mayors innovation project

7 STEPS TO MUNICIPAL RESILIENCE & RECOVERY

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INTRODUCTION

What can municipal governments (counties, cities and towns), still suffering from all the pain and disruption that COVID has brought to their communities and economies, do now to hasten their recovery and build resilience for the future, while also addressing past inequity? Here are seven essential steps to take, all proven, with real-world examples and implementation examples for each, that complement each other and can be done simultaneously.

All municipal governments have the power to start on them right now. So why not start today?

We recognize that not all of you have the home rule and local control powers that provide adequate regulatory and revenue freedom. We also know that all of you are operating within bigger private and public systems, sanctioned by law, with widely distributed veto or blocking powers on your attempts at public service. But we also assume that

- you want to build a prosperous, inclusive, sustainable, stable home for your residents, businesses and civic institutions;
- you've identified priorities in doing that work now, a sense of your current assets and liabilities (financial, legal, civic) in doing that work;
- you're willing to lead and take risks in doing so, but also recognize that success requires inviting, enabling, and organizing contribution from a diverse network of local actors, and
- you know that effective reform requires clear continuous communication of WHY it's being done and adjustment to feedback on HOW; both recommend specificity, incrementalism, and "walking in the shoes" of residents.

If these assumptions are correct, these seven steps are for you.

1. Make recovery everyone's business
2. Advance equity and opportunity for all
3. Unleash your local economy
4. Zone for equitable and sustainable neighborhoods
5. Speed & broaden delivery of essential services while *saving* money
6. Leave no dollar behind
7. Build a readiness culture

NOTE: We've tried to order the recommended actions in each section by degree of difficulty (easiest to hardest) or natural sequence (learning to walk before trying to run, much less bike).

ONE: MAKE RECOVERY EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Actions

- Create an inclusive task force of public and nongovernmental leaders to create a home-grown recovery strategy[1]
- Create a performance dashboard to track and monitor health and economic status, and signal both accomplishments and needed additional actions[2]
- Create a focused team to support especially threatened sectors such as the service industry and the arts[3]
- Secure direct support from your regional agencies and states for emerging priorities[4]
- Contract with community- based, civic and local research centers (independent, university, news media) to provide early warnings of threats to public health and economic stability[5]
- Create and use local government technical assistance and programs at regional agencies and in emerging state and multi-state initiatives[6]

Implementation Resources

[1] City of Chicago, Report of the Chicago Recovery Task Force; Crain's Chicago Business, Scott Bernstein, The Recovery of Our Region Requires Collective Intent

[2] PHEAL, Planning for Health Equity, Action and Leadership—A Guide for the COVID-19 Era; Healthy People 2020 Environmental Objectives; Chicago Health Atlas, Healthy Chicago 2.0 Dashboard

[3] City of Huntsville AL, COVID-19 Musicians Guide, Sound Diplomacy Huntsville Music Strategy; City of Boston, COVID-19 High Road Kitchens Restaurant Relief Fund

[4] Atlanta Regional Commission, Atlanta Livable Centers Initiative, Streetsblog, Using Highway $ for Complete Streets

[5] Asset Based Community Development Institute, Guidebooks and Case Studies to Identifying and Mobilizing Community Assets

[6] California Strategic Growth Council, Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Grants from Greenhouse Gas Cap-and-Trade Auction, Transportation & Climate Initiative, 12-State Consortium Formed to Reduce Transportation Emissions and Support Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Communities, South Coast Air Quality Management District, Making Clean Trucks Affordable for Independent Owner-Operators, Boston Public Radio, Neighborhood Scale Climate Change Readiness

TWO: ADVANCE EQUITY AND OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

Actions

- Apply a racial equity lens in recovery and rebuild (and strategic) plans, with strong indicators and accountability[1]
- Utilize tools that help establish delivery strategies to promote health, equity, poverty reduction, and economic inclusion.[2]
- Eliminate or reduce municipal fines and fees that inequitably impact low-income residents[3]
- Understand the eviction problem in your city and implement key steps to prevent eviction[4]
- Create new avenues for public engagement and resident participation in city governance[5]
- Explore piloting a Universal Basic Income program[6]

Implementation Resources

[1] City of Seattle, Racial and Social Justice Initiative; Government Alliance on Race and Equity, Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government.

