



DESIGNING FOR EXTREMES

WINTER 2020 POLICY MEETING JANUARY 24 - 25, WASHINGTON, DC

Cities on the high road proactively address the uneven distribution of resources, and will thus often pursue targeted and focused interventions to address the needs of specific populations. In doing so, they can build solutions that have far-reaching benefits beyond that target population. By using the principle of “designing for extremes,” communities can create policies that have positive outcomes for everyone. This session will feature the work of cities whose policies have tackled challenges that more directly affect specific populations and have, consequently, improved their community more broadly. The discussion will focus in the areas of housing, transportation, and public health.



RESOURCES

PAGE

1

Angela Glover Blackwell, “The Curb-Cut Effect,” Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2017.

9

Paula Bisiau, “How to design cities for and by women,” apolitical, October 28, 2019.

11

Patrick Sisson, “How kid-friendly urban design makes cities better for all,” Curbed, December 12, 2017.

13

Jennifer Medina, “A Novel Solution for the Homeless: House Them in Backyards,” The New York Times, October 29, 2018.

17

“Age Strong Public Awareness Campaign Launched,” City of Boston, MA, September 24, 2019.

19

John Henderson, “Tiny houses in Fayetteville? City leaders think it may be a solution for homeless,” The Fayetteville Observer, October 8, 2019.

21

Jakob Rodgers, “Community approach to target teen substance abuse in Fountain,” The Gazette, February 26, 2017.

23

“Experience Matters for Livability,” AARP Livable Communities, June 5, 2019.

25

William Kucinski, “City of Grand Rapids begins year-long autonomous vehicle trial,” SAE International, July 26, 2019.

SPEAKERS

MAYOR ROSALYNN BLISS, GRAND RAPIDS, MI

Mayor Rosalynn Bliss became the City of Grand Rapids’ first female Mayor when she took office on January 1, 2016. She previously served as a Second Ward City Commissioner for 10 years. Mayor Bliss is also Grand Valley State University’s endowed chair for the Frederik Meijer Honors College. She earned bachelor’s degrees in psychology and criminal justice from the University of South Alabama and a master’s in social work from Michigan State University. She has over twenty years of experience in the fields of domestic violence and child welfare before serving as Mayor. Mayor Bliss is an active member of the community. She is Past President of the Michigan Municipal League and serves on the boards of the Downtown Development Authority, Experience Grand Rapids, Convention Arena Authority, Economic Club of Grand Rapids, Mayor’s Innovation Project and Interurban Transit Partnership, among many other organizations.

Mayor Bliss has been recognized and honored locally as well as statewide for her commitment, dedication and work in the field of child abuse and neglect and for her leadership in the community. Recognitions include WMCAT's Award for Innovation; Kathryn Timmer Literacy Award; Crain's 100 Most Influential Women; Grand Rapids Business Journal's 50 Most Influential Women in West Michigan; Five-time recipient of Grand Rapids Business Journal's 40 Under Forty distinction; West Michigan Public Relations Society of America's Communicator of the Year Award; ATHENA Young Professional Award; Tim Pope Memorial Award for Outstanding Young Governmental Leader; Christine Nelson Professional Award for Service to Children; and Michigan Professional Society on the Abuse of Children Special Recognition Award.

As Mayor, she is committed to supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs as well as addressing disparities in our community and making sure that Grand Rapids is a great place for everyone.

MAYOR MITCH COLVIN, FAYETTEVILLE, NC

Mitch Colvin is a native of Fayetteville with a passion for helping to improve the City. He was elected Mayor in November 2017. Prior to that, he served two consecutive terms on City Council as a Council Member for District 3 from 2013-15 and from 2015-17. In 1995, at the age of 21, Mr. Colvin assumed the operational leadership of Colvin Funeral Home, Inc. He still leads the operation of Colvin Funeral Home, Inc. today, helping residents in their time of need. At the time he assumed control, the company was experiencing significant financial and regulatory distress. Mr. Colvin learned at an early age that being in business is not easy. Over the last 20 years, he has worked to build a strong, community-oriented business, restore goodwill and address remaining legacy issues. Today, his company is a market leader in funeral home service calls. Mr. Colvin believes that hard work and commitment in the face of adversity is crucial to survival in business and life.

Mayor Colvin's vision is to help Fayetteville prepare for the future by building a viable work force, investing in infrastructure and expanding our City's connection to the global economy. He is placing a strong emphasis on economic development; education and training; and the creation of a safe and secure community. In 2019, Mayor Colvin welcomed Segra to Fayetteville as they will expand their fiber optics business in the city. The Mayor hopes that Segra will be able to improve fiber optic connectivity for current businesses and that Segra can help attract new businesses to Fayetteville.

In fiscal year 2020, he is committed to the Targets for Action that Council selected during its Strategic Planning Retreat: Redevelopment and business growth of the Murchison Road corridor; Comprehensive Land Use Map; Community Revitalization: Commercial and Residential; Poverty; Internship Program; Young Adult Engagement Program; Stormwater improvements; Railroad crossing safety; and Broadband connectivity.

Mayor Colvin is also committed to unity in the community by working with other local government organizations on partnerships and projects to improve Fayetteville and Cumberland County. The City and County agreed to an interlocal funding agreement for the new downtown baseball stadium, and PWC also extended a funding agreement with the City on the Franklin Street Parking Deck.

Education includes John Tyler Mortuary College (Associate of Arts in Funeral Service) and Fayetteville State University (Bachelor of Arts in Sociology).



MAYOR GABRIEL ORTEGA, FOUNTAIN, CO

Gabriel Ortega is a lifelong and fifth generation resident of Fountain, Colorado, and is in his second and last term as Mayor of The City of Fountain. He has served his community on the Fountain City Council for 14 years as a Council Member, Mayor Pro Tem and then Mayor. Prior to his tenure on the Council, Mr. Ortega also served for one year on the City Planning Commission.

Mayor Ortega has additionally served on both the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments and The Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control & Greenway District. He is a founding board member with the Fountain Creek District, and also served as the Board's Chairmen during his tenure.

Outside of politics, Mayor Ortega is a Middle School Special Education Teacher, and has educated and developed students with disabilities at all levels, kindergarten through high school, for over 24 years. He is married 20 years to Abby Ortega, who serves as a Water Resources Manager with Colorado Springs Utilities. They have three children, Isabella, Sofia and Nicholas. Mr. Ortega enjoys the Colorado outdoors, to include fishing, hiking, nature photography, camping, hunting and target shooting.

Education includes School Administrator Licensure – University of Denver; Master of Arts in Special Education – University of Colorado at Colorado Springs 1999; Bachelor of Science in Sports Medicine – Colorado State University 1996; and Graduated from Fountain-Fort Carson High School 1991.



The Curb-Cut Effect

Laws and programs designed to benefit vulnerable groups, such as the disabled or people of color, often end up benefiting all of society.

By [Angela Glover Blackwell](#) Winter 2017

One evening in the early 1970s, Michael Pachovas and a few friends wheeled themselves to a curb in Berkeley, Calif., poured cement into the form of a crude ramp, and rolled off into the night.¹ For Pachovas and his fellow disability advocates, it was a political act, a gesture of defiance. “The police threatened to arrest us,” Pachovas recalls. “But they didn’t.”² It was also pragmatic. Despite their unevenness, the makeshift sloping curbs provided the disabled community with something invaluable: mobility.

At the time, getting around Berkeley—or any American city—in a wheelchair was not easy. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 required government buildings to make themselves universally accessible, but traversing the streets in a wheelchair resembled the running of an obstacle course: Wheel to the driveway in an alley or at a loading dock; roll into the street until you reached another driveway; hope all the while that a truck didn’t pull out. Students with disabilities at the University of California, Berkeley, housed in Cowell Hospital—the only space that could accommodate them³—planned their class schedule according to which class was downhill from the previous one.

Yet this was Berkeley in the era of political activism. There was a Free Speech Movement, an antiwar movement, a civil rights movement. Why not a movement for movement? Pressed by disabled activists, in 1972 the city installed its first official “curb cut” at an intersection on Telegraph Avenue.⁴ It would become, in the words of a Berkeley advocate, “the slab of concrete heard ’round the world.”⁵

Curb cuts were not an entirely new invention—the first appeared in 1945, in Kalamazoo, Mich.⁶ But the one on Telegraph changed the way the country thinks about access and opportunity for a population that has faced barriers at every turn. This turnabout and the remarkable ripple effects are salient today, as the nation confronts the anguish of rising inequality and the mounting barriers to economic mobility.

