



AUSTIN, MN

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INSTRUCTIONS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency developed this community self-assessment for the Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program. The self-assessment is designed to help your Steering Committee consider local trends, concerns, and issues related to equitable development. It can help your Committee and Planning Assistance Team narrow the focus to a specific set of key issues and begin identifying appropriate strategies to address those issues.

What this self-assessment is:

- A conversation starter.
- A learning tool for the Steering Committee to begin thinking about equitable development topics and strategies.
- An information-gathering tool for the outside facilitators to better understand where the community is today and where it wants to go.



What it is not:

- A scorecard, ranking, audit, or judgment of any kind.
- A checklist of programs and projects you could have.
- A permanent assessment that cannot be revised.
- Intended to be an onerous task for the community.

Benefits for the community:

- Helps the community conceptualize its current development landscape and begin to examine the scope of possibilities and interrelated activities.
- Helps generate ideas about possible stakeholders to invite to the workshop.
- Provides a concrete way for the Steering Committee to begin their work together.

Benefits for the outside facilitators:

- Provides valuable background information on the status of planning and development in the community.
- Helps clarify workshop goals and desired outcomes.
- Helps identify case studies and supplemental materials most pertinent to the community.

How to Complete Your Community Self-Assessment

To the extent possible, this self-assessment is best completed as a group activity to spark dialogue about key issues, opportunities, and goals. Please schedule 1-2 in-person or virtual meeting(s) with your Steering Committee to complete the following steps. As a team, **plan for about 2 hours of work**; there is no need to spend more time than that.

Please begin by filling out the Narrative Overview section, and then select and fill in the 3-4 Focus Areas that are most aligned with your community's goals and priorities for the Building Blocks process. ***You are not required to complete the entire self-assessment or answer every question.***

Feel free to answer the questions with just a sentence or two, or more if desired. Also feel free to represent multiple opinions on a given question. Pay attention to areas of



agreement, disagreement, and enthusiasm, as this information will be helpful to highlight during the conference calls and at the workshop.

Be sure to send any current data, maps, plans, website links, or other information that provides context and supports your vision for equitable development to the Planning Assistance Team (please include both EPA staff and consultant team) along with your completed self-assessment.

Defining Equitable Development

For decades, investment and development patterns in underserved communities have been harmful, causing both displacement and disinvestment. This particularly harmed communities of color, where inequities have been persistent and profound. Efforts to redress these harms fall under the umbrella of equitable development.

The EPA describes equitable development as [“an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering places that are healthy and vibrant.”](#) The EPA outlines [seven elements](#) to equitable development in “Creating Equitable, Healthy and Sustainable Communities”. This Building Blocks self-assessment tool is built off of the elements identified in this publication.

In May 2023, the Domestic Policy Council released [a memorandum advising federal agencies to advance equitable community development](#). In the memo, the equitable development is described as “a positive development approach that employs processes, policies, and programs that aim to meet the needs of all communities and community members, with a particular focus on underserved communities and populations.”

The practice of equitable development continues to evolve. Additional approaches and definitions for equitable development are available as part of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) [initiative to address equity](#).

The NAACP, through the [Centering Equity in the Sustainable Building Sector Initiative \(CESBSI\)](#), developed a toolkit for Equitable Community Involvement in Building & Development Projects. A key emphasis of CEDBSI is “bridging the divide for Black and brown communities for whom, because of historic environmental racism, structures are more likely to be unhealthy, energy inefficient and disaster vulnerable.”



Environmental justice is integral to equitable development, addressing the historical inequities faced by marginalized communities. This concept gained significant recognition during the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, which led to the adoption of seventeen Principles of Environmental Justice. These principles emphasize proactive approaches to environmental challenges and highlight the interrelated nature of issues like housing, land use, and industrial pollution.

The integration of environmental justice into urban planning and development processes has historically been challenging. However, recent efforts by researchers, advocates, planners, and community builders have begun to break down these barriers, demonstrating that environmental justice and planning can coexist as complementary goals. Equitable development serves as a strategic method to advance environmental justice, enhancing public involvement, fostering collaborative problem-solving, and making a tangible difference in communities that are historically underserved and overburdened.

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY VISION: NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

1. Describe your ideal vision for your community and for the study area for this project five years from now.

Groundwork to allow the corridor to be fully utilized is completed. Early highly implementable improvements in progress or completed.

The Chamber envisions economic growth thanks to coordinated, market-responsive retail/restaurant/cultural offerings in both downtown and along the Oakland corridor designed to capitalize on the 100,000 annual visitors to the SPAM Museum while serving residents with options for food, shopping, and entertainment. This core economic growth will then drive more opportunities throughout Austin and all its residents.

2. How do you define or describe equitable development in your community?

This area needs attention. Maintain demographic mix in neighborhoods and businesses city wide. Future development should take account of financial accessibility. JEDI will be interwoven into new comprehensive plan.

All boats rise in a flood.



