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# Building inclusive and healthy neighborhoods, block by block:

## Findings from 11 neighborhoods nationwide

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# 1

## Introduction

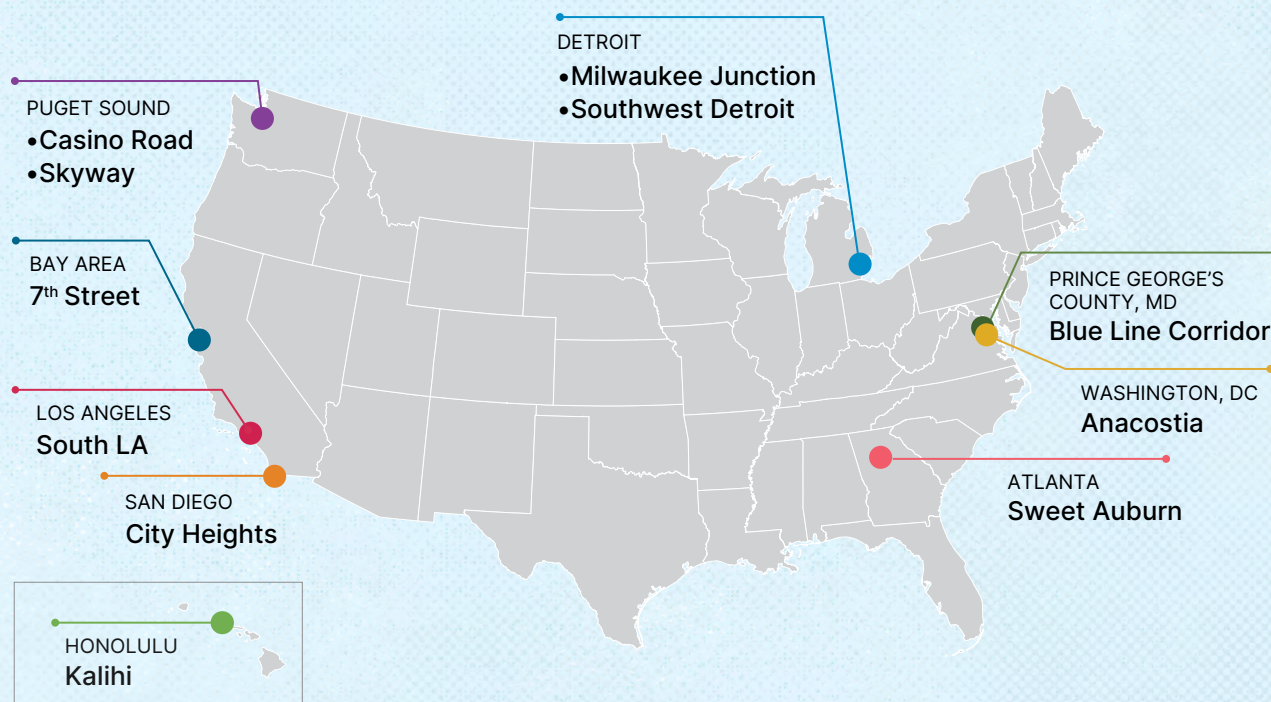
In the U.S., a person's ZIP code significantly shapes the trajectory, quality, and length of their life. Neighborhoods are the building blocks of strong cities and regions—determining people's access to education, jobs, clean air, and upward mobility—but far too often, they are overlooked as essential ingredients of regional and national prosperity.

When policy conversations hover only at the regional level or higher, the intersections between economic opportunity, health, public safety, and climate resilience—which converge to impact people's lives on a hyperlocal scale—can be missed, as can the need for cross-sectoral action to address these issues. Focusing on neighborhoods allows practitioners and policymakers to target the scale at which these socioeconomic issues are concentrated and lets them assemble the cross-sectoral coalition needed to achieve the population-level economic and public health outcomes that form strong regional economies.