Hundreds more curb cuts followed Berkeley’s. Then hundreds of thousands, all across the country. Disabled advocates continued to push for access to the basics that many Americans take for granted—sidewalks, classrooms, dorm rooms, restrooms, buses. At last, on July 26, 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits disability-based discrimination and mandated changes to the built environment, including curb cuts. “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down,” he proclaimed.⁷

Then a magnificent and unexpected thing happened. When the wall of exclusion came down, everybody benefited—not only people in wheelchairs. Parents pushing strollers headed straight for curb cuts. So did workers pushing heavy carts, business travelers wheeling luggage, even runners and skateboarders. A study of pedestrian behavior at a Sarasota, Fla., shopping mall revealed that nine out of 10 “unencumbered pedestrians” go out of their way to use a curb cut.⁸ As journalist Frank Greve has noted,

the barricades stormed by disabled advocates in Berkeley 40 years ago were a few inches high, “yet today millions of Americans pass daily through the breaches.”⁹

An economist might call it a “positive externality.” A military officer might call it a “force multiplier.” I like to think of it as the “curb-cut effect”—and it’s changing the way the country thinks about the struggles of the most vulnerable communities.

Access, Opportunity, and the New Demographics

There’s an ingrained societal suspicion that intentionally supporting one group hurts another. That equity is a zero sum game. In fact, when the nation targets support where it is needed most—when we create the circumstances that allow those who have been left behind to participate and contribute fully—everyone wins. The corollary is also true: When we ignore the challenges faced by the most vulnerable among us, those challenges, magnified many times over, become a drag on economic growth, prosperity, and national well-being.

This has become painfully evident as inequality has reached toxic levels in the United States. Since 1979, the income of workers in the top 10 percent has grown nearly 15 percent.¹⁰ For workers in the bottom 10 percent, incomes have fallen more than 11 percent.¹¹ The top 25 hedge fund managers earn more than all kindergarten teachers in America put together.¹² Only 9 out of 100 children born to parents in the bottom fifth of the income distribution can expect to rise above their circumstances, the cornerstone of the American Dream.¹³

A wave of recent publicity has focused attention on the toll that these trends are taking on white America. In a paper published in November 2015 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, Princeton University economists Anne Case and Angus Deaton revealed that the death rate for middle-aged whites without a college education jumped more than 20 percent from 1999 to 2013,¹⁴ a staggering increase attributable largely to drug- and alcohol-related deaths and suicides. Case and Deaton see the spikes in addiction and suicide as a response to financial insecurity and economic despair. They write: “After the productivity slowdown in the early 1970s, and with widening income inequality, many in the baby boom generation are the first to find, in midlife, that they will not be better off than were their parents.”

While commentators debate the extent to which economic shock is driving white mortality, one thing is indisputable: Economic distress is deepest and the inequities are widest in communities of color. In 149 of the country’s 150 largest metro areas, the percentage of college-educated whites exceeds the percentage of African-Americans and Latinos with college degrees.¹⁵ The national unemployment rates for blacks and Latinos are 9.5 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively, compared with 4.5 percent for whites.¹⁶ One in four black and Latino Americans live in poverty, more than twice the rate for whites.¹⁷ People of color lag well behind whites on just about every measure of well-being, including health, homeownership, wealth, and (Case and Deaton notwithstanding) longevity.

The point is not to argue about who is suffering more, but to identify the best solutions to remedy these inequities. And here, another number should command attention: 2044. That is the year in which people of color are expected to become a majority of the US population.¹⁸ The nation—80 percent white in 1980, 63 percent white today¹⁹—is already well on its way. Since 2012, the majority of babies born in the United States have been children of color.²⁰ By the end of the decade, the majority of Americans under age 18 will be people of color.²¹

These demographic shifts matter to every American. Not because there is something frightening about a nation where whites are no longer the majority. Rather, it is because the costs of society failing people of color are climbing as the population grows—and because the benefits of strategies that expand

opportunity for people of color would extend to all. Knock down walls of exclusion and build accessible pathways to success, and everyone gains.

The curb-cut effect applies to America's new demographic profile in two important ways. First, curb-cut thinking is animated by the idea of equity. This should not be confused with the formal legal equality conferred by landmark laws such as the Civil Rights Act. Equality gives everyone the right to ride on the bus. Equity ensures that there are curb cuts so people in wheelchairs can get to the bus stop and lifts so they can get on the bus, and ensures that there are bus lines where people need them so they can get to wherever they need to go. Equity means promoting just and fair inclusion throughout society and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper, and reach his or her full potential.

Second, the curb-cut effect illustrates the outsize benefits that accrue to everyone from policies and investments designed to achieve equity. The country must choose: Will we make these investments? Will we make sure that everyone has access to the essentials for living productive lives—things like jobs and reliable transportation? Or will we neglect entire communities and waste the talents and potential of tens of millions of people?

There's really no choice. Continuing to write off poor people and people of color is not an option. Not when the American Dream is nearly unattainable for all low-income people, regardless of their ethnicity. Not when age-old health disparities between whites and people of color are narrowing because whites are sicker than they used to be and more are dying younger. Not when popular fury is growing over an economic system in which a single American family (the Waltons) has more wealth than 41 percent of Americans combined.²²

Policymakers tend to overlook the ways in which focusing on one group might help all groups and strengthen the whole nation. Cut into the curb, and we create a path forward for everyone.

Curb-Cut Effects, from Streets to Schools to the Sky

Once you know what you're looking for, the curb-cut effect is on display all around. It happened when seat belt legislation, adopted initially to protect young children, led 49 states to adopt seat belt laws that have saved an estimated 317,000 lives—children and adults—since 1975.²³ It happened when affirmative action was created to open the doors of higher education to black people—and ended up emboldening vast numbers of white women, and other racial and ethnic groups, to push for greater access as well. It happened when fed-up flight attendants spearheaded a national fight to end smoking on planes, setting in motion a decades-long public-health campaign that has largely banished smoking from public spaces and cut tobacco consumption in half since the 1960s.²⁴

And it happened, spectacularly, with another improvement to America's streets: bike lanes. After years of enduring injuries and fatalities, beleaguered bicyclists—backed by environmental advocates—have pressured a number of cities to install protected bike lanes. As of 2014, New York City had added roughly 30 miles of these lanes.²⁵ My hometown of Oakland is installing a similar amount.²⁶

The verdict? In city after city, despite a “bike-lash” of critics who warn of more congestion and less parking, we've seen that—like a bicycle wheel—what goes around comes around. From 2000 to 2013, the risk of serious injury dropped 75 percent for New York City cyclists²⁷—and pedestrians, a much larger group and not the intended target of the bike lanes, are 40 percent less likely to be injured.²⁸ In a 2011 survey of Chicago drivers, half believed that they noticed improved driving behavior on a street with bike lanes.²⁹

In addition to creating safer and saner streets, bike lanes add tremendous economic value to a neighborhood. One stretch of Ninth Avenue in Manhattan saw retail sales rise nearly 50 percent after bike paths were installed, compared with a 3 percent rise borough-wide.³⁰ Rents along the Times Square

bike paths grew 71 percent in 2010, the largest increase in the city, as people flocked to pedestrian- and bike-friendly neighborhoods.³¹ A single block in Indianapolis saw the value of its property jump nearly 150 percent after adding bike lanes.³²

Then there are the benefits to public health and the environment. A study of the San Francisco Bay Area found that a slight increase in walking and biking each day can reduce the prevalence of diabetes and cardiovascular disease by 14 percent,³³ while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions by 14 percent as well.³⁴ If just 5 percent of New York City commuters began biking to work, the CO2 emissions saved would be equal to planting a forest 1.3 times the size of Manhattan.³⁵

The Making of a Middle Class

The most illuminating example of the curb-cut effect is the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill. It's no overstatement to say that the legislation created the white American middle class. The sponsors of the bill, initially scrawled by an American Legion lobbyist on a piece of hotel stationery, didn't expect to do more than provide job training to some World War II veterans looking to reintegrate into society.³⁶ Supporters of the legislation predicted that just a few hundred thousand of the 16 million returning veterans would use it to go to college. Even that was too much for educators like Robert Hutchins, the president of the University of Chicago, who direfully predicted that campuses would be turned into "hobo jungles."³⁷

To the surprise of nearly everyone, nearly eight million veterans went to college on the GI bill,³⁸ and contrary to Hutchins' warning, they earned better grades, on average, than their civilian classmates. Journalist Edward Humes has catalogued their ranks to include 14 future Nobel Prize winners, three Supreme Court justices, three presidents, a dozen senators, 22,000 dentists, 67,000 doctors, 91,000 scientists, 238,000 teachers, and 450,000 engineers, along with numerous lawyers, nurses, businessmen, artists, actors, writers, and pilots.³⁹ New campuses sprang up to handle the influx, including Claremont McKenna College, Marlboro College, and the State University of New York at Binghamton. In 1944, the United States was home to 58 two-year community colleges. By 1947, there were 358.⁴⁰

The results of the bill, however, could have been even better. The GI Bill included black veterans in the deal but let local governments decide how to allocate the money. All too predictably, black GIs received much, much less generous subsidies.⁴¹ The bill that opened doors of opportunity to so many people who had previously been left out effectively barred entry for too many others.

