvestment and abandonment continues, racially segregated urban communities must manage a legacy of decaying infrastructure. This sprawl-fueled segregation of urban communities has, however, had the practical effect of giving those communities distinct political representation. In regions where urban growth boundaries or the pressures of traffic and growing economies have stimulated urban infill, it means the dilution of political power and displacement of long-time communities of color. Hooper Brooks, Program Director for the Environment at the Surdna Foundation, reflected on a race dynamic the foundation has confronted in many urban core communities. "Even if everyone agrees that regional dynamics must shift, there are a lot of things people are unwilling to do out of fear that their agendas will be stolen or co-opted," he said. "There is a real concern by urban African American communities that if they start working regionally, all the power that they have gained as a Black community will be diluted or lost."

A focus on "regional opportunity structures" can help coalitions bridge the racial tensions between urban and suburban communities. When the Casey Foundation's Jobs Initiative started to work with communities in New Orleans, they asked what barriers

<sup>3</sup> The Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program is the philanthropic program of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock.



ers existed to better employment. While many were identified, low-income communities in the region identified racial discrimination as the major barrier. A lead New Orleans anchor, the interfaith Jeremiah Group, partnered church-based groups, labor, and community organizations across urban-suburban lines to convene roundtable discussions with employers on racial barriers, training, and workforce needs. From these roundtables, the Jeremiah Group organized a coalition of African American and white business leaders who advise state officials on job training and workforce development needs.<sup>4</sup>

A Baltimore anchor, the Citizen's Planning and Housing Association, has a long-term goal of rationalizing tax revenue structures in the Greater Baltimore region. They face the challenge of moving majority white suburban jurisdictions to share tax base growth with majority black Baltimore City. While all jurisdictions agree that Baltimore City disinvestment needs to be staunch, the race dynamics that fed sprawl need to be transformed to accomplish the revenue sharing goal. They have taken on shorter-term campaigns to rationalize urban-suburban transportation, mixed-income housing, neighborhood open space protection, and drug treatment and workforce development services to begin to give constituencies the experience of approaching joint agendas.

Baltimore regional funding partnerships are investing deeply in neighborhood planning efforts across the region to help foster that transformation. The Baltimore Neighborhood Collaborative brings together 30 area grantmakers to make three-year \$150,000 general support grants to community-building organizations. Six have received funding, with ten more slated, across urban and suburban jurisdictions. The collaborative also funds the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance, which helps the groups collectivize data to advance their planning and organizing efforts, and identifies

### Innovative regional anchor-led equity campaigns supported by philanthropy include:

- *urban-suburban partnerships that address racial discrimination and access to jobs;*
- *alliances between multiple neighborhood-focused groups in a region to plan for and equitably distribute and develop low-income and affordable housing (known as "fair-share" housing);*
- *environmental, health, and social equity coalitions that focus on transportation infrastructure and access strategies;*
- *region-wide living wage floors for public expenditures;*
- *industry-labor-community partnerships that develop specific economic sectors; and*
- *private sector-community partnerships that leverage public and private investment capital with equity criteria into poor neighborhoods.*

sources of public money to help the groups fund their development efforts.

Foundations play other crucial roles in developing new alliances between historically divided interests. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation brought together their grantees that represent racial and ethnic identity groups with those working for environmental and economic development change. Lori Villarosa, Program Officer at Mott, found that "getting and keeping race issues on the table was a challenge, but when you can get them there, everyone's perspective begins to shift, and different solutions emerge."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation website (<http://www.aecf.org>)

<sup>5</sup> See *Sprawl and Regional Inequities: Exploring the Connections*, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, [www.mott.org](http://www.mott.org)

*“One of the most important learning experiences for community was hearing Myron Orfield present his maps of Chicago. It made painfully clear that the forces of disinvestment were regional forces, and that many of the solutions for the city would need to be regional solutions... His work began to connect the dots. If you care about the future of cities and low-income people, you need to be more educated about the region.”*

*Rebecca Riley, Vice President,  
John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

In South Florida, race was at the center of the regionalism goal to restore inner city, coastal, and urban communities while stopping the spread of development into the Everglades. The MacArthur Foundation took it on directly. “There was no way to get into this work without getting at the difficult issues of race and privilege,” said David Harris, Director of Florida Programs. “Some communities felt the environmental groups would be willing to sacrifice their communities to achieve their environmental goals of Everglades restoration.” With a commitment to connecting underrepresented communities to regional planning, Harris launched a leadership training and neighborhood organizing component, along with “undoing racism” training for all participating groups. He also brought in a vanguard of environmental leaders who are people of color to consult and guide Florida groups in diversifying their own leadership.