This report outlines lessons, outcomes, and recommendations from a national community-centered economic inclusion (CCEI) initiative that embodies this theory of change and treats neighborhoods as the key setting for achieving inclusive regional outcomes. Eleven neighborhoods across six states and the nation's capital implemented the CCEI model (see Figure 1)—each assembling a diverse coalition of community, city, and regional practitioners that aligned catalytic investments in small businesses, affordable housing, workforce development, food access, and other drivers of community well-being in historically disinvested neighborhoods.

FIGURE 1

### Local markets implementing the community-centered economic inclusion model



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas

Brookings Metro

Our findings—derived from in-depth interviews with 100 stakeholders implementing CCEI on the ground and quantitative investment data from the eleven neighborhoods—demonstrate the transformative impact that place-based models like CCEI and similar approaches can have by improving economic and health outcomes in historically disinvested neighborhoods, but these findings also reveal a set of policy, practice, and funding barriers that must be addressed to enable these approaches to scale (see Background, pages 5-8).

Taken together, these lessons make one thing clear: to truly transform the prosperity and well-being of entire cities and regions, it's past time to abandon top-down or "trickle-down" approaches and embrace the actionable, community-centered models that have demonstrated true promise in cities and neighborhoods nationwide.<sup>1</sup>

# Background:

## The community-centered economic inclusion model

In 2019, the Brookings Institution's Bass Center for Transformative Placemaking and the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) co-developed the community-centered economic inclusion model and piloted it in three major cities: Los Angeles, Indianapolis, and Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> As a place-based and equity-focused approach, CCEI has three distinctive elements, including:

- **Hyperlocal scale:** While the term place-based can be used to describe areas as large as a region or as small as a public space, CCEI targets and aligns investments in sub-city geographies (such as commercial or industrial districts and adjacent residential areas, some of which comprise portions or the entirety of regional activity centers) where economic assets cluster but have been hampered by economic disinvestment and/or displacement pressures that prevent residents from benefiting from new growth.<sup>3</sup>
- **Interdisciplinary scope:** Using data and market analyses, local knowledge, and community engagement, CCEI codifies a set of holistic, community-defined priorities that are prime for catalytic investment—spanning the fields of economic, community, and workforce development; placemaking; and public health—into actionable and fundable CCEI agendas (see Figure 2).
- **Level of integration:** Recognizing that interdisciplinary actions require a broad coalition of implementers and champions, the CCEI process expands the decision-making table to share power between community leaders, the public sector, and other city and regional officials. This approach seeks to break down siloes and legacies of distrust between often disconnected stakeholders with the dual purpose of ensuring that economic inclusion agendas are community-defined and -led, but that they are also backed by the resources, support, and connections of broader city and regional actors.

FIGURE 2

## The community-centered economic inclusion model



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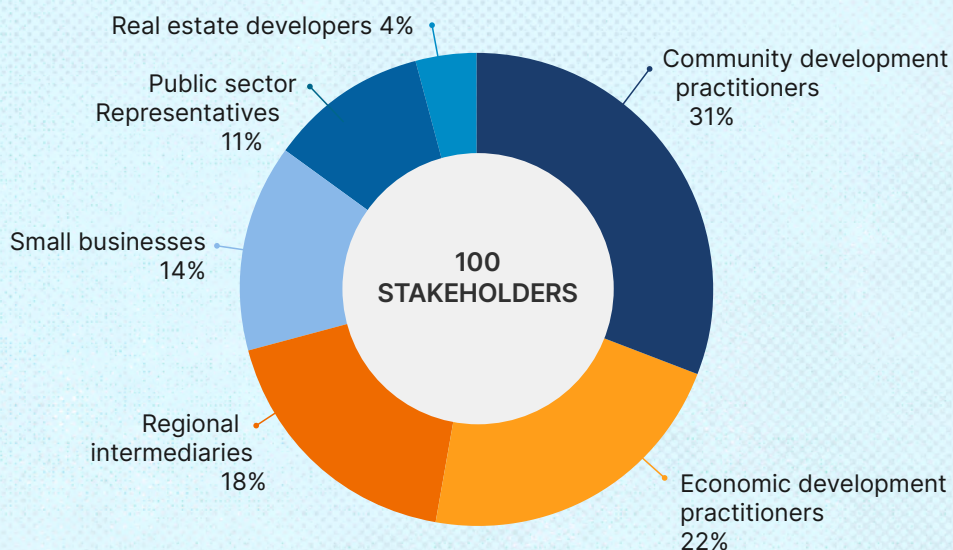
After concluding the three-city pilot in 2020, Brookings and LISC published [a practitioner-oriented playbook](#) codifying the model (hereafter called the Playbook).<sup>4</sup> A year later, Brookings conducted an early assessment of CCEI outcomes in early adoption cities and found promising capacity-building and investment wins.<sup>5</sup> Also in 2020, Kaiser Permanente provided LISC and its affiliate Broadstreet Impact Services with \$8 million in grant funding and \$30 million in loan capital—matched by an additional \$30 million in loan capital from LISC—to deepen and scale the CCEI approach in nine neighborhoods across California, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, (the state of) Washington, and Washington, D.C.<sup>6</sup>