Despite its shortcomings, the GI Bill demonstrates the transformative effects of smart, targeted investments. The beneficiaries did not just rejoin society; they remade it. The second pillar of the GI Bill, low-interest home loans, boosted homeownership from 44 percent before the war to 60 percent by the mid-1950s.⁴² (Here, again, black GIs were largely excluded.) This, in turn, spurred the tremendous growth of the suburbs and buoyed an already-booming economy. All told, historians estimate that for every \$1 invested in returning World War II veterans, the country recouped \$8.⁴³ But the true benefits are incalculable.

Creating a Prosperous Future

Many years ago, trying to get across Los Angeles to a job interview in Watts, I budgeted an hour and a half to take the five buses from my house to my destination. Two and a half hours later—well after my interview would have ended—I got off bus number four and turned around, defeated.

Frustration like this—to say nothing of lost opportunity—reflects a reality still common to people of color living in low-income neighborhoods. Connections to jobs, schools, hospitals, and grocery stores, and often to each other, are few and far between. One in five African-Americans—and 12 percent of Latinos—live in households without access to a car.⁴⁴ Two-thirds of the roads on Native American

reservations are unpaved.⁴⁵ Half of the people who use public transit are people of color, yet far too many cannot get where they need to go.⁴⁶ In Chicago, four out of five residents cannot reach their jobs in 90 minutes or less using public transit.⁴⁷

“Transportation touches every aspect of where we live, work, play, and go to school, as well as the physical and natural world,” writes author and scholar Robert Bullard, often described as the father of the environmental justice movement.⁴⁸ “Transportation also plays a pivotal role in shaping human interaction, economic mobility, and sustainability.”

If the United States can get equitable infrastructure right, the benefits will ripple far and wide. Transportation investments, particularly public transit projects, create many jobs and contracting opportunities building and maintaining infrastructure. With the right policies in place, those investments can do the double work of building the physical infrastructure that connects residents of underserved neighborhoods to economic opportunities while also delivering jobs and business opportunities to those residents.

Over the next five years, the country could generate more than one million transit-related jobs if the 20 largest cities in America merely shifted half of their transportation budget from funding highways to funding transit.⁴⁹ No new spending, just shifting our priorities.

Businesses would benefit, too. A Harvard Business School survey of business leaders’ priorities found that more and better public transportation was at the top of their wish list,⁵⁰ and it’s easy to see why. Better transportation leads to less absenteeism, and it gives businesses a larger pool of candidates to choose from to fill the available jobs.⁵¹ In a 2013 study, urban planning scholar Daniel Chatman of the University of California, Berkeley, and Robert Noland of Rutgers University calculated that when metro areas added even just a few bus or rail seats—four for every 1,000 residents—this increased the number of employees working in the central city by 320 per square mile, nearly a 20 percent increase on average.⁵² Similarly, the researchers found that expanding public transit 10 percent boosted the city’s total economic output between 1 and 2 percent. Chatman and Noland estimate that the “hidden economic value” of public transit was \$45 million in the average metro area, with a range between \$1.5 million and nearly \$2 billion depending on the size of the region.

The ripples don’t end there. When people have access to public transit, they can more easily attend good schools and take advantage of higher education, which creates a more prepared workforce for the region. They can more readily get to health clinics and hospitals, allowing for greater preventive care and lower health care costs. Evidence also suggests that public transit leads to a decrease in crime. Simply put, better transit means better access to opportunity. Indeed, the pioneering Stanford University economist Raj Chetty has identified the top 10 cities for upward economic mobility. Five of them—New York, San Francisco, Boston, Washington, D.C., and Seattle—are also in the top 10 for physical mobility.⁵³

To maximize benefits like these, metropolitan regions around the country are rethinking their transportation strategies and investments. The neighboring cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul offer a glimpse of how this is playing out. People of color—more than a quarter of whom are poor—have long been concentrated in disinvested neighborhoods and cut off from opportunity.⁵⁴ Initial plans for a new Green Line light-rail corridor overlooked these neighborhoods—reminding me of Bullard’s observation, “Follow the transportation dollars and one can tell who is important and who is not.”⁵⁵ But local activists worked with the federal government, city government, and others to rewrite the old rules.⁵⁶ Now, when the city evaluates the viability of a transportation project, planners assign points based on whether the proposed road or rail will enhance racial equity.⁵⁷ In other words, equity—not just safety or usage statistics, the traditional metrics for transportation considerations—has become central to transportation decisions.

The Green Line is a model of inclusive growth. People of color have made up nearly a fifth of the work hours on the project.⁵⁸ Women- and minority-owned small businesses have earned nearly 20 percent of construction contracts, worth \$115 million.⁵⁹ The light rail now stops in previously neglected neighborhoods, connecting those residents to the more robust job markets in downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul.

The nation can apply curb-cut thinking far beyond transportation infrastructure, to strengthen the entire economy. The misshapen way in which the economy has grown is a problem not only for those at the bottom. As everyone from the OECD⁶⁰ to the International Monetary Fund⁶¹ has concluded, widening inequality leads to declining economic growth. When a country fails to include a large number of people in its economy—when it restricts the circle of opportunity—the economy is weakened and the whole nation suffers.

There's no mystery about how to decrease inequality and increase economic growth. The answer is not easy credit or subprime mortgages or the privatization and parceling off of the social safety net. The antidote to inequality is equity. That means growing good jobs and improving the pay and quality of low-wage jobs. It means building human capabilities by upgrading the education and skills of today's workforce, and tomorrow's. It means eliminating barriers to economic inclusion and civic participation—for example, by revamping a criminal justice system that has trapped seven million people, the vast majority of them black and brown.⁶² And it means expanding opportunity by investing in the most distressed places in America, and in the people who live there.

If the chasm between the gleaming skyscrapers of Manhattan and the barrios of East Los Angeles is holding the entire country back and limiting American economic potential, just think what closing that chasm with well-chosen policies would do. In 2012, blacks, Latinos, and Asian businesses grew more than three times faster than whiteowned businesses⁶³—so imagine the entrepreneurial energy waiting to be unleashed if the country strengthens programs to boost business owners of color. Imagine the impact of connecting poor people and young people of color to high-growth industries like technology. The term “equity” in a corporate context is currently defined as a mere tally of assets and liabilities. But with racially diverse companies 35 percent more likely to outperform their peers,⁶⁴ imagine the rewards to be reaped if equity came to mean so much more.

Shrinking the racial gap in the US economy—simply employing and paying workers of color at the same rates as white workers—would boost the total GDP of America's 150 largest metro areas by nearly a quarter.⁶⁵ New York City metro would add 31 percent—\$409 billion—to its GDP. Miami's GDP would grow 41 percent, adding nearly \$113 billion. In Brownsville, Texas, GDP stands to grow 131 percent. In total, building a racially equitable economy would add \$2.1 trillion to America's annual GDP.

The curb-cut effect underscores the foundational belief that we are one nation, that we rise or fall together. Without equity, there can be neither progress nor prosperity. Despite years of politicians insisting otherwise, the laws of economic gravity have always run in reverse. Opportunity doesn't trickle down; it cascades out and up.

The initiatives described here are not handouts or giveaways; they are investments in the broader well-being of society. They are highly efficient. They are not a sweeping takeover by the federal government. In fact, many—if not most—rely on policies implemented at the state and local levels.

This is not a liberal or a conservative issue. It is not strictly a question of morality or efficiency. All of us—Democrats and Republicans, businesses and nonprofit organizations, city dwellers and suburbanites alike—have an interest in developing targeted, achievable reforms that yield real results and make noticeable differences in the lives of our most vulnerable. The inescapable conclusion is that it is right and smart to let hard-working Americans see more of the benefits of their hard work. It is right and

smart to give more Americans, indeed all Americans, the chance to contribute to this country. It is right and smart to build a future in which every American, regardless of skin color or economic quintile, can participate and prosper. What is called for is nothing less than a return to the notion of a common good.

Half a century ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. prophetically wrote from a Birmingham, Ala., jail cell, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”⁶⁶ Outside that building today, a plaque commemorates its most famous inmate. Along the sidewalk, at regular intervals, are curb cuts.