## Building Block #2: Sophisticated Research and Analysis

A second crucial building block identified by funders to advance regional equity is research. Research arms the community with data that illustrates the forces driving existing inequities and enables anchors to enlist new partners to join equity pursuits. The data can provide a baseline for community partners to identify their priorities for change and can be used to frame coalitions’ positions when bringing a regional equity agenda to the public at large.

Initial research starts with mapping the region and an area’s people and economy—including infrastructure, investments, jobs, unemployment rates, growth sectors of the economy, racial residency patterns, housing stock, etc. Early investment in research helps community partners identify and frame the campaign development and policy targets. The Environmental Law and Policy Center partnered with the Lung Association and the Bicycle Federation to do a technical analysis of transportation policy in the Great Lakes region. Together, they developed sophisticated modeling and forecasting of transportation demand that took low-income communities’ needs into account. Armed with this research and information, the campaign was able to slow Illinois’ infrastructure spending in the Southeast Wisconsin-Northeast Indiana transportation corridor until a longer-term transportation agenda is developed.

Foundation support of race analyses of a region has helped anchors define the important parameters of regional inequity. Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

funds research and policy advocates that help anchors address specific race and regionalism issues nationally. One of these, the Institute on Race and Policy at University of Minnesota Law School, directed by John A. Powell, helps primarily African American communities develop more strategic regional plans. "For these communities, their experience of development is a racialized experience," explains Powell. "Starting with a race analysis helps describe their lived experience. Having their reality acknowledged energizes the communities to work for change." PolicyLink is developing a "Beyond Gentrification: Managing Equitable Development Toolkit" that helps regional anchors identify the range of policy options that will focus investment that advances equity. The toolkit carries an assessment tool that helps communities incorporate a race analysis into their planning. Myron Orfield, of the Minneapolis-based Metropolitan Area Research Corporation, who has helped communities map regional forces for five years, has increasingly incorporated race analysis into his mapping practices.

The Rockefeller Foundation supports the capacity of local advocacy groups to conduct regional labor market analyses. "These groups often provide the only counterweight to commercial interests in debates about economic development," said Katherine McFate, Associate Director of Working Communities. "At their best, such groups are able to link quality analysis to constituency building in a way that involves residents in defining and articulating their own interests and policy choices," she said. "Labor market analyses can also be used to identify job growth areas and so direct public training and placement services to sectors of the economy that offer avenues for skill enhancement and upward mobility."

### Building Block #3: Developing Regional Campaigns

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Through the building of anchor's capacity, development of new leadership, recruitment of a strong mix of community players into active alliances, and the conducting of targeted research and analysis, priorities take shape for advancing equity campaigns. Successful regional anchors build on cumulative experiences of targeted policy campaigns and the engagement of advocates and community constituents in shaping development strategies at various levels. Campaign work involves equity proponents shaping a regional agenda and impacting policy and decision-making while developing the institutional capacity of the campaign actors. As the

#### Steps that comprise regional equity campaigns:

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- *identifying the specific resources the campaign wants to apply toward regional equity;*
- *engaging and organizing low-income, urban-core, and key allied constituents in a campaign that targets those resources;*
- *analyzing the agencies, jurisdictions, and other entities that control those resources and developing strategies to create or redirect those resources;*
- *coordinating a public education and media strategy to shape the debate;*
- *advocating for positive policy changes at legislative and administrative levels; and*
- *winning specific gains that deliver equity outcomes for the targeted communities.*

*“The money that the federal government puts into a region is a huge drive of activity that has an intended consequence. We need to better understand the decisions of how to spend money and the entry points for people to influence the process. There is an opportunity to influence government decision making and open the process so that it is more participatory and responsive to equity impacts.”*

*Margaret O’Dell, Program Officer, The Joyce Foundation*

research and mapping draw a state-of-the-community picture, the crafting of a forward-looking campaign is in order.

Foundation leaders observed that with effective strategies, equity proponents begin to reverse the unequal distribution of resources and inner-city disinvestment. Successful regional equity campaigns have redirected significant public sector investments into communities and harnessed private capital to create new assets in the community. Funders generally saw this leveraging of larger resources as the primary objective of effective regional coalitions.