3. What are some of the key people, places, events, or activities that shape your community's identity and culture, both currently and historically? What is unique about your community and the study area that you want to emphasize and celebrate?
 - A. Historic downtown (Main Street, SPAM Museum, Mill Pond, Park/trail system)
 - B. Gathering: Coffee House on Main, Austin Artworks, Downtown Grill, 4th Ave Fest, Freedom Fest.
 - C. Iconic: Tendermaid, Kenny's Oak Grill, Sweet Reads, Paramount Theatre.
 - a. Unique signage/branding - Apollo
 - b. Diversity in services and ownership
 - c. Landscaping at McD's
 - d. Athletic Field/sports complex
 - e. Some long time neighborhood businesses – Sterling, Ace, Donkers
 - f. Restaurants – DQ, Pho Kayah, Maya Taqueria

Key players: elephants in the room: Hormel Foundation and Hormel Foods. Strong supporters of the community.

Key events: Austin Artworks Festival, Paint the Town Pink (Hormel Institute cancer awareness fundraising events)

In terms of the Oakland Corridor under discussion, it is a pass-through area with a confused identity. Not really a cause for celebration

4. How are your community and the study area changing? This could include demographic shifts, development trends, or other changes.
 - A. Becoming more commercial, increased diversity, we have a "thin" middle class (dumbbell economy).
 - B. The area seems to have been subdivided with housing in mind, which has converted to commercial.
 - C. There's not a cohesive vibe, or a vibe at all maybe. It's nostalgic in some places, but a mish mash in others.

We have many migrants here, and often they speak no English, which limits their ability to fully integrate into the community. Also, because of the nature of the jobs they take, they often have little "free time" or flexibility.



5. What groups in the community face unique barriers to thriving?

Anyone trying to buy a house.

People who rely on public transport for various reasons. Food deserts.

Are communities in need accessing the services that are available? Education, fear of government.

Take for example a foreign-born family who opens a small business here in Austin. Typically their business might serve only their own ethnic population. They often must also work outside of the family business to make ends meet. They may not understand the local market and may choose to operate a business the way they would in their home countries rather than applying business planning and market research to help them thrive.

6. What are the top successes your community has had in making progress towards your vision? Who was involved and/or led these efforts?

Decision makers from the early 90's have determined to see immigrants and refugees as a benefit to the community and have created and support many things to help them be successful, starting at school age through adult.

Apex, Austin Aspires, Welcome Center, Parenting Resource Center, Community Health workers, many non-profits, United Way, Salvation Army, etc.

- Hormel Foundation, Bonnie Rietz, School District (success coaches, Austin aspires), (Newer – Hometown Food Security, Welcoming America)

West Oakland Auto. Cecilia and Jose Cisfuentes have a successful business, in part because of the hard work they put into learning English and learning how to apply best practices to their business through formal education from Riverland Community College, community ESL programs, etc.

7. What are the top challenges your community experiences in making progress towards your vision for equitable development?

Making connections, funding, expertise/knowledge, fear of change, lack of vision/desire. Low expectations. Higher paying jobs.



Programs that increase the tax burden on residents and businesses to support efforts without economic return on investment.

8. Are there communities that are similar to yours, or examples of equitable development projects in other communities, that you find inspiring? Which aspects of these communities or projects would you like to see in your own community? (Be specific! Examples can come from anywhere in the world.)

We've been compared to Faribault, MN and Bentonville, AR. The corridor is poor for pedestrian and multi-modal access. Asheville NC great multi-modal access, trees, arts district. Shanghai, tucks greenery wherever possible, downtown/tourist/unique neighborhood areas are well maintained. Rochester MN has a group that maintains downtown district (clean and safe ambassadors).

Galena, Illinois. A main street with uninterrupted user experience.

FOCUS AREA 1: FACILITATE MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING AND LAND USE DECISIONS

Overview

What communities/populations tend to be un- or underrepresented in local planning and development decision making processes? What barriers stand in the way of their involvement? What partners/organizations could help to facilitate stronger engagement, particularly in the study area?

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check "Adopted" if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, "Considered & Opted Against" if you've tried and ruled out related strategies, or "Interested in Exploring" if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you're unsure about it, leave the row blank.



[Click here for definitions, best practices, and examples.](#)

FOCUS AREA 1: FACILITATE MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING AND LAND USE DECISIONS	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Study area planning documents (such as neighborhood plans, sector plans, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Targeted/pop-up community engagement to meet underrepresented populations where they are	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Formal or informal partnerships with community-based organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multilingual interpretation and translation in planning activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resident leadership/advisory councils and/or community ambassadors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compensating community leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community-based assessments (walkability audits, food audits, community safety walkabouts, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning/land use leadership development/education programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online public engagement platforms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.



What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?

FOCUS AREA 2: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Overview

What are the most significant barriers to public health and community wellness in your community and the study area? These could include contamination, built environments that discourage physical activity, lack of access to healthy food, vulnerability to climate change impacts such as flooding and extreme heat, and other barriers. What groups, initiatives, or projects are actively working to overcome these challenges?

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring” if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you’re unsure about it, leave the row blank.

[Click here for definitions, best practices, and examples.](#)

FOCUS AREA 2: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Health impact assessments or Health in all Programs (HIAP) policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brownfield remediation plans/programs/incentives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Supporting Equitable Development



Good neighbor agreements between companies and communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buffer zones between industrial facilities and sensitive land uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nuisance-related zoning or conditional land use permits for facilities with potential environmental concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overlay zones setting additional requirements for industrial zones close to residential neighborhoods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emissions mitigation programs/technologies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green building policies or goals (such as LEED or EnergyStar Homes)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green streets policies or goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green infrastructure policies or programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs to encourage greening vacant lots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs and incentives to strengthen healthy food access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pocket park plans or incentives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Climate adaptation plans or data on community vulnerability to flooding, extreme heat, severe storms, and other impacts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community health clinics/initiatives/partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.