Notes

¹ [“Builders and Sustainers of the Independent Living Movement in Berkeley: Volume IV,”](#) Disability Rights and Independent Living Movement Oral History Series, University of California. ² Frank Greve, [“Curb ramps liberate Americans with disabilities—and everyone else,”](#) McClatchy Newspapers, January 31, 2007.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Steven E. Brown, [“The Curb Ramps of Kalamazoo: Discovering Our Unrecorded History,”](#) *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1999, pp. 203-205.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ [“Remarks of President George Bush at the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act,”](#) EEOC History: 35th Anniversary: 1965-2000, US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

⁸ Greve, [“Curb Ramps.”](#)

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ [“Data Summaries,”](#) National Equity Atlas, PolicyLink and the USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Phillip Bump, [“The 25 top hedge fund managers earn more than all kindergarten teachers combined,”](#) *The Washington Post*, May 10, 2016.

¹³ Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Patrick Kline, Emmanuel Saez, and Nicholas Turner, [“Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity?”](#) *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings*, vol. 104, no. 5, 2014, pp. 141-147.

¹⁴ Anne Case and Angus Deaton, [“Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century,”](#) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, vol. 112, no. 49, 2015, pp. 15078-15083.

¹⁵ Ronald Brownstein and Janie Boschma, [“Education Gaps Pose Looming Crisis for U.S. Economy,”](#) *National Journal*, May 20, 2015.

¹⁶ [“Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey,”](#) Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor.

¹⁷ [“Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity,”](#) State Health Facts, The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.

¹⁸ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, [“Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060,”](#) US Census Bureau, March 2015.

¹⁹ Frank Bass, [“White Share of U.S. Population Drops to Historic Low,”](#) *Bloomberg News*, June 12, 2013.

²⁰ [“Most Children Younger Than Age 1 are Minorities,”](#) U.S. Census Bureau, May 17, 2012.

²¹ Colby and Ortman, [“Projections of the Size.”](#)

²² Josh Bivens, [“Inequality, exhibit A: Walmart and the wealth of American families,”](#) Economic Policy Institute, July 17, 2012.

²³ [“Policy Impact: Seat Belts,”](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, January 2011.

²⁴ Poncie Rutsch, [“Will Vaping Reignite the Battle Over Smoking On Airplanes?”](#) *National Public Radio*, February 24, 2015. [“Trends in Current Cigarette Smoking](#)

[Among High School Students and Adults, United States, 1965-2014,”](#) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

²⁵ [“Protected Bicycle Lanes in NYC,”](#) New York City Department of Transportation, September 2014.

²⁶ Will Kane, [“Oakland racing to meet demand for bike lanes,”](#) San Francisco Chronicle, April 27, 2014.

²⁷ [“Protected Bicycle Lanes in NYC.”](#)

²⁸ [“Sustainable Streets: 2013 and Beyond,”](#) New York City Department of Transportation, 2013.

²⁹ [“Initial Findings: Kinzie Street Protected Bike Lane,”](#) Chicago Department of Transportation, September 21, 2011.

³⁰ [“The Economic Benefits of Sustainable Streets,”](#) New York City Department of Transportation.

³¹ [“The Re-Design of Broadway Moving All Modes,”](#) New York City Department of Transportation, July 2010.

³² Jessica Majors and Sue Burow, [“Assessment of the Impact of the Indianapolis Cultural Trail: A Legacy of Gene and Marilyn Glick,”](#) Indiana University Public Policy Institute, March 2015.

³³ Neil Maizlish, James Woodcock, Sean Co, Bart Ostro et al., [“Health Cobenefits and Transportation-Related Reductions in](#)

[Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the San Francisco Bay Area](#),” *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 103, no. 4, 2013, pp. 703-709.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ [“Environmental Statistics](#),” Statistics Library, People for Bikes.

³⁶ Meredith Hindley, [“How the GI Bill Became Law in Spite of Some Veterans’ Groups](#),” *Humanities*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2014.

³⁷ Thalia Assuras, [“How the GI Bill Changed America](#),” *CBS News*, June 22, 2008.

³⁸ Claudio Sanchez, [“How the Cost of College Went From Affordable to Sky-High](#),” *National Public Radio*, March 18, 2014.

³⁹ Edward Humes, *Over Here: How the GI Bill Transformed the American Dream*, San Diego, Harcourt, 2006.

⁴⁰ William Celis III, [“50 Years Later, the Value of the G.I. Bill Is Questioned](#),” *The New York Times*, June 22, 1994.

⁴¹ Chuck Leddy, [“A critical look at the GI Bill’s impact](#),” *The Boston Globe*, September 10, 2009.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jared Lyon, [“The GI Bill’s Impact on the Past, Present and Future](#),” Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University, June 21, 2013.

⁴⁴ Elaine Murakami and Liang Long, [“Vehicle Availability and Mode to Work by Race and Hispanic Origin](#),” Census Transportation Planning Products, US Department of Transportation, October 20, 2015.

⁴⁵ [Demographics](#), About Tribes, National Congress of American Indians.

⁴⁶ Mike Maciag, [“Public Transportation’s Demographic Divide](#),” *Governing*, February 24, 2014.

⁴⁷ Adie Tomer, Elizabeth Kneebone, Robert Puentes, and Alan Berube, [“Missed Opportunity: Transit and Jobs in Metropolitan America](#),” Metropolitan Policy Program, Brookings Institution, May 2011.

⁴⁸ Robert D. Bullard, [“Addressing Urban Transportation Equity in the United States](#),” *Fordham Urban Law Journal*, vol. 31, no. 5, 2003, pp. 1183-1209.

⁴⁹ Todd Swanstrom, Will Winter, and Laura Wiedlocher, [“More Transit Equals More Jobs](#),” Transportation Equity Network.

⁵⁰ Michael E. Porter and Jan W. Rivkin, [“An Economy Doing Half Its Job](#),” Harvard Business School Survey on U.S. Competitiveness, September 2014.

⁵¹ Eric Jaffe, [“Public Transit Is Worth Way More to a City Than You Might Think](#),” *CityLab*, August 14, 2013.

⁵² Daniel G. Chatman and Robert B. Noland, [“Transit Service, Physical Agglomeration and Productivity in US Metropolitan Areas](#),” *Urban Studies*, vol. 51, no. 5, 2014, pp. 917-937.

⁵³ [“2016 City and Neighborhood Rating](#),” Walk Score.

⁵⁴ [“Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region](#),” Metropolitan Council, 2014.

⁵⁵ Robert D. Bullard, *Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity*, Cambridge, Mass., The MIT Press, 2007.

⁵⁶ John McCarron, [“Building Equity By the Tracks](#),” *Next City*, August 30, 2013.

⁵⁷ Rachel Dovey, [“Transportation Funding Change Aims for Equality in Twin Cities](#),” *Next City*, September 24, 2014.

⁵⁸ [“Central Corridor Green Line DBE and Workforce Story](#),” Metropolitan Council, June 2014.

⁵⁹ [“Council Meets Contracting Goals for Green Line Construction](#),” Metropolitan Council, July 17, 2014.

⁶⁰ [“Inequality hurts economic growth, finds OECD research](#),” OECD, September 12, 2014.

⁶¹ Era Dabla-Norris, Kalpana Kochhar, Nujin Suphaphiphat, Frantisek Ricka, and Evridiki Tsounta, [“Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality: A Global Perspective](#),” International Monetary Fund, June 15, 2015.

⁶² Lauren E. Glaze, Danielle Kaebler, [“Correctional Populations in the United States, 2013](#),” Bureau of Justice Statistics, US Department of Justice, December 19, 2014.

⁶³ Vanessa Cardenas and Sarah Treuhaft, eds., *All-In Nation: An America That Works for All*, Center for American Progress and PolicyLink, 2013.

⁶⁴ Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton, and Sara Prince, [“Why Diversity Matters](#),” *McKinsey Insights*, January 2015.

⁶⁵ Sarah Treuhaft, Justin Scoggins, and Jennifer Tran, [“The Equity Solution: Racial Inclusion Is Key to Growing a Strong Economy](#),” PolicyLink and USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity, October 22, 2014.

⁶⁶ Martin Luther King Jr., [“Letter from a Birmingham Jail \[King, Jr.\]](#),” African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, April 16, 1963.

Angela Glover Blackwell ([@agb4equity](#)) is the CEO of PolicyLink. She was previously a senior vice president at the Rockefeller Foundation and a partner at the public interest law firm Public Advocates. She is also the coauthor of *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America’s Future*, Norton, 2010.

How to design cities for and by women

Opinion: It's time to put women in the driver's seat



[Paula BISIAU](#)

Subsecretaria de Movilidad Sustentable y Segura - Buenos Aires City Government

This opinion article was written by Paula Bisiau, Subsecretary of Sustainable and Safe Mobility in the city government of Buenos Aires, Argentina. This article was chosen as one of the finalists in

Apolitical's [women in government writing competition](#).