## Directing Public Sector Resources to Equity Purposes

With ongoing advocacy by organized regional constituencies, public funding for infrastructure, economic development, transportation systems, education, and services can be allocated in ways that increase equitable opportunity in the regional economy. The money that federal, state and local governments put into regions is a huge driver of activity with consequences in relation to equity, sprawl, and the environment. To leverage public dollars in areas where disinvestment or other negative impacts have occurred, foundations need to invest resources in anchors to educate themselves and their coalition members on the complex web of decisions—and the leverage points—that determine how jurisdictions spend their money. Out of these exercises, regional anchors can craft plans for funding their visions with those public dollars.

### Review and Critique Federal Programs

Some communities have approached equity campaign development through review and critique of federal programs that created the unintended consequences of displacement, toxic abandonment, or lack of transit access for urban-core communities. In the transportation campaign spearheaded by the Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC) and other Atlanta leaders, for instance, the community identified serious problems with the city’s plan for federal transportation dollars. EJRC and its partners worked to increase the inclusion of neighborhoods in the planning process. They identified the harms to low-income communities imbedded in the city’s

## CNT Research Identifies Investment Opportunities

*As the anchor in several Chicago-area campaigns, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) provides technical research expertise to its regional partners. In a campaign on transit-oriented development with community groups in Chicago's West Garfield and Washington Park communities, CNT used a GIS-based system to identify the benefits of development close to transit. The research determined where investments could be made that drew on other beneficial urban resources. CNT then helped develop a program to finance African American and Latino start-up businesses along transit lines, with the support of banks and businesses.*

*"CNT has a unique ability to link grassroots work to a high level of policy ideas," said Margaret O'Dell of the Joyce Foundation. "They create a partnership of think tank and action-oriented players as they engage in the substantive conversations with people about what they want to be different."*

proposed plan, and are working to remove the harms while ensuring that the transportation needs of low-income communities are served.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the San Francisco Bay Area's Transportation Choices coalition brought together housing advocates, environmental groups, workforce development proponents, and suburban commuters to redirect hundreds of millions of dollars from highways to public

<sup>6</sup> Clark Atlanta University's Environmental Justice Resource Center website (<http://www.cau.edu>).

<sup>7</sup> See Surface Transportation Policy Project's website [www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org) for further explanation of the community involvement provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act.

<sup>8</sup> Regional groups in this campaign include Center for Policy Initiatives, L.A. Alliance for a New Economy, Working Partnerships USA, and East Bay Alliances for a New Economy; PolicyLink is a statewide partner.

transit. These regional transportation advances are possible due to national-level advocacy coordinated by the Surface Transportation Policy Project that delivered legislative changes to require public input and allocation of dollars for mass transit projects.<sup>7</sup>

### Review Municipal and State Allocations

Other regional anchors have approached their public resource campaigns through municipal and state allocations. In California, community-labor partnerships in San Diego, Los Angeles, the Silicon Valley, and the East Bay have wrested equity criteria from municipalities, redevelopment agencies, ports, and airports to mandate living wages, health benefits, and residential hiring agreements. They are now partnered to make state investment similarly accountable to creating quality jobs, community accountability in development projects, and smart growth outcomes.<sup>8</sup> In other regions, sophisticated campaigns have led to new public spending that promotes equity and environmental criteria. These include legislative initiatives such as tax credit expansions for urban core reinvestment tied to job quality and environmental clean-up, funds to capitalize land trusts for maintenance of affordable housing, and reverse commute incentives. Foundations have played a variety of roles in these public resource campaigns that range from grant support, to arranging peer learning between accomplished and emerging organizations, to seeding early development of leadership in public arenas that need equity attention, to investing capital in land banking activities to ensure permanent affordability for community housing, services and arts needs.

## Harnessing Private Investment and Market Forces for Equity

Some anchors have pursued strategies that encourage community-building investment of private capital into inner cities and inner-ring suburbs. These market-based initiatives require both the organizing of community constituents as well as the development of technical deal-making skills. By linking private investments to community benefits like commercial and industrial real estate development, employment training, community land trusts, profit-sharing, and affordable housing opportunities, older urban areas can be strengthened without displacing low-income residents.

### Capturing Private Sector Investments

Some strategists have experimented successfully with wresting development agreements that bring new workforce development resources to low-income communities. In Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Alliance won an agreement from the DreamWorks studio over their city-subsidized expansion plan to seed high technology workforce development for South Central Los Angeles residents. The millions pledged by DreamWorks will establish new film, technical, and engineering programs at several community colleges in the region.