[2] Center for Neighborhood Technology, Urban Opportunity Agenda (poverty reduction strategy and benefits calculator); City Presentations.

[3] National League of Cities, Why Cities Should Find Equitable Ways to Impose and Collect Fines and Fees; Urban Libraries Council, How Eliminating Library Fees Advances Racial Equity; St. Louis Office of Financial Empowerment (children's saving accounts funded through parking fines).
[4] Mayors Innovation Project, The Housing Crisis: What Cities Can Do; National League of Cities, Using Data to Understand Your Local Eviction Crisis; Grand Rapids, MI, Eviction Prevention.
[5] GovTech for Localized Surveys & Citizen Engagement, Polco; Innovations in Citizen Participation, Modernizing Democracy
[6] Mayors for a Guaranteed Income

THREE: UNLEASH YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY

Actions

- Support "buy local" and "invest local" with procurement practices and incentives, especially in historically underserved communities[1]
- Affirmatively support your town's small businesses, prioritizing women and BIPOC businesses[2]
- Lead and partner in the supply of essential goods and services [3]
- Lower procurement barriers to partnerships that promise increased efficiency and/or broader opportunity[4]
- Lower barriers to consolidated, joint, or cooperative purchasing and procurement[5]
- Support "informal" approaches to otherwise expensive development and services[6]
- Procure through partnering (e.g. keep the community in Community Policing)[7]
- Create and support a cadre of small builder-developers[8]
- Support and advance employee ownership[9]

Implementation Resources

[1] Chicago Dept. of Planning & Development, Chicago Neighborhood Opportunity Fund Supports Local Businesses and Commercial Corridors; Governing, In Government Procurement, Buying Local Is Popular. But Is It Beneficial?
[2] Institute for Local Self-Reliance, Safeguarding Small Business During The Pandemic: 26 Strategies For Local Leaders; City of Boston Small Business Plan
[3] Supply Chain Dive, Spending more on local sourcing mitigates socioeconomic and health disparities; Freight Pop, Dynamic, Pop-Up & On-Demand Warehouses; Medium, Project N95 is Here to Help State and Local Governments Address the PPE Shortage; State of CA, Safely Making California; Social Procurement in Victoria AU

[4] Mayors Innovation Project, Contracting; Government Alliance on Race and Equity, Contracting for Equity; Meeting of the Minds, Five Takeaways from Procurement Innovation in Glasgow,; Governing, Bringing Innovation to Procurement, Innovative Procurement in Philadelphia and Barcelona

[5] Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning, Partnerships for Sharing Services, Lake County Illinois, Joint and Cooperative Purchasing, Northwest Municipal Conference, Suburban Purchasing Cooperative, American Public Power Association, National Directory of Public Power Joint Action Agencies

[6] Island Press 2020, DIY City: The Collective Power of Small Actions; Makeshift Mobility Newsletter

[7] US Dept. of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Service, Community Policing Defined; Community Based Alternatives to Policing in California

[8] Incremental Development Alliance, Helping locals strengthen their neighborhoods through small-scale real estate projects; Evanston Developers Cooperative: Built by and For Evanston

[9] Democracy Collaborative, Expanding Democratic Ownership; Imagined Economy Project, Cities Developing Worker Coops: Efforts in Ten Cities; City of Rochester NY, OWN Rochester

FOUR: ZONE FOR EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Actions

- Support outdoor dining and develop outdoor design guidelines[1]
- Create open streets and non-vehicle priority areas and encourage rain gardens and tree-planting to quickly improve neighborhood life while "greening"[2]
- Expedite building and zoning permitting[3]
- Support tradeoff of parking spaces for parklets[4]
- Support and create outdoor shopping, learning, and places of worship[5]
- Reduce or remove parking and lot size minimums[6]
- Adopt common sense, "lean" zoning codes[7]
- Develop and support rent-to-own initiatives[8]
- Allow and support in-home businesses[9]
- Allow and support Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs)[10]
- Allow and support Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)[11]
- Eliminate or soften legacy rules on permissible number of unrelated persons living in a single home or apartment[12]
- Develop and support use of a tiny home code[13]