October 28, 2019

Sometimes historical circumstances give us the opportunity to contribute to social and cultural movements that are really transcendent.

I believe that today I can count myself among those privileged.

Like other countries in the Western world, Argentina is experiencing a true “women’s revolution” that has triggered an impressive wave of cultural and social changes in all spheres of social life, both public and private. For this reason, the gender agenda has gained importance in the public debate, and women’s movements have an increasingly prominent place in Argentina’s political space.

In November 2017, a new law was passed which guarantees parity on electoral lists, and in 2018 the debate over access to abortion, which is legal only under three circumstances, reached the National Congress for the first time in history.

And the debate was not just about equality in political or institutional representation: the economic dimension of inequality between men and women also became more evident, and the gender pay gap was addressed in the opening speech of the Legislative Assembly of President Mauricio Macri in March 2018. He also launched the National Plan for Equal Opportunities and Rights, the main planning tool to encourage public policies that promote gender equality.

I believe that women’s right to life in the city rests on their ability to live freely, to enjoy and create the city, and to “decide” its public spaces and their uses

This strategy focuses on four issues: autonomy in decision making; physical autonomy; economic autonomy; and cultural transformation as a transversal goal. In local government, we are faced with the challenge from society, as citizens ask what we are doing to help strengthen this process? Similarly, how can we translate this immense social and cultural transformation into action in an urban setting?

As both a woman and a public official my responsibility is even greater: for me, it is a matter of gender solidarity, as well as a task of political management.

Redesigning the city for all

I believe that women's right to life in the city rests on their ability to live freely, to enjoy and create the city, and to "decide" its public spaces and their uses.

In this sense, the incorporation of a gender perspective in urban planning is about problematizing how the city and its spaces contribute to, strengthen and reproduce gender roles and stereotypes and that visible. It's about reversing an urbanism that has been designed by and for men, and to help invent a city that is also for women and all human groups.

With that spirit, we began in 2017 to investigate and work on the implementation of a comprehensive Mobility and Gender Plan from the Secretariat of Transport, with the intention of being able to introduce concrete and real changes in the (traditionally male-dominated) transport sector with a gender perspective.

So far we have managed to increase the number of women working in the transport sector, both in management roles as well as increasing the number of women behind the wheel of taxis, subways, buses and road safety and transit agents

We had several goals that we wanted to achieve: eradicating violence and harassment in public spaces and urban transport; the incorporation of a gender perspective into public transport, guaranteeing safety in all urban routes; the inclusion of women as workers in the transport sector; the modification of gender cultural patterns rooted in society, especially through massive communication and education campaigns.

In order to meet these objectives, we proposed four elements of action in our plan that address inclusion, violence prevention and protection of women in urban public space and transport in particular. These were:

- Design and urban planning with a gender perspective
- Inclusion of women in the labour market
- Producing data and statistics about urban mobility
- Communication and awareness.

A new road to gender equality

The plan has already been set in motion, and so far we have managed to increase the number of women working in the transport sector, both in management roles as well as increasing the number of women behind the wheel of taxis, subways, buses and road safety and transit agents.

We have initiated a massive communication and awareness campaign on street sexual harassment in public transport, with high impact throughout the City of Buenos Aires; we launched training programs for public officials within the City administration on gender issues and developed a complete and homogeneous diagnosis of the problems of women in our City, essential to develop a strategy in the medium and long term.

These concrete actions were made possible in a very short period of time because there are women in decision-making positions all over the Government of the City of [Buenos Aires](#) that know and understand women's needs, and who have worked together to make this happen. This is what sorority in practice means.

Being a woman in politics it's not always easy, but seeing this kind of solidarity in action empowers us and makes us work harder every day. Together we can make change happen.

— *Paula Bisiau*



How kid-friendly urban design makes cities better for all

A new report from Arup argues that child-friendly design is our urban future.

By [Patrick Sisson](#) Dec 12, 2017, 1:46pm EST



Hudson River Greenway playground in New York City. *Shutterstock*

Promoting urban planning projects often relies on an inspiring narrative: what are we as a community trying to accomplish, and how do we want our neighborhoods to evolve? Few stories are as universal as building a better future for our children. But in urban design, it's too often a tale untold.

A new research report focused on child-first urban planning, *Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods*,

argues that designing for children can be the anchor and central theme animating a larger progressive urban agenda. Written by the international engineering, planning, and consulting firm Arup, the report offers numerous case studies, sobering statistics—such as the fact that 1 billion children live in urban settings right now—and visions for tackling what they see as the main hurdles to more youth-friendly metropolises: traffic and pollution, high-rise living and sprawl, crime, isolation and intolerance, and unequal, inadequate access to the city's benefits.

Most importantly, it suggests a child-friendly lens can help leaders, planners, and designers envision a better city for everyone, one that offers a wealth of social benefits (society gains \$8 in benefits for every \$1 spent on early play-based education, according to a University College London study).

"Perhaps uniquely, a child-friendly approach has the potential to unite a range of progressive agendas—including health and wellbeing, sustainability, resilience and safety—and to act as a catalyst for urban innovation," the report notes.

Many sweeping, and optimistic, modern movements to change metro design focused on children. From the Garden City movement to the post-war suburban boom, updated living environments have often been sold with a promise of healthier living environments for our kids.

But today, urban environmental and health issues are increasingly on the rise, a crises when experts believe that by 2030, 60 percent of all city dwellers will be under the age of 18. The World Health Organization estimates that the number of overweight children globally will skyrocket to 70 million by 2025, from 41 million in 2016, and rates of childhood mental health problems, triggered by the stress of urban life, is also on the rise.

To reverse these trends, *Cities Alive* proposes a combination of parks, play, equitable planning, and making nature more prevalent. Cars, specifically the amount of real estate given over to roads and

vehicles, presents a big problem. This infrastructure often forms borders between children and freer access to playspaces, and limits other mobility options.

The report says that the problem, exacerbated in developing countries, is a universal challenge for cities. Road fatalities cost between \$65 and \$100 billion annually, according to NACTO, and recent [research found](#) that for every 10 minutes spent in a car, a child's time spent participating in community activities falls by 10%.

"With less independent mobility, children have a reduced ability to navigate and experience the city," the report states. "This means fewer opportunities for social interaction, chance encounters, playful journeys and discovery."

Numerous cities have started to seek out feedback from their youngest citizens and plan with children in mind. Rotterdam, Vancouver, and Toronto, which recently released [kid-friendly guidelines](#) for high-rise development have created kid-centered design and development guidelines. Oslo spearheaded the development of [an app](#) that allows children walking to school to play "secret agent" and report issues with street repairs and heavy traffic, to allow them to have a say in street-level design. Many cities have, not surprisingly, reaped the benefits of [allowing teens to participate in park design](#), or have created children's design councils to discover how to design for this particular constituency.

Cities Alive suggests an agenda that focuses on walkability, safety, and shared urban spaces obviously not only benefits children, but offers widespread societal and economic benefits that can't be ignored. Pedestrianization of streets can boost foot traffic and commercial activity, adding \$9 per square foot to annual rents, according to a [Walk Score analysis](#). The authors suggest evaluating streets by the popsicle test: can a child safely walk to a store, buy a popsicle, and return before it melts?

The examples range from temporary interventions to massive redevelopments. In Leeds, England, a pop-up park program in the town square not only brought more families downtown and created additional playspaces, but increased foot traffic and spending. Surveys found 85 percent of families would spend more time downtown due to the improved playground, parks, and playspaces. Another UK project, the Housing Design for Community Life study, examined landscape design in public housing, concluding that developments with the most external playspaces for children exhibited the highest levels of use by adults. The Darling Quarter in Sydney, a large mixed-use project anchored around a sizable playground, has become one of the city's most-visited destinations.

Barcelona's ambitious [superblock program](#), a widespread reconsideration of land-use that will turn streets into public spaces, will line city blocks with pedestrian zones, parks, and increased activity, creating more "citizen spaces" with increased space for culture, leisure and community activities.

With urban populations growing, the oft-repeated cliché about children being our futures is doubly true in cities. *Cities Alive* argues that keeping them at the center of building and design discussions will fuel smarter, more sustainable growth.

"If children are not designed into our cities, they are designed out," wrote George Monbiot, who is quoted in the report. "This means that they are deprived of contact with the material world, with nature, with civic life and with their own capacities."