Equity advocates in several states have been trying to apply Community Reinvestment Act-like regulations onto insurance companies' investments. While Massachusetts is the only state that applies equity and environmental standards to insurance investments, California Consumers Union has established a voluntary program through which insurance companies are channeling small portions of their investment portfolios into low-income and inner-city communities.

## Establishing Capital for Communities Funds

*The development of place-specific funds for real estate and community capacity development can be important sources of revenue for under-invested communities.<sup>9</sup>*

*Ingredients:*

*Elected officials—to pass development agreements, zoning, or other regulatory mechanisms for directing private capital*

*Community advocates—to identify areas and criteria for investment and oversight mechanisms*

*Developers—to help manifest community-conceived development needs*

*Community-Based Organizations—to be development partners*

*Investors—to capitalize funds, including foundations (with program-related and corpus investments), banks (with CRA investments), businesses, labor (with pension and HitBit funds), faith institutions, individual investors.*

Another market strategy in rapidly gentrifying urban-core areas is that of land banking in community-held land trusts. The Albuquerque community developed a land trust based on an extensive community-planning exercise that acquired 200 acres of brownfields through eminent domain agreement with the city to do mixed use affordable development in a Latino quarter of the city that was experiencing rapid gentrification. Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement (HCCI) has its vision set on acquiring

### Center for Neighborhood Technology Partners with Chicago Transit to Promote "U Pass" Program

*In Chicago, the Center for Neighborhood Technology proposed a unique partnership between community-based organizations, private and public post-secondary institutions, and the government to increase transit ridership within the city. Twenty colleges and universities participate in the "U" Pass program, adopted by the Chicago Transit Authority. Each educational institution provides bus passes to students as a service of their student activities fee. The system provides a huge infusion of cash for the local public transit agency. In turn, the community benefits in several regards: buses are safer with more riders, students stop driving their cars (reducing congestion, auto emissions, and parking demand), and ridership increases of 10% allow increased frequency of service. (See, Center for Neighborhood Technology website (<http://www.cnt.org>)).*

some of the 30 percent of land in Harlem held by the city due to abandonment, back taxes, toxic waste, etc. The Rockefeller Foundation is supporting HCCI to assess these properties, put together the financing to acquire appropriate parcels for an HCCI land trust, mitigate the brownfields, develop them into affordable housing and community-run enterprises, and utilize the management and utility profits for ongoing community services financing. The Urban Habitat Program in the Bay Area has organized a neighborhood congress representing the 46 low-income neighborhoods of the region to help historic communities direct private and public

resources to avoid the displacement of gentrification. They have chaired the social equity caucus of the Bay Area Alliance for Sustainable Development and worked with support from the Hewlett Foundation to establish a family of private funds to invest in new ventures in these communities.<sup>10</sup>

### Partnering with Private Industry

Foundations can help regional anchors craft development partnerships with the private sector to address regional equity issues. In Milwaukee, the Annie E. Casey Foundation brought powerful private sector players to community partnerships to focus on regional workforce development. The foundation's original initiative, which partnered the Graphic Arts Institute with CBOs to prepare low-income residents to become printers, has expanded into ambitious plans for a major urban-core graphic arts complex that partners employers, community colleges, labor unions and workforce investment boards. This complex is bringing major new investment to older urban core sites.

Community developers who are working to advance these larger-scale community development projects admit their challenges in putting together the scale of deals warranted for their communities.

Philanthropy can play an important role in supporting access to legal and technical experts (engineering firms, planning experts, architects, venture capital advisors, developers, etc.) and intermediaries with community-focused values who can help community organizations be involved in regionalism as highly effective players.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org), [www.urbanhabitat.org](http://www.urbanhabitat.org), and [www.ncedlc.org](http://www.ncedlc.org) to learn more about the Bay Area Capital for Communities Investment Initiative.

<sup>10</sup> Urban Habitat, PolicyLink and the National Economic Development and Law Center have negotiated the terms for these funds to invest in four areas: brownfields development; community enterprises; affordable housing; and capacity building. The Bay Area Partnership, a consortium of the business community, will help capitalize these funds to the tune of \$200-\$250 million.

*“We need to build leadership in different sectors all the time. For instance, anytime we talk about the critical role of public officials at a meeting, they are generally absent. We are not taking enough time to build their capacity.”*

*Peter Beard, Vice President, Fannie Mae Foundation*

## Engaging in Public Education and Media Strategies

The public policy movements to attach equity criteria to public and private investment in regional development are nascent and limited—meaning limited public will is developed in support of these solutions. Philanthropy can play a key role in this development by supporting anchors’ development of education and media activities that frame their strategies and solutions and build public support for them. The most effective regional strategists have developed messages about regional equity that speak to the interests and concerns of a wide cross-section of regional stakeholders and develop a sense of shared responsibility for solutions across the region.