What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?

FOCUS AREA 3: STRENGTHEN EXISTING COMMUNITIES

Overview

Has your community successfully reinvested in your downtown and other established or older commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods? This includes areas that may not be officially designated as historic but are longstanding parts of the urban fabric, contrasted with newer suburban or exurban developments. Please share any examples of such initiatives. What barriers are hindering revitalization and redevelopment efforts, especially in areas where underserved communities live, work, and play?

Mainstreet project: 40+ facades improved, redevelopment of old power plant site (now YMCA), redevelopment of old YMCA site (now apartments). SPAM Museum where buildings had been destroyed by fire. Courthouse and jail downtown redevelopment. Downtown Grill (and apartments) as well as Artworks Center.

There are a lot of ideas, but few resources. Impact Austin working on “Velocity Report” and initiated city and county update of Comp plans and downtown master plan, starting in 2024.

We need funding sources to invest in updating the historic buildings in downtown. There are relatively few building owners willing or able to invest in this critical economic infrastructure. The buildings require a significant level of renovation to allow for maximum flexibility of use and to bring them up to code for public access.

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring”



if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you're unsure about it, leave the row blank.

FOCUS AREA 3: STRENGTHEN EXISTING COMMUNITIES	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Fix-it-first policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Main Street programs	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Business Improvement Districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Clean-up services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Land banks or community land trusts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Title clearance support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Other vacant/abandoned property cleanup strategies (i.e. cleanup days, greening)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Pop-up retail/temporary space activation strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policy/regulatory tools that encourage and guide redevelopment (i.e., by-right mixed-use and multifamily residential zoning districts, overlay districts, small area plans, urban design guidelines)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Infill development incentives (permit streamlining, density bonuses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Zoning/density bonuses for developers including space for community amenities or local businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Historic district designation programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Façade improvement programs	X expired	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Grants or low-interest loans for commercial rehabilitation and/or tenant improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Programs or entities to deploy, leverage, and direct Community Reinvestment Act funds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area? We are updating our comp plan to engage the community on these issues, also see above.



FOCUS AREA :
4 PROVIDE HOUSING CHOICES

Overview

How is the existing housing supply meeting the needs of community residents, in terms of affordability, housing types/sizes, quality, and rental/ownership mix? Are rising housing costs or displacement a concern for residents? What are the barriers to expanding housing supply, diversity, and quality to better address local needs? What groups, initiatives, or projects are actively working to overcome these barriers?

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring” if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you’re unsure about it, leave the row blank.

[Click here for definitions, best practices, and examples.](#)

FOCUS AREA 4: PROVIDE HOUSING CHOICES	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Create a local preservation program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Housing rehabilitation assistance	X low income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Renovation/redevelopment of existing subsidized housing, including through green retrofits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Rent control regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Just cause eviction requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Property tax relief for older, low-income homeowners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Emergency housing and utility assistance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community land trusts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zoning incentives that encourage affordable housing and minimize permitting hurdles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Inclusionary zoning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tax abatements/forgiveness for affordable housing projects	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Affordable housing impact fee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Utilize public property for affordable housing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building capacity for affordable housing developers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
First-time homebuyer assistance/education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mortgage counseling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Renters-rights education initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

Not enough inventory.

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?



FOCUS AREA :
5 PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Overview

What modes of transportation (walking, biking, public transit, driving) do residents of the study area use to reach school, work, and other amenities? Is it safe and attractive for residents to walk or bike to key destinations (places of employment, schools, shopping, healthcare, recreation destinations)? What makes it difficult for residents to reach destinations in your community?

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring” if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you’re unsure about it, leave the row blank.

FOCUS AREA 5: PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Complete streets policies	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Safe Routes to Schools programs	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sidewalk repair/upkeep programs	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Streetscaping programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Signed bicycle routes	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transit rider council	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Public transportation that reliably connects residents to key employers	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local demand-response transit	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bike or scooter sharing programs	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equitable transit-oriented development policies or programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vision Zero (no/reduced traffic deaths and severe injuries) policies/programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Multimodal design guidance for streets	x	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs or incentives to encourage walking and bicycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	x
Incorporate transportation/access improvements into community benefits agreements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?

6 SUPPORT COMMUNITY & GENERATIONAL WEALTH-BUILDING



FOCUS AREA :

Overview

Do residents of the study area have access to opportunities to build wealth, including banking and financial services, entrepreneurship and small business development support, and other chances to invest in their own community? Please provide examples. What could be done to strengthen community wealth-building opportunities?

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring” if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you’re unsure about it, leave the row blank.

[Click here for definitions, best practices, and examples.](#)

FOCUS AREA 6: SUPPORT COMMUNITY & GENERATIONAL WEALTH-BUILDING	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Small business support programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Zoning and development strategies to support small businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small business preference for local contracts and hiring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leverage anchor institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Engage youth through career coaching and civic leadership opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community-oriented development initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community land trusts for affordable housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Access to banking and financial well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial education and counseling services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Incentives for intergenerational wealth transfer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial inclusion initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?