The New York Times

A Novel Solution for the Homeless: House Them in Backyards



A small house under construction in the backyard of a home in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. Similar structures will be built to rent to the homeless under a new pilot program. Credit...Jenna Schoenefeld for The New York Times

By Jennifer Medina

Oct. 29, 2018

LOS ANGELES — When she bought her tidy home with a renovated kitchen four years ago, Melina Chavarria was relieved to be in an area of Los Angeles County that she liked for a price she could afford. She strung a hammock up in the front yard, where she could watch her elementary-school-age sons play on their scooters while she sipped coffee.

Since then, dozens of homeless men and women have built up encampments just a few yards away from her house, and at the local train station, and beneath the overpasses of the freeways that crisscross her neighborhood near Watts.

Now, as part of an unusual arrangement, Ms. Chavarria may soon be welcoming some of those homeless people into her backyard. Ms. Chavarria is one of several Los Angeles residents who are building additions to their homes that would be used by people emerging from homelessness.

Faced with a major housing crisis, Los Angeles is trying out an idea that some hope is so wild that it just might work: helping homeowners build small homes in their backyards and rent them to people who have spent months living in their cars, in shelters or on the streets.

Both the county and the city of Los Angeles are beginning pilot programs to give homeowners subsidies to create housing for the homeless. Similar experiments are also underway in [Seattle](#) and [Portland](#).

Though housing the homeless in your backyard might be considered extreme, thousands of residents on the West Coast have indicated they are interested in doing just that.

“It’s part of our daily life now — you’re always either walking or driving past someone who is homeless,” said Ms. Chavarria, a 37-year-old single mother who works in human resources. She has volunteered at soup kitchens and contributed to food drives but more often has felt helpless about the seemingly intractable problem.

“If we can be part of doing something, why would I not want to do that?” she said. “I’m not religious, but I am spiritual, and I have this belief that when God blesses you, it’s to bless someone else.”

While officials hope that homeowners like Ms. Chavarria will be motivated by good will, they also plan to prod them by offering subsidies.



Martha Chambers’s accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, in her North Portland, Ore. backyard was built as part of Multnomah County’s A Place for You pilot program, which provides subsidies for building the units if homeowners promise to rent them to homeless people for five years. Credit...Amanda Lucier for The New York Times

The notion of housing the homeless with backyard homes — commonly called granny flats and bureaucratically referred to as accessory dwelling units — has been gaining

steam in the last few years, as Mayor Eric Garcetti and others lobbied to make the buildings legal across the state. Bloomberg Philanthropies announced on Monday that the city of Los Angeles had won a \$1 million grant as part of a competition intended to encourage cities to try creative new policies.

The city plans to offer incentives worth between \$10,000 and \$30,000 to make it cheaper and easier for homeowners to build units if they promise to rent them to homeless residents for three years.

For now, the details of how homeless people would qualify for the program are vague. Homeless families and individuals would be screened by nonprofit organizations to ensure that they do not need intensive services and would then be matched with homeowners, who could indicate their preference for the kind of tenant they want. Tenants would be expected to pay the rent through vouchers or their own income.

City officials have spent the last several months testing out ideas for how the program would work, using focus groups with dozens of homeowners, existing landlords and residents who have struggled with homelessness themselves.

The responses from one group on a recent morning were a mixture of enthusiasm and skepticism. Of course we want to help, several homeowners said. But how much will it cost me? Who will pay the rent? What if residents are doing drugs in my yard?

The formerly homeless people who met later that morning were equally befuddled: Will I have any privacy? Will the owner just be in it for the money?

Mr. Garcetti said he was counting on the project to appeal equally to “both your self-interest and selfless interest.”

“Even with a cursory glance, you can easily see that most people facing homelessness don’t fit into the stereotype,” he said in an interview. “I heard from people all over the city who want to do something to solve the biggest humanitarian crisis in this city. This is not just going to be for the rich. This is going to help homeowners who are barely scraping by pay their mortgage.”

But there are still many details the city will need to work out to determine whether a large-scale plan would work. City officials have not yet determined, for example, how they could assure both owners and tenants of their safety, though they emphasize that chronically homeless people with serious mental health or drug problems would be excluded. And they are still unsure how they would measure the success of the experiment.

Accessory dwelling units, also known as A.D.U.s, have already begun to crop up all over the city, with many residents using them as short-term rentals that can generate enough money to substantially help with the mortgage. Several architecture and contracting firms have begun marketing themselves as specialists in the units, offering homeowners guidance on how to get the most bang for the buck by using sleek and easily replicable plans. Builders say the units can cost anywhere from \$45,000 to \$200,000 to construct.

Richelle Saldana, 33, a [designer](#) who has worked on about a half-dozen units in the last several months, said many of her clients were couples in their mid-30s and 40s who “need the extra income just to get back in L.A.”



Sherry, left, and her niece Sobeyda, center, live in the accessory dwelling unit behind the home of Martha Chambers, right, in North Portland, Ore.

Credit...Amanda Lucier for The New York Times

“I think it’s great for somebody who needs to have that second income and is willing to take a risk,” she said. But she quickly cautioned that she would be reluctant to rent her own back house to someone who was homeless.

“I have kids and a family to protect, so it would pretty much terrify me,” she said. “My mind just goes to worst-case scenarios, how that will unfold. It sounds great on all kinds of levels, but in real life, not everyone is a walk in the park.”

It is not only the potential landlords who are hesitant.

LaRae Cantley, 36, who has worked for years as an advocate, helping people find a place after they have spent time living in their cars or on the street, told city officials that they would need to provide landlords and tenants with social workers or professional mediators to go between them.

“These people would be inviting someone else into their lives,” Ms. Cantley said, a note of exasperation in her voice. “How ready are they to build a relationship?” She added: “Are they going to be able to communicate? What does that even look like?”

In the best case, she said, she could imagine “meeting in the middle of the yard and having coffee in the morning.” In the worst scenario, “someone is triggered, and all of a sudden isn’t safe for themselves or for anyone else.”

Even those who support the idea of backyard housing say it would be impossible to build enough units to significantly reduce the city’s homeless population.

“In the total picture of homelessness, we know this will not necessarily change that much,” said Vinit Mukhija, a professor of urban planning at University of California, Los Angeles. “The value goes beyond that, though, because it is finally somewhat of a departure of the purity of single-family housing in the region. It’s a good step to change what people here really consider a dogma of private housing.”

When officials in Multnomah County, Ore., announced plans to build backyard units at no cost to the homeowner, more than 1,000 people signed up to register as potential hosts. Four participants were selected in the initial stage. They all spoke with their own lawyers about the idea, and all were told the same thing: Don’t do it. But they all decided to ignore the legal advice and go ahead.

“It’s value proposition that goes to people’s hearts: What does it mean to be in community with each other?” said Mary Li, who runs the county’s innovation lab and is overseeing the program. “Can we all step up and do a little? If people are willing to do something that sounds a little cuckoo, what would that do, and how would that impact our work?”

Though Martha Chambers said she had signed up for largely altruistic reasons, she also listed the benefits she would receive: A backyard home at no cost to her for five years, a new neighbor whom she could ask to help dog-sit, and a few renovations in her main house.

“At first I thought, ‘How can I do this when I am just struggling to get by myself?’” she said. “I don’t make a lot of money. And my little joke is that this will keep me from being homeless — if I can’t afford my front house, I could move out back.”



AGE STRONG PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

September 24, 2019

Mayor Walsh launches Age Strong public awareness campaign

BOSTON- Tuesday, September 24, 2019 - Mayor Martin J. Walsh today announced the launch of the first Age Strong Commission public awareness campaign, aimed at revealing implicit biases around aging and dispelling stereotypes about older adults to promote more positive messaging around aging. The campaign launch comes after the City's [Age Strong Commission](#) updated its name and brand earlier this year, and redefined its mission and values reflecting a growing trend and national movement towards more inclusive aging language and actions.

"Boston's older residents are strong in so many different ways -- with strong experiences, cultures, and voices," said Mayor Walsh. "We want to evolve the conversation around aging and make sure that the images and stories we share help expand what it means to age in our city. Older Bostonians bring so many dynamic experiences to our community, and we want more people to see that and embrace it."



The multifaceted campaign features eight older Bostonians who defy negative stereotypes about aging. In the [advertisements](#), the models stand boldly under labels that often get placed on older people: frumpy, cranky, inactive, senile, frail, childish, over the hill, and helpless -- and their stories counter

those biases. The advertisements will be featured across the city on bus shelters, in Boston Public Library locations, in a 30-second television commercial, and on digital signage through this fall.

The Age Strong Commission has actively engaged with the community to learn how Bostonians are aging now and what their hopes are for aging in the future. Those conversations reflect a growing trend and national movement towards more inclusive aging language and actions, designed by the FrameWorks Institute, the research partner for the [Reframing Aging Project](#).