Crafting a message for the public can educate and activate individuals and organizations that care about the issues but do not know how to engage in the debate. Regional research can help frame media messages and media strategies can in turn strategically support campaigns. The L.A. Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) utilized its Ford Foundation supported research identifying that 40% of L.A. working families were below the poverty line to frame the media campaign that led to their living wage victories. Their media work highlighted a different worker’s situation each week, spotlighting problems for working families in several industries and across city council districts. LAANE’s initial victory—requiring contractors to the City of Los Angeles to pay their employees living wages (\$7.94 with health benefits or \$8.94 without benefits)—affected 10,000 workers and translated into annual wage increases of tens of millions of dollars.

The philanthropic scan of how groups were advancing the public debate in relation to sprawl and equity revealed that messages are framed in different ways to capture different interests. Faith-based social equity groups lead the regional equity discussion with the rightness or moral imperative of the situation. For other partners, business strategy may be more appropriate. “A businessman might want to hear that housing near his business stabilizes his work force and lowers his costs,” says Peter Beard, Vice President at Fannie Mae Foundation. “For him, it is a simple business decision, a sound business imperative. You still accomplish the same result when you talk about it from a business perspective, you just frame the issue using self-interest language.”



## Metropolitan Alliance Shapes Public Subsidies

*In Los Angeles, the Metropolitan Alliance took on a campaign to exact community benefits from Hollywood heavy hitter DreamWorks Inc., the new state-of-the-art movie, television, animation, and music corporation founded by Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen. Dreamworks benefits hugely by Los Angeles infrastructure investments. Metro Alliance's campaign won job-training resources for urban-core communities in high tech industries and raised public consciousness about corporate subsidies and public accountability in the Los Angeles community. The media garnered by the agreement planted public perception that something can be done to address the job and income disparities. "These Los Angeles campaigns counter the public perception that 'the market' is a force of nature and that government and public policies have no role in shaping regional economies," said Katherine McFate, Associate Director of Working Communities at The Rockefeller Foundation. "They show the public that their elected officials make decisions every day that affect economic inequality. People in L.A. are no longer accepting the old maxim that what's good for business is good for the community.' Instead, they are asking, 'who in the region—and who won't—benefit from the public subsidies associated with a particular development project? How can the benefits of these public investments be more broadly shared?"*

## Engaging Public Officials to Promote Regional Equity

While public programs may be the targets for legislative and administrative changes that can deliver equity outcomes, tremendous opportunity exists to develop and support public officials' engagement in promoting regional equity.

Some public officials willingly play a leadership role by raising regional equity issues in the interest of their constituents. Jesse Jackson Jr. represents a Congressional District from the South Side of Chicago, whose constituents range from white suburban to middle class Black to the poorest urban neighborhoods. "He understands that he will not get re-elected without social and economic equity as part of his agenda," says Rebecca Riley, formerly with the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. "Part of [philanthropy's] agenda needs to be building an educated citizenry to support bold political leadership on these issues." In Oregon, Congressman Earl Blumenauer is investigating how to use federal capital budget decisions to positive effect, asking how the placement of post offices and other federal facilities can elicit positive regional implications. In Cook County, Illinois, the Tax Assessor has played a major fiscal reform role in pulling together all the metropolitan mayors to rationalize tax and revenue experiences.

While few public officials have actively embraced equity as an important aspect of smart growth efforts, philanthropic work is contributing to the development of public officials as leaders in this agenda. For example, Fannie Mae donated one year of staff time to The Center for Policy Alternatives to cultivate a network of public officials around housing equity. They are currently working with African American public officials in the South to build their capacity on an affordable housing agenda.

*“We think we can have more impact if the local can relate to the region, the region to the state, the state to national.”*

*C.J. Callen, Senior Program Officer, the Tides Foundation*

Where there is excellent public leadership, foundations can support the capacity development of community-based groups to participate. In California, State Treasurer Phil Angelides adopted regional equity criteria for the spending of low-income housing tax credits and in state Treasury investment screens. Several California programs now incorporate equity components in eligibility criteria that favor organizations working to meet the needs of low-income and inner-city communities.<sup>11</sup> While few nonprofit groups currently have the capacity to put together deals on the scale that the state invests, philanthropy is investing to build that capacity.

