

Three Ways to Make Equitable Development Work

By Angela Glover Blackwell

Everyone has a role in building a more inclusive and just society. Through its All-In Cities initiative, PolicyLink, a national research and advocacy organization focused on economic and social equity, assists government and civic leaders across the country in adopting equitable development policies and practices. In this web-only addition to our h magazine special issue “A Community of We,” PolicyLink founder and CEO Angela Glover Blackwell identifies key steps to ensuring that development efforts contribute to a better future for everyone.

Cities and regions across the country are realizing that equity and inclusion are not only the right things to do, they also are essential for prosperity. Leaders are promoting innovative policies to dismantle barriers to opportunity and ensure that all can participate and prosper. Here are three inspiring ways that cities are advancing equity and making sure that development delivers benefits where they are needed most.

Harness the power of city government to foster inclusion. [EquityNewOrleans](#), a citywide initiative of the Office of Mayor Mitch Landrieu, is embedding equity in all city government policies, programs and service delivery procedures. Launched in June 2016, the initiative has engaged hundreds of residents, city employees, grassroots leaders, business leaders and local advocates in identifying racial, economic and geographic disparities that prevent the city from growing to its full capacity, and using best practice models to close the gaps.

The city rolled out an equity strategy — its first ever — in April 2017. The initiative commits the city government to establishing an equity office responsible for promoting equity in all its operations; making equity a central consideration in budgeting; creating plans with accountability measures for all departments; conducting racial equity training for all employees and members of boards and commissions; and advancing equity in hiring and workforce development.

“In the ‘new’ New Orleans, having an equitable government is a top priority,” [Landrieu said](#) in launching the strategy. “We understand the power of equity and view it as a growth strategy that will lead us to creating a stronger and more prosperous city for all our residents.”

Provide equitable access to business financing. As construction and new businesses change the face of downtown Detroit, the [Detroit Development Fund](#) works to extend opportunities to entrepreneurs of color, women and all communities, with the goal of stimulating local business, creating jobs and revitalizing neighborhood economies. It takes capital to start and grow a business. The fund provides loans and technical assistance to businesses that cannot jump the hurdles required by traditional lenders like banks.

Since 2005, the fund has made more than [\\$20 million in loans](#), accelerating the rise of young, homegrown entrepreneurial talent. The fund’s newly launched [Entrepreneurs of Color Fund](#)

provides loans of \$50,000 to \$150,000 to business owners of color and businesses that primarily hire people of color, enabling them to expand, buy equipment and address challenges such as short-term cash flow.

Raise the bar for new development. The city and county of San Francisco require major development to address the dual crises of housing affordability and high unemployment in communities of color. An [historic agreement](#) with Lennard Corp., one of the nation's largest housing developers, ensures that a huge development in Hunters Point, a black community, will benefit rather than displace residents.

The agreement guarantees that 32 percent of housing units in the project are affordable at a range of income levels. It also targets more than \$8.5 million in job training investments to neighborhood residents, with priority given to underrepresented workers and those facing barriers to employment. Construction and other jobs related to the project guarantee living wages, paid sick leave and employer participation in a local hiring program.

To find out more about the importance of equitable development in contributing to an inclusive and just society – “a community of we” – read Ms. Blackwell’s magazine essay, “The Road to We,” which can be found [here](#).