Implementation Resources

[1] Placemakers LLC, Pandemic Toolkit: Manual for Rebuilding Community Health & Opportunity Post-COVID

[2] U.S. National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Streets for Pandemic Response and Recovery; Federation of Canadian Municipalities' COVID-19 Street Rebalancing Guide; Open Street Plans Database of Cities with Open Streets (383 cities as of October 30, 2020); EPA, Soak Up the Rain; Louisville, KY Green Heart Project, Accelerated Tree Canopy Replacement & Health Impacts

[3] Codes Study: Trends in Zoning Reform; Green & Solar Permit Incentives; DC Accelerated Plan Review

[4] Done through sponsored competition, and/or better procurement, and/or guidance (NACTO, AARP, NAR, Tulsa). Case examples: Athens-Clarke County GA, Chicago IL, San Francisco CA, Washington DC

[5] Happy City and Canadian Urban Institute's Rapid Placemaking to Bring Back Main Street: A Pandemic Recovery Toolkit for Local Communities

[6] Minneapolis Eliminates SF Zoning; King County Right Size Parking Rules and Calculator; Green Trip Connect Sustainability Certification Bay Area CA; Center for Neighborhood Technology, Stalled Out

Accelerated Tree Canopy Replacement & Health Impacts

[7] Placemakers, Lean Code Tool (provides model slimmed down zoning codes); Congress for a New Urbanism, Project for Code Reform (organizes state and national assistances for smaller cities and towns' efforts to expedite improved zoning codes, including major elements for main streets, housing, green infrastructure for stormwater management and parking; sample manual and code provisions for Vermont towns at www.cnu.org/vermont); Enabling Better Places: A Zoning Guide for Vermont Neighborhoods, Stormwater, pp. 51-52

[8] Resident-Owned Communities, Independent Study Shows Resident Owned Communities Grow More Affordable Every Year; Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, Building Affordability Through Cooperation

[9] Project for Lean Urbanism, Leaning Toward Live-Work Units

[10] Fast Company, Put Tiny Businesses Back into Neighborhoods

[11] American Planning Association, Accessory Dwelling Units (includes guides, case studies, model ordinances); AARP, The ABCs of ADUs; Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Granny Flat Academy (links to presentation and training materials)

[12] Pew Trusts, Nearly One in Three Adults are Doubled Up in Housing, National Directory of Home Sharing and Home Matching Programs, Federal Court Rules Local Government Occupancy Limitation Illegal

[13] Building Safety Journal, The International Residential Code Has a Big Vision for Tiny Homes

FIVE: SPEED UP & BROADEN DELIVERY OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES WHILE *SAVING* MONEY

Actions

- Provide a lifeline package of broadband services[1]
- Transition public service provision from cash to touchless transactions, transition in-person permit applications to online services [2]
- Lower barriers to providing "shared package" consolidation and alternative supply chain services[3]
- Support micro-mobility for better connections and first-last mile accessibility, and bundle one-stop payment for combined on-demand and transit services[4]
- Expand transit frequency & hours of service, calibrate routes to demand[5]
- Offer one-stop packages (appropriate rates + advice + financing + contractors) for basic energy & water services including conservation, clean energy and community-scale solutions[6]

Implementation Resources

[1] Econsult, COVID 19: Cities and Municipal Broadband; Broadband Now, Report on State Barriers or Roadblocks; Community Municipal Networks, Status and Updated Plans; Directory of 331 current community or municipal networks and pricing

[2] Global Newswire, Big Growth in Contactless from Pandemic

[3] State Smart Transportation Initiative, Getting the Goods Without the Bads: Freight Transportation Demand Management Strategies to Improve Urban Impacts; Center for Neighborhood Technology, Cargo Oriented Development; ACEEE, Smart Freight; USEPA, SmartWay Best Freight & Supply Chain Practices

[4] Shared Use Mobility Center, New Urban Mobility Alliance, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Communities, Micromobility Policy Atlas (Provides case studies and policies from 100 cities)