"The stories of real people matter. Boston's reframing aging campaign challenges us to rethink older people and the words we use," said Nora Moreno Cargie, president of Tufts Health Plan Foundation and vice president for corporate citizenship at Tufts Health Plan. "This is one of many actions already taken by the city. It is adapting its systems and programs to be relevant for older people and include our voices, our stories, our experiences in solutions. City leaders are showing us what it means to Age Strong."

This Age Strong public awareness campaign comes three years into the Commission's [Age-Friendly Boston Action Plan](#) which details 75 concrete action items the City will take to become even more age friendly. Currently in its third year, it has already celebrated the successful launch of several action items including the City's first pilot [Senior Civic Academy](#); an interactive [public restrooms map](#); an [age- and dementia-friendly business designation](#); an [employment guide for people over 50](#); and most recently the unveiling of a [bench program](#) raising the availability of resting locations for older adults.

"Prejudices about groups of people negatively contribute to their health and well-being outcomes," said Boston Chief of Health and Human Services Marty Martinez. "This anti-ageism campaign helps us counter those stereotypes about aging that can hold people back, so that we can age even better in Boston."

"I am living my best life and I am thrilled to be a part of Boston's Age Strong campaign!" said Sandra Harris, Massachusetts state president of AARP and featured model in the campaign. "As a Boston resident, I am blessed to live in a city that values all I continue to bring to the table, and I appreciate the opportunity to redefine what it means to get older. It's not about defying or denying aging, it's about owning your age."

"Just because you're older doesn't mean you are inactive," said 103-year-old Irene Morey, a Boston resident featured in the print and multimedia campaign. "I'm far from senile--I'm aging strong!"

For more information about the campaign, please visit boston.gov/agestrong

About the Age Strong Commission

The Age Strong Commission works towards making Boston a city that fully embraces aging. Our mission is to enhance the lives of people 55+ with meaningful programs, resources, and connections so we can live and age strong together in Boston. For more than 50 years, we have served constituents as a City department, Council on Aging, and Area Agency on Aging. In 2017, the Commission launched its Age-Friendly Action Plan, which is the City's blueprint to make Boston the best city to live and age in. Learn more at www.boston.gov/age-strong.

###



Tiny houses in Fayetteville? City leaders think it may be a solution for homeless

By **John Henderson**

Staff writer

Posted Oct 8, 2019 at 6:21 PM; Updated Oct 8, 2019 at 6:31 PM

Mayor Mitch Colvin asks for recommendation for city to partner with nonprofit to hire homeless to do chores.

Homeless people would have the option of moving into tiny homes if a proposal discussed by the City Council comes to fruition.

The council at its work session on Monday night asked staff to study the concept in which the city might partner with a nonprofit agency to get the program going. There is no formal definition of a tiny house, but they are loosely defined as homes ranging between 100 feet and up to 400 or 500 square feet.

Mayor Mitch Colvin suggested — and the council agreed — that staff would come back with more information and recommendations.

He also convinced the council to have staff come back with a recommendation in which the city, working with a nonprofit agency, could hire homeless people for chores like trash pickup.

“This would take us out of managing employees,” Colvin said. “We may have a partnership with some organization and they may have people who they come in contact with who could help us with trash pickup or some of the other services we need.”

The City Council is looking for ways to help homeless people before it votes on an ordinance it tabled in June that would bar homeless people from “camping” on city property.

Colvin said he envisions the city partnering with a nonprofit organization to develop the tiny homes, similar to what it has done with Habitat for Humanity, where the city may donate land and put in infrastructure and the organization builds the home.

Colvin said a good example where this is working well can be found in Atlanta, where Mustard Seed Tiny Homes has partnered with Ground Zero Grace, a nonprofit in Atlanta that serves the elderly, disabled and families in need. Colvin said the Mustard Seed tiny homes range in price from \$2,000 to \$15,000.

“What I was asking for is a consensus to look and see if a pilot program may address some of what our needs are,” Colvin said. “We’re coming up with a comprehensive approach to deal with this population.”

Councilman Jim Arp said he recently met with someone who might be interested in building the tiny homes.

“If there is a way we can do this and partner with somebody, I’m certainly interested,” Arp said.

Councilman D.J. Haire said he supports this initial staff research but when it comes back he will have other questions, such as who would pay for upkeep and maintenance of the tiny homes, security and utilities.

“I just wonder how far are we willing to go,” he said. “I’d like to hear more about this. I’m fine with the first step.”

Councilman Johnny Dawkins said there is a [program in San Antonio](#) that seems to be working well in which the city has developed a homeless community on a concrete slab almost half a football field long with metal structures. “And then when it gets super cold they drop these tarps down and it seems to work,” he said.

Dawkins said the tiny houses could be included in that type of community.

“On a half a football field you can get a lot of tiny (houses),” he said. “You could probably put all of our homeless in there. This is going to take a whole lot of work.”

Councilman Tisha Waddell said she favors the tiny home concept, but she wants it to be transitional and not permanent housing for the homeless. She said the transitional housing could be included in a tiny home community that includes others who are not homeless.

Councilwoman Kathy Jensen said she supports the tiny home concept but also wants it to be transitional housing.

“They come in, get the help and within two months they are learning how to pay rent,” she said, adding that she sees the communities as self-sufficient because people in them would be paying something to live there.

The Fayetteville Cumberland County Continuum of Care on Homelessness is recommending that the city and county shell out \$1 million each year to help homeless people get into housing.

They argue that it’s a good investment, as homeless people end up costing government in many other ways, such as jail and health care costs. Laressa Witt, the chairwoman of the Continuum of Care on Homelessness, had previously told the council that the contribution could help turn the lives around of 100 to 150 homeless people in the city out of the estimated 342 in Cumberland County.

“There is not one solution for everybody. There are different solutions,” she said. “Tiny homes would be ideal for those who are low-income with disabilities, perhaps, who only make \$700 a month, and they are not going to move out into a place they can afford. A lot of tiny homes are very lovely done. They are secure, they are villages, and they use solar panels, so the utilities are reasonable and they can live their for the rest of their lives (in the homes).”

In Greensboro and High Point, tiny homes in small clusters are being built for lower-income people without government financial help so far, but High Point has passed an ordinance allowing tiny home communities.

In August, Tiny House Community Development, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, broke ground on a ten-unit tiny home community near downtown High Point. It is building the homes with donations and develops tiny house communities throughout North Carolina.

The houses range from 180-square feet up to 500-square feet, said Scott Jones, the executive director of the nonprofit. He said people who get into the homes are referred through local nonprofit agencies, and the residents are required to pay between \$350 to \$525 a month, which includes utilities.

They are permanent leases, meaning residents can live there as long as they want and comply with resident guidelines, which includes getting help from agencies that they are referred to who can help them.

Jones said he would like to talk to Fayetteville about possibly doing work here.

“We have a location in Winston-Salem. We have 13 acres there we are going to build on 40 percent (of the property),” he said.

Staff writer John Henderson can be reached at jhenderson@fayobserver.com or 910-486-3596.

The Gazette

Community approach to target teen substance abuse in Fountain

By [jakob rodgers jakob.rodgers@gazette.com](mailto:jakob.rodgers@gazette.com)

Feb 26, 2017

Fountain will be the focus of a first-of-its-kind initiative in the Pikes Peak region aimed at keeping kids and teens from using alcohol, marijuana and opioid-based painkillers.

The five-year program to prevent youth substance abuse comes as dozens of other agencies across the state embark on similar initiatives - each using money collected by recreational marijuana taxes.

In every case, organizers will implement the Communities that Care program - a research-based public health model that involves most of a community's core youth institutions. The goal: Create a stronger sense of family, community and society as a means to prevent kids and teens from using drugs or alcohol.

Studies have shown the program working because it takes a community-driven approach, said Taryn Bailey, El Paso County Public Health's youth substance use prevention planner.

"It's not just working with school officials or just working with families or just working with mental health care professionals," Bailey said. "It's every player in a community that has something to do that could potentially impact youth."

The initiative remains the planning stages, and organizers are seeking participants for a community board that will help guide the initiative. It will meet once a month and help devise an action plan by this summer.

El Paso County Public Health will lead the effort, using a \$140,000 grant that ends June 30. Further funding is guaranteed each year through summer 2021, but annual amounts may vary.

Already, several organizations and agencies have become involved, including Widefield School District 3 and Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8, the Fountain Valley YMCA, AspenPointe, Peak Vista Community Health Centers, the Pikes Peak Library District, Fort Carson, Fountain city leaders and Fountain and Colorado Springs police.