7 PRESERVE AND BUILD ON THE FEATURES THAT MAKE A COMMUNITY DISTINCTIVE

Overview

What are the important physical (buildings, main streets, public spaces, natural places) and cultural (institutions, traditions, festivals, commemorations of history) assets in the study area? Where do residents gather together? How are these community features being preserved or strengthened through current development projects?

- Important: Historic downtown / Main Street, SPAM Museum, Mill Pond, park/trail system.
- Gathering: Coffee House on Main, Austin Artworks Festival, Downtown Grill
- Iconic: Tendermaid, Kenny’s Oak Grill, Sweet Reads Bookstore



FOCUS AREA :

Strategy Areas

Please review the following set of planning and development strategies. Check “Adopted” if your community has already implemented strategies related to the topic, “Considered & Opted Against” if you’ve tried and ruled out related strategies, or “Interested in Exploring” if your community may want to pursue strategies related to this topic in the future. If the strategy is not relevant to your community or you’re unsure about it, leave the row blank.

[Click here for definitions, best practices, and examples.](#)

FOCUS AREA 7: PRESERVE AND BUILD ON THE FEATURES THAT MAKE A COMMUNITY DISTINCTIVE	Adopted	Considered & Opted Against	Interested in Exploring
Neighborhood conservation districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Design guidelines to preserve neighborhood character	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Community/cultural spaces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Right of first refusal for cultural/community nonprofit organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexible zoning for cultural/community nonprofit organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Culturally preferred designs are allowed under code	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Historic preservation efforts for cultural resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Historic preservation overlay zones to maintain physical community identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Grants available for cultural/community nonprofit organizations	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	X



Adaptive reuse of public property for community/cultural uses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Incorporate cultural spaces/programs into community benefits agreements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Of the adopted strategies checked above, what is working well? List accomplishments to date.

What barriers or challenges is your community facing related to this focus area?

It tends to be cheaper to start over. Also limited resources, few commercial kitchens downtown.

What would you like to see your community do in the next 2-5 years to address this focus area?



APPENDIX: STRATEGY DEFINITIONS, BEST PRACTICES, AND EXAMPLES

This appendix contains definitions, best practices, and examples for each of the strategies listed in the checklists. Click the arrows next to the headings to expand the sections you'd like to learn more about.

FOCUS AREA 1: FACILITATE MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PLANNING AND LAND USE DECISIONS

Study area planning documents (such as neighborhood plans, sector plans, etc.)

Definition: These documents outline the vision, guidelines, and regulations for the development and use of specific neighborhoods or sectors within a community.

Best Practice: Engage community members early in the planning process through workshops and public forums to ensure their needs and perspectives shape the development plans.

Example: A city conducts a series of community design workshops, gathering input before drafting a new sector plan, resulting in a document that aligns with the community's preferences for land use and infrastructure.

Formal or informal partnerships with community-based organizations

Definition: Collaborations between planning departments and local organizations that represent diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to ensure inclusive planning processes.

Best Practice: Foster partnerships with organizations that provide insights into diverse communities' cultural and linguistic needs.

Example: A municipal planning department collaborates with a nonprofit serving a predominantly immigrant community, integrating their insights into urban development projects.

Multilingual interpretation and translation in planning activities



Definition: The practice of providing planning materials and communication in multiple languages to ensure broader community participation.

Best Practice: Implement strategies such as translated materials and interpretation services at public meetings to enable full participation by non-English speaking residents.

Example: An urban planning department distributes multilingual brochures and employs interpreters at public hearings, enhancing participation from all community sectors.

Resident leadership/advisory councils and/or community ambassadors

Definition: Programs that empower local residents to take active roles in the planning process through councils or ambassador roles.

Best Practice: Establish and support advisory councils or community ambassadors who are trained to collect and relay community feedback to planners.

Example: A neighborhood forms a resident advisory council with representatives from each block to ensure continuous and representative community feedback.

Compensating community leaders

Definition: The practice of providing financial remuneration to community leaders for their time and effort in participating in urban planning processes.

Best Practice: Offer compensation to acknowledge the significant contribution of community leaders in facilitating inclusive engagement.

Example: A city introduces a stipend program for community leaders who participate in planning meetings, acknowledging their critical role.



Community-based assessments (walkability audits, food audits, community safety walkabouts, etc.)

Definition: Localized evaluations conducted by community members to identify and address specific urban issues like walkability, food access, and safety.

Best Practice: Engage residents in firsthand assessments to collect relevant data that directly informs urban planning decisions.

Example: Residents conduct a walkability audit that informs city planning decisions, leading to targeted infrastructure improvements based on identified needs.

Planning/land use leadership development/education programs

Definition: Educational initiatives designed to enhance the capacity of community members to effectively engage in urban planning and advocacy.

Best Practice: Develop and support programs that educate and empower residents with the necessary skills to contribute to the planning process.

Example: A local university and city planning department collaborate to offer a leadership development program focused on urban planning and community organizing, cultivating informed community advocates.

FOCUS AREA 2: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT





Health impact assessments or Health in all Programs (HIAP) policies

Definition: HIAP is an approach that integrates health considerations into policymaking across all sectors to ensure public health factors are considered in all decisions.