Community-based anchor organizations also can be key partners in efforts of state and local government officials to more fairly address the infrastructure needs of inner cities and older suburbs as part of a comprehensive revitalization strategy. The Annie E. Casey’s Seattle Jobs Initiative is coordinated by the City of Seattle’s Office of Economic Development, a governmental intermediary. Because the lead anchor for the initiative is a government entity, the Seattle project has been able to leverage public money to promote workforce development in that community.<sup>12</sup> In Chicago, the Delta Institute leads the Regional Dialogue on Clean Air and Redevelopment, a partnership of environmental and community development leaders with the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The campaign has worked to develop practical strategies for improving air quality throughout the Chicago region.<sup>13</sup>

#### Building Block #4: Implementing, Monitoring and Enforcing Outcomes

Winning a specific regional equity campaign begins a process or reorienting development directions. Because it creates a new distribution strategy, it often requires new mechanisms or entities to implement the gain. After winning several living wage ordinances in the region, LAANE helped the City of Los Angeles devise monitoring systems to track public contractors and subsidy-recipients. Together, the agency and the anchor built community oversight into the system as a way to continue enhancing civic engagement in regional equity.

Foundations that emphasize civic engagement in their equity funding—like the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Joyce Foundation—cite such implementation practices as one criterion they evaluate in their grantmaking decisions. “We consider it the best practice,” said Victor Quintana at Veatch, “when implementation creates another organizing opportunity for the community.”

<sup>11</sup> California State Treasurer’s website (<http://www.treasurer.ca.gov>).

<sup>12</sup> Seattle Jobs Initiative website (<http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/oed/sji>).

<sup>13</sup> Delta Institute website (<http://www.delta-institute.org>).

## Benchmarking Success

As anchors succeed in developing and advancing regional equity agendas, scale begins to build in knitting the interests of local communities to larger policy outcomes. Success at the regional level positions groups to have larger impacts on the economy.

Successful local working communities can broaden to a regional campaign with strong anchors championing the efforts. The Harlem Community Congregations Initiative (HCCI), a consortium of 100 congregations, successfully has developed 600 units of housing as part of a community revitalization effort. Now HCCI is assessing the City-held land in Harlem (over 30% of the community lands) to develop their land trust goal for the community. (See page 6.) The Oakland-based Unity Council's shepherding of transit-oriented development in the historically Latino (and diversifying) Fruitvale district is now moving to replication in the greater Bay Area by the appointment of Unity's executive director to the Metropolitan Transit Commission's board of directors. Three more community-driven transit-oriented plans are now being considered for approval.

The burgeoning transportation movement brings environmental and social equity leaders into regional transportation coalitions and ties the regional work to a national agenda. The Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), a key anchor and intermediary in advancing equity and conservation within transportation planning, both conducts and imparts capacity to coalitions across the country. In the national arena, STPP and the Center for Community Change support the Transportation Equity Network (TEN) with research and capacity. As a national coalition of grassroots and faith-based organizations working to improve transportation services for poor communities, TEN opens up the transportation planning process to more effective grassroots participation.

### Citizen's Planning and Housing Association Builds Regional Campaign Out of Transportation Reform Efforts

*Five years ago, the Citizen's Planning and Housing Association, a 60-year veteran of battles on behalf of Baltimore City neighborhoods, began to shift toward regional perspectives. After reviewing data assembled by Myron Orfield on the region, they hypothesized that there was a strong potential to form an urban/suburban coalition around transportation reform. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, CPHA partnered with neighborhood groups and community development corporations from Baltimore City and the five adjacent counties. Their Campaign for Regional Solutions engaged in both regional planning and state legislative processes to boost mass transit and cancel a \$200 million outer-suburban bypass highway that failed to address equity issues. Having successfully taken on the regional transportation issue, the Campaign has crafted an agenda of specific regional strategies that hold promise for ensuring the long-term vitality of the Baltimore region and will build a region-wide constituency of support for that agenda's implementation. Included in its agenda is work to develop a vision plan for the Baltimore region to build on Maryland Governor Glendening's smart growth initiative. (See, Citizen's Planning and Housing Association website (<http://www.CPHARegionalCampaign.org>)).*

Regional anchors that have achieved significant success constantly balance the investment of institutional resources with the potential for delivering concrete gains for their member constituencies. As their grantees have become disciplined in advancing strategic work, foundations have begun to develop benchmarks that help identify the measures of success that effective regional anchors are

accomplishing. The benchmarks philanthropy identified through this survey include:

- Achievement of specific constituency targets for regional alliances:
  - new organizational partners;
  - growing constituency of members;
  - geographical and identity-based targets.
- Meeting specific goals for advancement of breadth and depth of leadership representing communities of color:
  - leadership training focused on regional equity campaigns;
  - formation of social equity caucuses in regional planning bodies;
  - committee seats on planning, zoning, transportation, and economic development bodies filled by community-based representatives.
- Increased ability to frame and accomplish action-oriented research:
  - development of research capacity within anchor organizations and through community-university partnerships;
  - framing of regional inequities through sophisticated research;
  - issuance of policy-related research that has strategic impact on public policy decisions.
- Identification of specific policy targets:
  - effective case made for public policy change;
  - strategic education, organizing, and mobilization work conducted with partners.
- Achievement of policy gains:
  - reallocation of spending;
  - specific new resources to targeted communities;
  - new systems in region to advance equity (e.g. transportation access).

### Smart Growth America fosters federal policy change

*Smart Growth America, a nascent entity launched to coordinate advocacy efforts at the national level, is dedicated to bringing together environmental, equity, community development and transportation proponents.*

*SGA grew out of the efforts of the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), which successfully coordinated local transit groups to get the federal Intermodal Transportation Equity Act passed through Congress—ensuring community participation in transportation planning at the regional level and directing more spending toward public transit.*

*Steering committee organizations include STPP, PolicyLink, Environmental Justice Resource Center, Urban Habitat Program, Enterprise Foundation, National Neighborhood Coalition, Sierra Club, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Nature Conservancy, and the Center for Neighborhood Technology.*

*SGA's aim: to move other federal bills to promote community involvement and racial and environmental equity in program allocation for Smart Growth.*

- Increase in public scope of communications work:
  - heightened visibility in strategic media markets;
  - increased recognition as reputable change makers for equity.

Accomplishment in these arenas marks the maturing of a field of innovative community anchors that can promote regional equity. With the necessary components and strategies now recognized, philanthropy can play a key role in building the scale of efforts and the scope of institutions involved in shaping the next generation of development in metropolitan communities.

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## Strengthening the Role of Funders in the Promotion of Regional Equity

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Grantmakers from a variety of disciplines are playing critical leadership roles in the advancement of regional solutions to problems of growth, environmental degradation and poverty. Philanthropy now must move these efforts to scale by more rapidly and systematically bringing community builders and equity advocates into the shaping of the smart growth movement. While the prior section reviews successes made possible in part by philanthropic support, this section documents promising practices within philanthropy itself that were identified through this survey.

- national foundations that choose a specific regional focus and those that do operational work in their home-city communities function well in local regional-equity roles;
- clusters of foundations that work in a region can be effective and coordinated supporters for larger planning and policy frameworks; and
- national foundations and affinity groups of funders that support key components of regional equity are well situated to spread best practices to many regions.

### Orient Internal And External Practices to Promote Regional Equity

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Among those foundations that utilize a regional analysis in their grantmaking, some have moved to formally embrace a regional equity agenda within their foundations' structure, while others utilize the analysis to inform their issue-focused programs. A wide range of institutional experiences informs the approaches foundations can take to advance equity strategies. Some foundations have formally oriented their policies and grantmaking mechanisms to help the foundation promote regional equity outcomes. The majority of funders who support regional equity are engaged in more informal internal practices of broadening their cross-portfolio grantmaking. Most foundations are new to applying a regional analysis to their internal thinking in support of equity work.

The trends identified among funding leaders who utilize a regional analysis in their grantmaking were these:

- community foundations are well situated to provide regional equity support due to their geographic focus and intimate knowledge of equity and human services advocates;

### Develop Internal Knowledge of the Field

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A big challenge for national foundation staff is the ability to acquire an informed sensibility of communities' dynamics in all of the regions where they make grants. In an effort to meet this challenge, many foundations have been directing their own research to help inform their institutions and the fields they are trying to influence. When The Annie E. Casey Foundation undertook an eight-year project on workforce development at six sites throughout the country, they commissioned technical expertise to guide them on how to do regional analysis for workforce development. The Ford Foundation, which seeded significant early regional equity work, recently completed a mapping assessment to identify organizations and expertise nationally that are advancing regional equity.

