STRENGTHENING CIVIC CAPACITY FOR REVITALIZATION IN SMALLER LEGACY CITIES

STRATEGIES FROM “REGENERATING AMERICA’S SMALLER LEGACY CITIES”

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ABOUT GREATER OHIO POLICY CENTER

An outcome-oriented statewide non-profit that champions revitalization and sustainable redevelopment in Ohio:

- Revitalize Ohio’s urban cores and metropolitan regions
- Achieve sustainable land reuse and economic growth
SMALL AND MID-SIZED LEGACY CITIES

DEFINITION

- Between 30,000 and 200,000 residents
- Most are located in the Midwest and Northeast
- Industrial history
- Lost population since peak
- Not a college town or suburb
From Akron to Zanesville: How Are Ohio’s Small and Mid-Sized Cities Faring?

Revitalizing America’s Smaller Legacy Cities
Strategies for Postindustrial Success from Gary to Lowell
3 KEY FINDINGS FROM ANALYSIS OF 24 CITIES IN REGENERATING AMERICA'S SMALLER LEGACY CITIES
1. CHANGING ECONOMIES
2. DECLINING ECONOMIC HEALTH
3. DIVERGING TRAJECTORIES

DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOUSING MARKETS

Photo Credit: Grguy2011 via Wikimedia Commons
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS
Civic Infrastructure
The Kresge Foundation defines civic capacity as:

“the ability of a community to see challenges, draw plans sufficient to meet them and muster the time, energy and creativity to move on those plans.”
CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

“The network of organizations, resources, and engaged citizens who not only help a community function, but mobilize in times of crisis or opportunity.”

1. FOCUS ON CIVIC CAPACITY AND BUILDING TALENT

Strong cities have strong leaders in all sectors willing to “own the problem” of the city’s revitalization.
2. ENCOURAGE A SHARED PUBLIC/PRIVATE SECTOR VISION

Vision for the future must be grounded in a realistic assessment of the present.
3. GROW HUMAN CAPITAL BY INVESTING IN LOW-INCOME RESIDENTS

Strong cities are places of opportunity for residents of varying incomes and educational backgrounds.

Photo Credit: Rowan Cabarrus Community College
Cities are most likely to be successful by blending a long term strategic vision and an incremental process of change.
Quality of Place
Why focus on quality of place?
PLACEMAKING

The process of creating places where people want to live, work, invest, and spend time.
5. DEPLOY CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strong cities have a strong sense of place that encourages diverse people to live, work, and play there.
6. FOCUS REGIONAL EFFORTS ON REBUILDING A STRONG DOWNTOWN

Strong cities are built around downtowns that serve as the region’s economic and cultural core.
Strong cities have neighborhoods of choice for people with a range of incomes.

Photo: Citiwide Development
Strong cities thrive when state policy is responsive to their specific needs.
ONLINE TOOLKIT OF RESOURCE FOR 8 STRATEGIES
SMALLER LEGACY CITY TOOLKIT: 8 STRATEGIES

Build Civic Capacity
Committed local leadership is crucial for shepherding smaller legacy cities through the process of revitalization.

Encourage A Shared Vision
The magnitude of the challenges facing smaller legacy cities means that no sector can successfully address them alone.

Expand Opportunities for Low-Income Workers
Efforts to revitalize smaller legacy cities cannot be successful if they focus on high-income residents alone.

Build on an Authentic Sense of Place
Quality places help to attract and retain talent, an important component of economic development.

Focus Regional Efforts on a Strong Downtown
The strength of a region depends on the strength of its central city.

Engage in Community and Strategic Planning
In a small city where resources are scarce, competing visions for the future cannot all be implemented successfully.

Stabilize Distressed Neighborhoods
Strong cities require neighborhoods of choice for all residents.

Strategically Leverage State Policies
States have an important role to play in local revitalization efforts.
TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Smaller Legacy City Toolkit

many smaller legacy cities, but it is one of the most important ingredients for revitalization.

Committed and collaborative local leadership is critical for shepherding smaller legacy cities through the difficult process of revitalization. Rebuilding civic capacity and a pipeline for talent is a long-term process, but one that will help communities weather both current and future challenges.

Tools

- Asset-Based Community Development Toolkit
  Asset-based community development (ABCDD) is a model for community change that is focused on leveraging the existing strengths of a neighborhood instead of focusing on its deficiencies.
- Kumu Network Mapping Tool
  Network maps can help identify who leaders are in a community, show how they are connected to one another, and help identify where additional representation is needed.
- CCELI Community Organizing Handbook
  Community organizing is about building the capacity of a community to address a problem by identifying and attacking its root causes.

If you have a resource you would like to see in the toolkit, drop us a line.
PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Smaller Legacy City Toolkit

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Tools  Programs  Background Information

Place-Based Fellowships → Place-based fellowship programs can help strengthen the pipeline for filling key leadership roles in smaller legacy cities’ civic sector.

Engage Students → A key component of strong civic capacity is a robust pipeline for new talent.

Seek Supplemental Capacity → Sometimes, resources from outside of a community can help to build local capacity for the long-term.

Neighborhood Improvement Projects → Empowering residents is an important aspect of building strong civic capacity.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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Tools Programs Background Information

Self Interests

Concepts from the field of community organizing can be useful for leaders hoping to build momentum to make change in their communities.

Asset Based Community Development Institute

Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a model for community empowerment and change that is focused on building and leveraging capacity in disinvested neighborhoods.

Civic Capacity Roundtable Key Findings

Key learnings on Civic Capacity from a Roundtable of Experts and Practitioners

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EMERGING NETWORK
OF PEERS IN OHIO
Presenting a Positive Vision

To present a bold vision for the future of their communities, a bipartisan, cross-sectoral network of leaders from small legacy cities have released “A Vision for Ohio’s Reinvention Cities.” Endorsed by more than twenty organizations representing the private, public, nonprofit, and philanthropic sectors, this forward-looking agenda outlines achievable state policies that are key to ensuring the revitalization of Ohio’s Reinvention Cities - legacy cities with fewer than 65,000 residents that have lost population since their 20th century peaks. The vision document proposes workable solutions that can be adopted by candidates and policymakers from both sides of the aisle as they work to strengthen these communities that are essential for ensuring Ohio’s future prosperity.