Best Practice: Systematically evaluate the health impacts of proposed projects and policies to prioritize health outcomes in all governmental decisions.

Example: A city adopts HIAP, requiring that all new housing developments undergo health impact assessments to address potential effects on community wellness.

Brownfield remediation plans/programs/incentives

Definition: Initiatives aimed at cleaning and redeveloping brownfield sites, which are previously used lands that may be contaminated with hazardous materials.

Best Practice: Implement robust remediation strategies followed by redevelopment that converts these areas into community assets such as parks, housing, or commercial spaces.

Example: A municipality launches a grant program incentivizing developers to clean up and repurpose brownfields into affordable housing complexes.

Good neighbor agreements between companies and communities

Definition: Legally binding agreements between local businesses and the communities they operate within to ensure operations do not adversely affect the local environment or residents' health.

Best Practice: Encourage transparency and community involvement in negotiations to ensure that the agreements meet the community's environmental and health safety needs.

Example: A community near a manufacturing plant negotiates a good neighbor agreement that limits harmful emissions and sets up a community monitoring program.



Buffer zones between industrial facilities and sensitive land uses

Definition: Areas designated to distance industrial activities from residential zones, schools, hospitals, and other places frequented by at-risk populations to reduce exposure to pollutants.

Best Practice: Establish clear zoning laws that create sufficient buffer zones to protect sensitive areas from industrial impacts.

Example: A city enforces a new zoning ordinance that requires a minimum of 500 meters of buffer space between new industrial developments and existing residential areas.

Nuisance-related zoning or conditional land use permits for facilities with potential environmental concerns

Definition: Zoning regulations or conditional permits that are specifically designed to manage facilities that could cause environmental nuisances, such as noise or odor.

Best Practice: Implement stringent conditional use permits that include regular compliance checks to mitigate potential nuisances.

Example: A local government issues a conditional land use permit to a factory with stipulations for noise reduction measures after community complaints.

Overlay zones setting additional requirements for industrial zones close to residential neighborhoods

Definition: Special zoning districts that provide an additional layer of standards for industrial activities near residential areas to protect public health.

Best Practice: Use overlay zoning to enforce stricter environmental controls and building codes in areas where industrial and residential uses are proximate.

Example: An urban area applies an overlay zone requiring all new industrial projects to undergo environmental impact assessments and community consultations before approval.



Emissions mitigation programs/technologies

Definition: Initiatives aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants from various sources within a community.

Best Practice: Implement advanced technologies and strategies to monitor and reduce emissions from industrial, residential, and transportation sectors.

Example: A municipality implements a program that subsidizes the transition to electric vehicles for public transportation and provides tax incentives for businesses that adopt clean energy solutions.

Green building policies or goals (such as LEED or EnergyStar Homes)

Definition: Standards and certifications that promote energy efficiency and environmentally responsible building practices.

Best Practice: Encourage the adoption of green building certifications and provide incentives for developers and homeowners to meet higher environmental standards.

Example: A local government offers reduced permit fees and expedited processing for construction projects that achieve LEED certification or meet EnergyStar criteria.

Green streets policies or goals

Definition: Planning initiatives that integrate environmental sustainability into street design, focusing on stormwater management, reducing heat island effects, and enhancing pedestrian and cyclist safety.

Best Practice: Design and retrofit streetscapes to include green infrastructure elements such as bioswales, permeable pavements, and increased tree canopy.

Example: A municipality adopts a green streets policy requiring all new street renovation projects to incorporate sustainable water management and increased green spaces.



Green infrastructure policies or programs

Definition: Strategies that use natural processes and systems to achieve environmental benefits, such as enhancing water quality and providing urban cooling.

Best Practice: Implement programs that integrate green infrastructure like parks, green roofs, and wetlands into planning to manage stormwater and reduce urban heat.

Example: A city develops a comprehensive green infrastructure plan that mandates green roofs on all new large-scale commercial developments.

Programs to encourage greening vacant lots

Definition: Initiatives that transform vacant or underutilized land into productive green spaces.

Best Practice: Support community-led projects that convert vacant lots into gardens, mini-parks, or urban farms to improve neighborhood aesthetics and functionality.

Example: A local government partners with nonprofits to provide grants and resources for communities to develop community gardens on abandoned lots.

Programs and incentives to strengthen healthy food access

Definition: Initiatives designed to improve access to healthy, affordable food through community gardens, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, and mobile food vending.

Best Practice: Develop and promote programs that connect local producers with urban consumers to enhance food security and support local agriculture.

Example: A municipality establishes a "food hub" that facilitates connections between local farmers and residents, along with providing start-up funds for mobile food vendors offering healthy options.



Pocket park plans or incentives

Definition: Small parks typically created on a single vacant lot or small undeveloped land spaces, designed to provide greenery, recreation, and relaxation spots within developed areas.

Best Practice: Encourage the development of pocket parks in more densely populated neighborhoods to provide accessible green spaces.

Example: A redevelopment agency offers incentives for developers to include publicly accessible pocket parks in their residential or commercial projects.

Climate adaptation plans or data on community vulnerability to flooding, extreme heat, severe storms, and other impacts

Definition: Strategies and assessments that identify risks and develop responses to the impacts of climate change such as flooding, extreme heat, and severe storms.