At the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Chicago regional program officer coordinated sessions where the country's leading proponents of regional equity could present their research and analysis to the entire program staff and board of directors. This process led the foundation to create a formal team structure within the

*“Our collaborative grants program looks at projects that have a nexus between and among foundation programs. Over time, it has been the impetus for program officers to discuss with one another promising projects and a joint opportunity to do grantmaking.”*

*Alvertha Penny,  
Program Officer for Family and Community Development,  
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*

foundation to review regional equity grant applications. Staffed by program officers from across all major issue areas, this regional team provides the opportunity to discuss the relevancy of projects across portfolios, to share grant-making resources, and to more comprehensively address regional issues as they develop.

Foundations utilize forums on regionalism as one vehicle to bring together grantees from different program areas to think in integrated ways about community concerns. Funders have learned that there are opportunities for collaboration within many of the program areas that they cover, including programs focused on diversity, race, civil rights, environment, community development, community organizing, land use, and workforce development.

Some funders partner across portfolios and substantive areas to jointly fund grantees pursuing regional equity agendas. At the Hewlett Foundation, staff contribute to a series of what they call “collaborative grants,” which allow program officers to jointly fund grantees across program areas. They recently partnered three program units: Environment, Community and Family Development, and Conflict Resolution to support regional work across several neighborhoods of San Francisco.

## Collaborate Among Foundations

Addressing issues within a regional context offers foundations working within the same region the opportunity to work together around common concerns. This collaboration between funders can strengthen institutional support for regional equity agendas. For example, the MacArthur Foundation partnered with four other funders from the Chicago and Great Lakes region over monthly lunch meetings on regional issues. Each of the funders was engaged in regional portfolio development and the monthly opportunity supported their internal work, their work within the field, and collaboration amongst them.

Together, the five funders have conducted educational forums through their Regional Association of Grantmakers. They jointly funded a number of big projects on transportation, housing and air quality within the region. They currently are collaborating on interviewing major nonprofit leaders in the area to see how regional work can be sustained on a greater scale.

Partnerships among foundations can leverage philanthropy’s investments in building community infrastructure and jump-start efforts to begin regional planning around human development, not just around physical development issues like water and transportation. The Mott Foundation is coordinating a regional focus on Michigan land use planning that includes this human development perspective. Program officers from Mott have networked with other funders in the area to assess environmental and racial equity in the region. While they have a long way to go to solve the environmental issues that divide rural and urban communities, they are working proactively with practitioners to identify the equity issues involved.

Within larger philanthropic gatherings, funders have utilized affinity groups to advance more comprehensive or interdisciplinary partnerships across foundations and substantive areas. The Environmental

Grantmakers Association (EGA) has a policy meeting every year that alternates between a state and a federal focus. At their last meeting, EGA invited program officers from economic and community development programs to raise issues of green development and of economic development's relationship to water quality. The Neighborhood Funders Group hosts regular sessions at its annual conference and at the Council on Foundations that highlight the role of regional equity. They are activist philanthropic proponents working to build the labor movement in partnership with community as one mechanism to deliver more regional equity. And the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities brings together funders with practitioners who have pioneered strategies in their own communities. Together in a "Learning Action Network," these groups are examining the larger policy implications that can advance their work.

The Learning Action Network participants together identified necessary strategies to advance the field and are actively pursuing their development, including:

- concerted outreach and education to environmental, civil rights, and community development groups to promote their focus on equity and regionalism;
- development of an "equity-impact" tool that communities can utilize to determine if regional plans and specific developments advance or deter equity within a region;
- development of case studies and documentation of best practices to develop the field; and
- development of regional and national research agendas that can advance policy development.

While regional equity work is moving closer to the forefront of the agenda for many foundations, the majority of funders have yet to consider the opportunities of the smart growth movement in shaping the next twenty to fifty years of communities' quality of life. Just as community-based organizations are challenged to look outside the neighborhood to the region and beyond, community foundations can similarly challenge themselves to move from a neighborhood focus to a focus on neighborhoods as part of a region. Finding ways to bring more foundations to the regional equity discussion will enhance the strength of community in regional planning. There need to be partnerships of community foundations and national funders to support community-based strategies to advance low-income communities' stake in regional equity outcomes.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

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As our analysis of the past fifty years of development has shown—that public policy has promoted sprawl and discriminated against and unfairly burdened urban core communities—the next five years offer the chance to craft a different world. Working in partnership with community leaders to forge new solutions, philanthropy can ensure that equity is at the center of that playing field for the next fifty years.

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on community foundation leadership, see the recent report published by the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities called "Leading the Field: Profiles of Community Foundation Leadership in Smart Growth and Livable Communities."











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