Fountain wasn't chosen due to its rates of youth substance use, because such localized data doesn't exist, Bailey said.

Rather, public health officials saw Fountain as most likely to be successful in implementing such a program. The area has already passed tobacco retailer policies that limit youth use, and school districts there have been diligent in surveying students on health-related issues.

"You can kind of look at it almost like a pilot," Bailey said. "You want to start somewhere that you think will make a lot of strides pretty quickly."

Contact Jakob Rodgers: 476-1654; Twitter: @jakobrodgers



Experience Matters for Livability

With support from AARP, Cities of Service awards \$150,000 to six cities for a program that will call upon the talents and expertise of people age 50+

AARP Livable Communities, June 5, 2019

In pursuit of the shared goal of creating communities that engage residents and are livable for people of all ages, AARP is partnering with **Cities of Service**, a nonprofit organization that helps mayors build stronger cities by changing the way local government and citizens work together.



Working in partnership with AARP, the Cities of Service Experience Matters program will operate out of City Hall in each of the following cities:

Albuquerque, New Mexico

Birmingham, Alabama

Columbia, South Carolina

Fort Worth, Texas

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Experience Matters

With support from AARP, Cities of Service will work with six cities to develop volunteering initiatives that engage older adults in efforts to address public problems related to the drivers of poverty.

Each city will receive \$25,000, technical assistance, and two full-time **AmeriCorps VISTA** members based in City Hall who will build capacity and raise awareness for the

initiatives. AmeriCorps VISTA members are part of a national network of service programs dedicated to addressing critical community needs and fostering civic engagement.

In addition to providing funding and technical assistance to the cities throughout the duration of the program, Cities of Service helps recruit and select AmeriCorps VISTA members, provides pre-program training in its citizen engagement model, assists with project design, offers expert and peer-learning opportunities through site visits and convenings, and promotes projects to encourage replication of best practices by other cities.

Applications and information about the job duties, qualifications and benefits can be found on the Cities of Service website

The Cities

Albuquerque, New Mexico: Volunteers will tutor students in the city's public schools and early childhood learning centers to help develop the children's literacy skills and ability to read at grade-level.

Birmingham, Alabama: To reduce the amount of money homeowners are spending on utilities as well as code violation fines, resident volunteers will help their neighbors make minor home and property repairs that will increase energy efficiency and also conform to local housing codes.

“Based on AARP’s work in hundreds of communities nationwide, we know that older adults can bring tremendous value to the places they live. This partnership with Cities of Service and the programs in these cities will not only enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages but will also demonstrate the results that cities can see when they tap the experience and expertise of people 50-plus.”

— **Nancy LeaMond**, AARP Executive Vice President and Chief Advocacy & Engagement Officer

Columbia, South Carolina: Serving as mentors, volunteers will work to build the types of strong relationships that enable students to improve their academic performance and earn a high school diploma.

Fort Worth, Texas: Resident volunteers will educate low-income families on topics including financial health, managing credit and debt, and the dangers of predatory financial services.

Saint Paul, Minnesota: To reduce the amount of money homeowners spend on water as well as on code violation fines, resident volunteers will help their neighbors make minor home and property repairs and reduce excess water usage.

Tulsa, Oklahoma: Citizen volunteers will offer financial security workshops and coaching to older adults with limited incomes in order to increase self-employment skills and opportunities.

City of Grand Rapids begins year-long autonomous vehicle trial



William Kucinski | July 26, 2019

"In Michigan, we've taken steps to nurture growth of electric and autonomous vehicles, and embrace our role as the nation's automotive leader," says Garrick Rochow, senior vice president of operations for Consumers Energy.

If the residents of downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan are on the fence about autonomous vehicles (AVs), they'll soon have the chance to hop in an electric self-driving vehicle and post about their experiences on social media. The [Grand Rapids Autonomous Vehicle Initiative](#) (AVGR),

with runs from Friday, July 26 until July 2020, is inviting the public to test self-driving public transportation for free.

AVGR – a coalition of nine Michigan companies, the [city of Grand Rapids](#), and state of Michigan – is the first of its kind, bringing together enterprise and infrastructure to gather and analyze critical information with the goal of understanding the usage of autonomous vehicles in a city environment. The fleet of AVs, sourced from AVGR member company [May Mobility](#), will operate alongside the City's existing [Downtown Area Shuttle](#) (DASH) bus fleet and the public can hail an AV ride at any DASH West stop.

"DASH West was designed from the beginning to be user-friendly, allow people to easily travel around downtown and reach many of the major landmarks and locations in our city. Placing our first AV test on this route will connect this technology with people and the places they want to be," says Josh Naramore, director of the City's Mobile GR department. "Grand Rapids is the best real-world testing ground. We've brought together developers, urban planners, accessibility experts and community stakeholders to understand their needs and design solutions that will build trust and capability with riders."

AVGR will operate on the 3.2-mile existing DASH West bus route, which provides access to downtown and the city's West Side and Heartside business districts. The route includes 22 stops, 30 traffic lights, and 12 turns, including three left turns. All autonomous vehicles have an attendant onboard when they are on Grand Rapids streets. As a commuter-driven service, DASH West provides connectivity to more than 10 City-owned parking lots and points of interest that include David D. Hunting YMCA, Kendall College of Art & Design, Grand Rapids Children's Museum, Van Andel Arena and Bridge Street Market.

"As populations are increasing in our cities and reliable transportation is becoming more of an issue with city congestion, May Mobility is using technology to improve how we move through urban places safer and more efficiency," says Edwin Olson, founder and CEO of May Mobility. "Grand Rapids is an incredible city with a coalition of private business stakeholders who have supported this project from

the beginning, and we're excited to be partnering on this project that will allow the community to drive less and live more."

According to AVGR, the member companies of the group include the people who design and build the environments that Grand Rapids residents live, work, and move in every day: City of Grand Rapids, [Consumers Energy](#), [Faurecia](#), [Gentex](#), May Mobility, [PlanetM/Michigan Economic Development Corporation \(MEDC\)](#), [Rockford Construction](#), [Start Garden/Seamless](#), and [Steelcase](#).

"In Michigan, we've taken steps to nurture growth of electric and autonomous vehicles, and embrace our role as the nation's automotive leader," says Garrick Rochow, senior vice president of operations for Consumers Energy. "As Michigan's largest energy provider, we're excited to work with May Mobility and the City of Grand Rapids to help bring this technology and a clean energy future to West Michigan – powered by Consumers Energy."

AVGR will focus on four areas during its operation:

- **Feasibility:** Little research has been done on the impact of mobility on our cities, yet every change in transportation technology has transformed them. The initiative is designed to gain insight and understand how autonomous vehicles impact existing urban structures.
- **Accessibility:** Address how autonomous vehicles improve or impact mobility for the elderly and people with disabilities and explore solutions around design of interiors and the urban environment to facilitate accessibility.
- **Safety:** Gather data and study safety in real-world operations. The initiative will explore how autonomous vehicles interact with automobile traffic, transportation, bicycle riders and pedestrians on city streets.
- **Community:** Prepare the local community and neighborhoods for the effects of autonomous transportation. This is a priority for the initiative and includes open sessions for city stakeholders for community visioning, goal setting, plan making and recommendations for public investments.

"Ensuring that inclusive and accessible transportation operations exist for people in communities, including Grand Rapids, remains a vital priority for PlanetM, and it starts with identifying solutions to today's most crucial mobility challenges," says Trevor Pawl, senior vice president of Business Innovation at MEDC. "Through this exciting collaboration with May Mobility, AVGR combines Michigan's opportunistic approach to the advancement of new mobility technology with our commitment to improving the quality of life for individuals, by directly engaging with those most impacted in the community."

Fleet operations for the May Mobility vehicles are housed and charged in the parking garage connected to the headquarters of Rockford Construction, which contains the necessary EV charging equipment and parking spaces to clean, maintain, and service the technology on the vehicles.

"Unlike any autonomous project of its kind, AVGR will achieve the type of systems integrations and learnings in months that typically take years," says Mike Morin, principal of Start Garden and the Seamless coalition. "Our public-private partnership will create a direct local connection between the vehicles and the community, and the coalition will host conversations with community stakeholders to thoughtfully and intentionally address accessibility of the vehicles."

Users are encouraged to post about their experiences and AV sightings on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #AVGR.

[William Kucinski](#) is content editor at SAE International, Aerospace Products Group in Warrendale, Pa. Previously, he worked as a writer at the NASA Safety Center in Cleveland, Ohio and was responsible for writing the agency's System Failure Case Studies. His interests include literally anything that has to do with space, past and present military aircraft, and propulsion technology.

Contact him regarding any article or collaboration ideas by e-mail at william.kucinski@sae.org.