Best Practice: Use climate data to inform planning and infrastructure decisions, ensuring resilience against extreme weather events.

Example: A coastal community updates its planning guidelines based on a climate vulnerability assessment, focusing on flood-resistant infrastructure and emergency preparedness.

Community health clinics/initiatives/partnerships

Definition: Local health services and programs that aim to improve community health outcomes through accessible medical care and health education.

Best Practice: Establish and support partnerships among governments, healthcare providers, and community organizations to offer comprehensive health services, especially in underserved areas.

Example: A network of community health clinics is established through a partnership between the city, a local university, and nonprofit organizations, offering preventive care and health education tailored to community needs.



FOCUS AREA 3: STRENGTHEN EXISTING COMMUNITIES

The definitions, best practices, and examples for this focus area are still under construction. If you have questions on any of the strategies listed, please contact your Planning Assistance Team.

FOCUS AREA 4: PROVIDE HOUSING CHOICES

In evaluating the effectiveness of the existing housing supply in meeting the needs of community residents, it is important to consider affordability, accessibility, and suitability for diverse family structures. Rising housing costs and displacement are increasingly pressing concerns in many communities. Key barriers to expanding the housing supply and improving its quality—both for rental and ownership options—include regulatory hurdles, financial constraints, and logistical challenges. Identifying and supporting communitybased organizations and initiatives actively working on these issues is crucial. These organizations employ various strategies to enhance housing availability and quality, and their efforts are vital in shaping the community's response to these challenges.

Create a local preservation program

Definition: A program focusing on strategies to preserve existing affordable housing stock and ensure that rental properties and units maintain affordability status if and when sold to a new owner.

Best Practice: Municipality convenes a group of stakeholders to identify affordable properties at risk of converting to market rate and assess strategies to maintain affordability.

Example: The Housing Preservation Strike Force is created and charged with developing an action plan to preserve existing housing covenants set to expire by 2025.



Housing rehabilitation assistance

Definition: Financial and technical assistance for the repair and upgrading of existing homes to improve safety and sustainability.

Best Practice: Offer grants and loans to homeowners and landlords to maintain and improve housing quality, particularly in older and historic neighborhoods.

Example: A city program provides matching grants up to \$10,000 for homeowners to upgrade heating systems and remove hazardous materials.

Renovation/redevelopment of existing subsidized housing, including through green retrofits

Definition: Upgrading older, subsidized housing units to meet modern living standards and efficiency.

Best Practice: Invest in the substantial rehabilitation of aging housing stock to prolong its usability and enhance livability.

Example: A housing authority secures federal and state grants to retrofit a 1960s public housing complex with energy-efficient systems and updated amenities.

Rent control regulations

Definition: Policies that limit the rate at which rent can increase in residential properties to maintain affordability.

Best Practice: Implement rent control to stabilize neighborhoods and prevent displacement in rapidly gentrifying areas.

Example: A city caps annual rent increases at 5% plus inflation to protect tenants from sudden rent spikes.

Just cause eviction requirements

Definition: Regulations that protect tenants from being evicted without substantial and justified cause.

Best Practice: Implement just cause eviction policies to provide stability for renters and prevent unfair displacement.

Example: A city ordinance requires that landlords can only evict tenants for specific reasons such as non-payment of rent or breach of lease terms, not at the landlord's whim.

Property tax relief for older, low-income homeowners



Definition: An effort, program, or policy to reduce the tax burden on senior homeowners with a fixed income.

Best Practice: A Senior Citizen or Disabled tax relief program reduces annual real property taxes, and targets seniors over the age of 65 or disabled as defined by the Social Security Administration and earning a household income of less than 80% AMI.

Example: Homestead deduction program reduces the real property assessed value by a fixed amount per tax year and amounts to annual savings on the real property tax bill.

Emergency housing and utility assistance

Definition: Funding source for renters in crisis to cover housing costs for a set, short term time frame.

Best Practice: Set aside short-term emergency funding to help families in crisis prevent eviction, foreclosure, loss of utilities and other emergency uses.

Example: Program provides up to \$7,000 over a 12-month period so that families can stay in their current home or move to a new one. Costs can be used for rent, utilities, moving costs or mortgage payments.

Community land trusts

Definition: Nonprofit organizations that hold land to develop and steward affordable housing, preserving affordability over the long term.

Best Practice: Use community land trusts to ensure permanent affordability and prevent marketdriven displacement.

Example: A community land trust develops a new neighborhood of affordable homes that remain affordable through a 99-year ground lease to homeowners.

Zoning incentives that encourage affordable housing and minimize permitting hurdles

Definition: Benefits such as increased density allowances or expedited permitting granted to developments that include affordable housing.

Best Practice: Encourage developers to include affordable units by offering zoning incentives that make projects more economically viable.

Example: A developer is allowed extra floor area ratio in exchange for including 20% affordable units in a new high-rise project.



Inclusionary zoning

Definition: Zoning ordinances that require a portion of new development to be affordable for low to moderate-income residents.

Best Practice: Use inclusionary zoning to ensure that new developments contribute to the stock of affordable housing.

Example: A city mandates that 10% of units in new residential developments be set aside as affordable housing for families earning below 60% of the median income.

