

## Local Moves towards Equity and Sustainability: Land Use Planning and Decision-Making

**Partners for Places (P4P) supports work to improve how local governments approach planning and land use decisions - promoting more sustainable and healthy places for all members of the community, especially those most vulnerable or unfairly burdened by environmental or economic injustices.**

### **Local Food Production - Providence, Rhode Island**

In Providence, P4P support has twice enabled the City sustainability staff to partner with the Rhode Island Foundation and other community leaders to expand urban agriculture and farming resources on city owned vacant lots. This has been done through the *Lots of Hope* program. These grants have increased the number of community gardens in several of the city's poorest neighborhoods, extended the growing season with new greenhouse facilities, connected market farmers to food service procurement, and most recently, created composting facilities for community and market plots.

All of this has improved food production and provided fresh herbs to the school district's central kitchen. These projects have engaged residents, school children, teachers, and community-based organizations in efforts to grow the number of community gardens and garden services. Access to fresh, locally produced fruits and vegetables has increased for residents and public schools. The grants have helped embed a focus on community health and nutrition into city-supported neighborhood planning and vacant lot reuse - with the promise of expanding future support through cross-departmental collaboration (Office of Sustainability, Office of Healthy Communities, and Providence School System).

### **Green Stormwater Infrastructure - New Orleans, Louisiana**

Moving to the Gulf Coast, a P4P grant to the City of New Orleans and the Greater New Orleans Foundation (the local community foundation) is providing funds to develop public data and mapping tools to inform, coordinate, and guide land use decisions regarding green stormwater solutions. The goal is to better align green infrastructure projects to benefit vulnerable communities. Partners will develop, implement, and train users how to utilize the GIS tools.

More than a decade after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city, New Orleans is working closely with the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Trust for Public Land, and other partners to use natural systems like green infrastructure to build neighborhood-scale resilience to climate change and sea level rise. The project will bring new tools to help prioritize green stormwater solutions in the city's neighborhood planning and development/redevelopment decisions. The Trust for Public Land, a project partner, is developing similar mapping tools for a dozen cities across the country as part of its Climate Smart Cities program, offering the added benefit of learning from experiences and tools developed for other climate challenged cities, including other USDN member cities.

### **Park Spaces – Los Angeles, California**

In southern California, a new P4P grant is supporting the City of Los Angeles in partnership with the Goldhirsh Foundation to transform underutilized schoolyards into Community School Parks. This work will provide places for children and parents to recreate, recharge, and connect with neighbors, increasing physical activity and wellness. The project extends a highly successful schoolyard greening project to an additional nine schools. It creates new neighborhood amenities for use during non-school hours, and a new way for the Mayor's Sustainability Office to partner with the City's LA Promise Zone Initiative, the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the People for Parks Charitable Fund.

The project will serve communities where 94% of children are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and more than 80% of the target population is Latino. By working closely with the School District, the project identifies new sources of financing for community green space (public school capital improvement dollars) and a way to maximize the value of public school infrastructure investments to benefit the broader community at large.

### **Partners for Places**

These projects in Providence, New Orleans, and Los Angeles are but a sampling of ways that the P4P grant program is working with place-based funders and community partners to improve local government approaches to planning and land use decision-making. P4P is excited to support operationalizing sustainability for future generations. Future editions of the USDN Urban Sustainability Innovation Report will continue to share updates on the important place-building work of this grant program.

*Partners for Places is a successful matching grant program that improves U.S. and Canadian communities by building partnerships between local government sustainability leaders and place-based foundations. National funders invest in local projects developed through these partnerships to promote a healthy environment, a strong economy, and well-being for all residents. Partners for Places is led by the Funders' Networks for Smart Growth and Livable Communities in partnership with the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. In its first five years, Partners for Places generated \$8 million for sustainability projects, half from more than 100 local matching funders.*