

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Northampton Equity-Focused Complete Streets Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan*

- **Year Complete:** 2017
- **Local Government:** City of Northampton, MA
- **Local Foundation:** Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

Project Purpose

To develop a Complete Streets plan for the City, with an emphasis on equity and prioritization of projects based on socioeconomic status of residents and connectivity.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

- Create a pilot Resident Engagement Team to recruit and train approximately 20 residents to serve as Engagement and Inclusion workers on behalf of the City and Residents with the main goal of reaching and empowering marginalized residents to inform them of opportunities to participate and how to do so.
- Simplify access to important information about opportunities to participate by creating an on-line subscription service and/or engagement app (and/or text message system), and/or a Facebook page with push notifications-- for no cost down-load and use by all. Through this platform, public discussions and meetings can be broadcast live and can be used to solicit resident input on a variety of topics.
- Hold semi-regular "Get to Know One Another" events--possibly dinners, coffees etc. with City staff and elected officials visiting with residents.
- Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understand and advance the process of dismantling institutional/systemic racism. Prioritize training key people (Elected officials, Department Heads, and others most often engaging with the public).
- Create a Volunteer Mentor program for "Savvy" residents to donate their time to 'translate' the system for marginalized residents--people can be paired up for a fixed period of time, a la Big Brothers and Big Sisters to translate the system and build capacity of marginalized residents to get more actively involved in local government.
- Host budget meetings where a high level City official sits down and engages residents on the budget and budget priorities.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

This grant project affirmed the growing awareness among Sustainability Directors and others committed to advancing sustainability, that to achieve full participation of all community members in community planning processes, it is necessary to take affirmative actions and also to consider changing 'business as usual' practices of local government.

Additional Information and Resources

This project advanced the City's overall sustainability progress as the City was able to apply for and receive \$400,000 in additional funding available from the MassDOT thanks to having a completed Walk/Bike (Complete Streets) [plan](#).