Tax abatements/forgiveness for affordable housing projects

Definition: Reduction or elimination of property taxes for a specified period to incentivize the development of affordable housing.

Best Practice: Offer tax incentives to developers to lower the operational costs of affordable housing units.

Example: A development company receives a 15-year tax abatement for building a 100-unit affordable housing complex in a revitalizing neighborhood.

Affordable housing impact fee

Definition: A fee imposed on new developments to fund affordable housing initiatives.

Best Practice: Utilize fees collected from developers to support the construction or subsidization of affordable housing elsewhere in the community.

Example: A city charges a \$2 per square foot housing impact fee on all new commercial developments, using the funds to support local affordable housing projects.

Utilize public properties and land for affordable housing

Definition: Repurposing underutilized public buildings or land for housing, particularly affordable housing.

Best Practice: Convert unused public properties like schools or hospitals into housing to maximize resource use and address housing shortages.

Example: An old school building is converted into a mixed-use development with affordable apartments and community spaces.



Building capacity for affordable housing developers

Definition: Program that delivers training or access to loan funding to new and emerging local developers to support projects designed to revitalize communities.

Best Practice: Offer a targeted loan fund for developers with a deep commitment to engaging and working collaboratively with local residents.

Example: A local municipality administers an Emerging Developer loan fund with the intention to increase quality affordable housing for residents. Awards are made through a competitive request for proposal process seeking talented but undercapitalized developers with a demonstrated commitment to the local community.

First-time homebuyer assistance/education

Definition: Programs that offer financial aid and educational resources to first-time homebuyers.

Best Practice: Provide down payment assistance, affordable mortgage products, and homebuyer education to ease the purchasing process for first-time buyers.

Example: A county offers a first-time homebuyers program that includes a low-interest loan for the down payment and a series of workshops on homeownership.

Mortgage counseling

Definition: Advisory services offered to potential homebuyers to help them understand mortgage terms and obligations.

Best Practice: Counseling programs assist homebuyers in navigating the complexities of purchasing and financing a home.

Example: A nonprofit organization partners with a city to offer mortgage counseling workshops aimed at low-income buyers.

Renters-rights education initiative

Definition: Programs designed to educate renters about their legal rights and responsibilities to empower them in their dealings with landlords.

Best Practice: Conduct regular workshops and provide online resources to inform tenants about their rights and available support mechanisms.

Example: A tenants' union holds monthly sessions on tenant rights, covering topics from security deposits to legal recourse in cases of eviction.



FOCUS AREA 5: PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

This focus area explores the various transportation methods available to residents for commuting to school, work, and accessing essential amenities. It assesses whether key destinations such as grocery stores, health clinics, parks, and schools are within walkable distances for community members. The overview also examines the challenges that residents face in reaching these destinations. Factors such as the availability of public transit, the condition and connectivity of pedestrian pathways, and the safety of cycling routes are considered to identify gaps in the current transportation infrastructure and opportunities for improvement. This analysis is crucial for developing strategies to enhance mobility, reduce reliance on personal vehicles, and increase access to essential services through better transportation planning.

The definitions, best practices, and examples for this focus area are still under construction. If you have questions on any of the strategies listed, please contact your Planning Assistance Team.

FOCUS AREA 6: SUPPORT COMMUNITY & GENERATIONAL WEALTH-BUILDING

This focus area centers on initiatives aimed at fostering economic prosperity and financial stability within the community, with a particular focus on intergenerational wealth accumulation. It explores strategies to support local businesses, attract investments that contribute to long-term economic growth within the community, and expand access to banking and financial well-being for residents. By nurturing entrepreneurship, promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development, and facilitating wealth-building opportunities, communities can create a more equitable and resilient economic landscape for future generations.



Small business support programs

Definition: Providing financial and technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners to facilitate business growth and sustainability.

Best Practice: Establishing small business incubators or accelerators that offer comprehensive support services, including business planning, marketing assistance, and access to capital.

Example: A nonprofit organization launches a microloan program tailored to support minority-owned businesses, providing affordable financing and mentorship to help entrepreneurs establish and expand their ventures.

Zoning and development strategies to support small businesses

Definition: Zoning strategies to permit businesses to operate with flexibility across a variety of small and large commercial spaces, as well as incentives for developers willing to set aside space for local, small business at affordable lease terms.

Best Practice: Zoning code that takes into consideration flexibility to support a range of small local businesses and their space needs.

Small business preference for local contracts and hiring

Definition: Municipal ordinances that ensure that residents are given priority for new jobs created by municipal development programs. Local purchasing programs can also provide a preference to suppliers that hire locally.

Best Practice: Requiring improvement projects estimated to cost \$500,000 and up to employ a preference for hiring local residents or firms.

Example: City Council approves an ordinance that requires local public construction projects to meet minimum local hiring requirements.



Leverage anchor institutions

Definition: Collaborating closely with anchor institutions (large nonprofit or public institutions that are rooted in a place and unlikely to move to another location such as including universities, health centers) to address socioeconomic challenges in community.

Best Practice: Anchor collaboratives bring together large employers and local organizations and residents to identify, design and implement strategies to benefit the local community.

Example: Establishing MOUs between City and University to coordinate on economic development efforts.