[5] The Transit Center, Bus Stop Balancing and A Transit Agenda for the COVID-19 Emergency, Boulder, CO, Making Neighborhoods AND Employees Eligible for Prepaid Discounted Transit Passes; Houston revamp of regional transit

[6] Center for Neighborhood Technology, Creating a Chicago Regional Energy Efficiency System; NPR, Tenant Flooding Risks; CNT, Increasing Funding and Financing Options for Sustainable Stormwater Infrastructure; Mayors Innovation Project, Guide for Integrated Water Management

SIX: LEAVE NO DOLLAR BEHIND

Actions

- Don't miss the opportunity to include short-term recovery assistance in current and pending Community Reinvestment Act agreements, or in actions by public employee and other pension funds[1]
- Work with "essential" sectors to take advantage of emergency & recovery resources (e.g. flexible funding provision in CARES for health recovery, flexible funding in FAST Act for transportation dollars, use of regional capital dollars by Metropolitan Planning Organizations, stormwater agencies, utilities and Publicly Owned Treatment Works)[2]
- Provide or support assistance with tax filing and counseling that focuses on cost reduction[3]
- Create "forbearance partnerships" with lenders and creditors to restructure home and business debt worsened by COVID-induced economic crisis[4]
- Create and use locally-responsible banking ordinances targeting city banking with lenders who "greenline" or meet public policy targets[5]
- Get your state to use their own depository authority to support your town's initiatives, including linked deposit investment programs & mortgage forbearance[6]

Implementation Resources

[1] Illinois Treasurer, Access To Capital
[2] Federal Reserve Board, Federal Community Development and Small Business COVID-19 Assistance Resources; Eno Center, Transferability Percentages in Federal Funding, p.21; NEUAC, Energy Affordability Practices and COVID-19 and COVID-19 FAQ
[3] National League of Cities, Earned Income Tax Credit in Your City
[4] State of Michigan, Michigan Forbearance Partnership
[5] National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Summary of Local Responsible Banking Ordinances
[6] Illinois Treasurer, Community Development Linked Deposits; WXYZ, Michigan Mortgage Forbearance Partnership; Housing Wire, Explaining Mortgage Forbearance

SEVEN: BUILD A READINESS CULTURE

Actions

- Repeatedly confirm and communicate community consensus on shared goals, existing plan to get there, progress on that plan and efficiency in getting there, and any needed changes[1]
- Always be open to exploring proven low-cost, fast, and high-impact strategies for innovation[2]
- Use your and your State's "emergency declaration" powers to get things done in the community's interest if community behind them[3]
- Adopt a lean and flexible municipal ethic based on need, data-informed experiment, and recursive learning, always open to feedback from residents[4]
- Prioritize "fix it first" policies and leverage medium term opportunities around economic recovery, health and climate protection, and anticipate new policies that reward readiness[5]

Implementation Resources

[1] Urban3, Data-Driven Storytelling, Chmura, County Economic Vulnerability Index; New York Times, Cities' Fiscal Shortfall from Pandemic Recession; National Tax Association, The Fiscal Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Cities: An Initial Assessment, Envisio, Productive Places in a Post-Pandemic Era

[2] GovLabPHL, The Philadelphia Behavioral Science Initiative; Bloomberg Cities, The Future of City Innovation; Moves the Needle, Hayward, CA Case Study on Lean Innovation.

[3] NGA, Gubernatorial Authority to Remove Legal Barriers During a Declared Emergency; Coates' Canons, COVID-19: Who Has What Emergency Authority at the Local Level (North Carolina)

[4] USA Today, Using RVs to Free Up Scarce Hospital Beds; CNU, Is Hospital Oriented Development the Next Big Thing?; Democracy Collaborative, Reimagining Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply Chains

[5] CARES Act, Flexible funding for quarantine & recovery facilities, stockpiles, supply chains; HEROES Act, Various Energy, Water, Wastewater Affordability Provisions; LIFT Act, Title III, Subtitle B Re-authorizing Environmental and Energy Conservation Block Grants