Engage youth through career coaching and civic leadership opportunities

Definition: City-led program or office established to offer workforce development, summer jobs, training and leadership opportunities to local youth.

Best Practice: Collaborating with a program such as AmeriCorps to bring young adults into city government through short term employment opportunities coupled with leadership training.

Example: City organizes a youth engagement council that meets annually, is exposed to the civic process, and offered an opportunity to shape city programs.

Community-oriented development initiatives

Definition: Implementing development projects that prioritize community needs, foster local entrepreneurship, and contribute to the overall well-being of residents.

Best Practice: Engaging community members in the planning and decision-making processes for development projects to ensure alignment with community priorities and values.

Example: A city government partners with local residents and business owners to revitalize a vacant lot into a community garden and market space, creating opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship and community engagement.



Community land trusts for affordable housing

Definition: Establishing community-owned land trusts to develop and manage affordable housing units, ensuring long-term affordability and preventing displacement.

Best Practice: Collaborating with local governments, nonprofit organizations, and residents to establish community land trusts governed by a diverse board of trustees representing the community's interests.

Example: A grassroots coalition forms a community land trust to acquire and rehabilitate vacant properties, converting them into permanently affordable housing units for low-income families and individuals.

Access to banking and financial well-being

Definition: Ensuring convenient access to banking services and promoting financial literacy to enhance the economic well-being of individuals and families.

Best Practice: Establishing partnerships between financial institutions and community organizations to offer financial education workshops and expand access to banking services in underserved areas.

Example: A local credit union collaborates with a community center to provide free financial literacy classes and mobile banking services to residents in low-income neighborhoods.

Financial education and counseling services

Definition: Offering educational programs and personalized counseling services to empower individuals and families with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed financial decisions.

Best Practice: Partnering with local schools, libraries, and community centers to deliver financial literacy workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions to residents of all ages.

Example: A nonprofit organization offers free financial coaching sessions to low-income families, covering topics such as budgeting, debt management, and long-term financial planning.

Incentives for intergenerational wealth transfer

Definition: Implementing policies or programs that facilitate the transfer of wealth between generations and promote asset accumulation among underserved communities.

Best Practice: Establishing tax incentives or grant programs to encourage families to create savings accounts for future generations, fostering long-term financial stability and asset building.

Example: Program offers to match family contributions to a college savings account up to a certain dollar amount over the first two years of a child's life.



Financial inclusion initiatives

Definition: Promoting policies and programs that expand access to financial services and products for underserved populations, including low-income individuals, immigrants, and communities of color.

Best Practice: Partnering with financial institutions and community organizations to develop innovative banking solutions, such as mobile banking apps and prepaid debit cards, tailored to the needs of unbanked and underbanked populations.

Example: A local credit union launches a mobile banking van that travels to underserved neighborhoods, providing on-site banking services and financial education workshops to residents who lack access to traditional bank branches.

FOCUS AREA 7: PRESERVE AND BUILD ON THE FEATURES THAT MAKE A COMMUNITY DISTINCTIVE

This focus area aims to celebrate and preserve the unique characteristics and heritage that define each community. By recognizing the historical events, influential figures, and cultural landmarks that have shaped their identity, communities can foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents. Through intentional preservation efforts and thoughtful development, communities can enhance their vibrancy and authenticity for future generations to enjoy.

Neighborhood conservation districts

Definition: Designated areas with special zoning regulations to preserve the architectural and historical character of neighborhoods.

Best Practice: Involve residents in developing conservation plans, provide incentives for property maintenance, and enforce design guidelines.

Example: The Old Town district has strict zoning regulations to preserve its historic buildings and streetscape.

Design guidelines to preserve neighborhood character



Community/cultural spaces

Definition: Physical locations facilitating social interaction, cultural expression, and community engagement.

Best Practice: Design spaces to be inclusive and adaptable, and foster partnerships for management and programming.

Example: A Community Arts Center provides affordable studios and performance venues for local artists.

Right of first refusal for cultural/community nonprofit organizations

Definition: Policy granting nonprofits the first opportunity to purchase or lease publicly owned buildings.

Best Practice: Establish clear guidelines and offer technical assistance and financial support.

Example: Nonprofits have the first chance to acquire surplus public buildings for community use.

Flexible zoning for cultural/community nonprofit organizations

Definition: Zoning regulations accommodating the unique needs of cultural and community organizations.

Best Practice: Collaborate with stakeholders to identify barriers and implement streamlined processes.

Example: Zoning ordinance allows nonprofits to operate with relaxed requirements in residential zones.

Culturally preferred designs are allowed under code

Definition: Zoning provisions permitting architectural styles reflecting local cultural heritage.

Best Practice: Gather community input to inform design guidelines.

Example: Design guidelines encourage traditional building materials and features in historic districts.

Historic preservation efforts for cultural resources

Definition: Preservation initiatives safeguarding landmarks, artifacts, and traditions significant to community identity.

Best Practice: Conduct surveys, foster partnerships, and integrate traditional knowledge into preservation plans.

Example: Collaborate with indigenous communities to preserve sacred sites and cultural landscapes.



Historic preservation overlay zones to maintain physical community identity
Grants available for cultural/community nonprofit organizations
Adaptive reuse of public property for community/cultural uses
Incorporate cultural spaces/programs into community benefits agreements