This evaluation centers on implementation findings from these eleven CCEI neighborhoods. The list includes the nine Kaiser-funded ones and two early adopter neighborhoods in Detroit—Milwaukee Junction and Southwest Detroit—that implemented the model without the catalytic Kaiser investments. To collect the information included in this report, we conducted in-person site visits to all eleven districts and interviewed 100 stakeholders about the impact of CCEI on their communities, cities, and regions (see Figure 3). Throughout the evaluation, findings from these qualitative interviews are supplemented and compared with quantitative impact data on the breadth and scope of CCEI investments.

FIGURE 3

### Overview of CCEI stakeholder interviewees, by sector

From 100 total interviews conducted by Brookings researchers between November 2023 and February 2024



SOURCE: Authors' field work interviews

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FIGURE 4

## Key timeline milestones of eleven districts implementing the community-centered economic inclusion model



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews





Murals in Anacostia, Washington, D.C.  
AUTHORS



# 2

## The need for a different approach to shared prosperity: Evidence and local perspectives

Disinvested neighborhoods in the U.S. have long been over-planned and overstudied, often with dismal results. Residents have endured too many top-down city plans that have not brought tangible benefits to their communities. Despite billions of dollars spent on place-based initiatives over the past four decades, the number of high-poverty neighborhoods has continued to grow at an alarming rate, with very few examples of “turnaround” neighborhoods that successfully reduced poverty without displacement.<sup>7</sup>

These patterns have stark implications for people, contributing to up to 20-year gaps in life expectancy for residents of high-poverty places compared to those in wealthier ones.<sup>8</sup> In Washington, D.C.’s, CCEI district, Anacostia, for example, in 2015, residents were expected to live 23 years less on average than those living in Cleveland Park, a nearby wealthier neighborhood in the district’s northwest quadrant.<sup>9</sup> This challenge is growing nationwide, as the country experiences its starkest life expectancy divide in four decades.<sup>10</sup>

To better address these persistent patterns of disadvantages that hold entire communities, cities, and regions back, local leaders can no longer afford to rely on the same revitalization tools that got so many neighborhoods to this point. To that end, CCEI argues that neighborhood revitalization approaches must directly address **four key drivers of inequality** that are too often overlooked or taken for granted. These drivers, all of which manifested to impact the lives of stakeholders in all eleven of the CCEI neighborhoods studied, include:

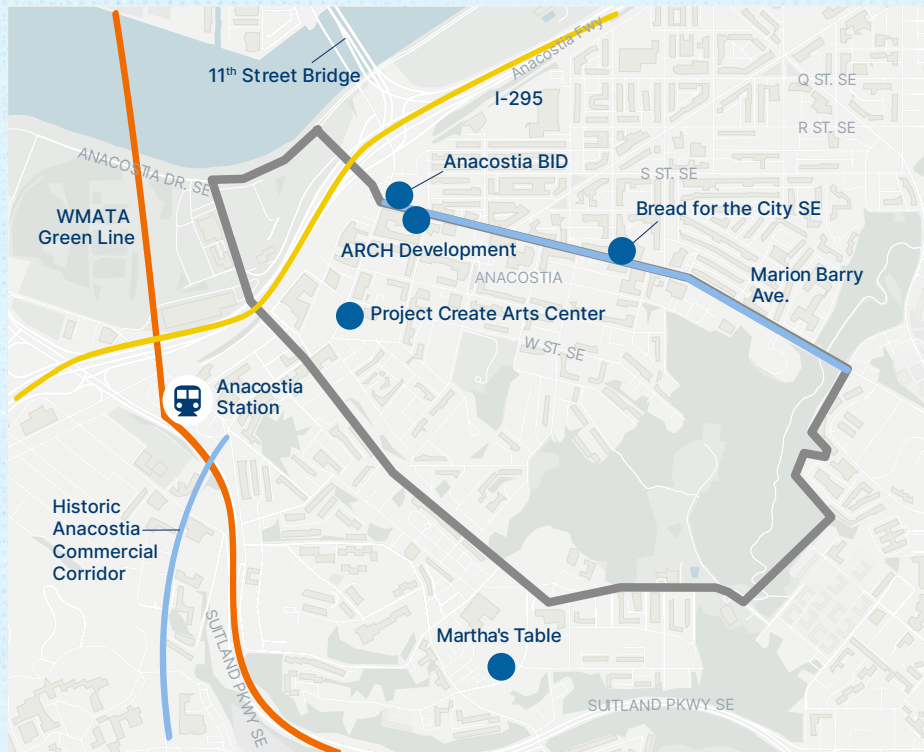
# DRIVER 1

## The lasting impact of discriminatory public policies on neighborhood-level economic and public health outcomes

Historically, many of the first dense, walkable urban neighborhoods that today yield high demand and lucrative real estate premiums were once vibrant Black centers of commerce and economic activity.<sup>11</sup> Take Southeast Washington, D.C., once a thriving hub of Black businesses and entertainment, where the 1952–1965 construction of Interstate 295 sliced through the neighborhood, scattered the population, and fractured the physical landscape so that walking through the community was neither safe nor desirable (see Figure 5).<sup>12</sup> Examples like this abound.

FIGURE 5

### Anacostia's CCEI district in Washington, D.C.



- Community Asset
- Metro Station
- Transit Route
- District Boundary
- Commercial Corridor
- Highway

SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“There are so many underused resources here that have not been contributing to our quality of life or the revenue of the municipality. Look at the riverway—here, we have a river that we’ve allowed to be a dividing line between those that have and those that don’t in terms of economics, health—everything. How can we begin to talk about looking at both sides of this river and about creating those amenities that connect the city more?”

ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

Neighborhoods that face concentrated disadvantages were not created by accident or by pure market forces. Improving neighborhood conditions requires an acknowledgment of the public policies that undergird them—including racial zoning ordinances in the 1910s;<sup>13</sup> redlining in the 1930s;<sup>14</sup> blockbusting in the 1940s and 1950s;<sup>15</sup> and racially restrictive covenants, eminent domain, and destructive infrastructure projects throughout the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

This acknowledgment is not simply an academic or moral exercise. There are two key reasons it matters for more effective place-based initiatives. First, people’s everyday lives continue to be shaped by the policies of the last century. The concentration of disadvantages today—on issues like poverty, environmental toxin exposure, and life expectancy— closely maps onto the redlining boundaries of the 1930s. Since the advent of zoning in the 1910s, for instance, majority-minority communities have been disproportionately zoned as industrial areas, allowing for the placement of toxic facilities with negative public health impacts. According to a 2017 study, Black Americans are still “75 percent more likely” to live in areas exposed to toxic materials or fumes.<sup>17</sup> As a result of these persistent patterns, such areas grapple with lower property values and increased risk of environmentally related health conditions resulting in shortened life expectancies.<sup>18</sup>

FIGURE 6

### Southwest Detroit’s CCEI district



SOURCE: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“You have these industrial facilities that directly abut residential areas. How can we have more available sustainable jobs for the community here? How do we help facilitate that and make it compatible with residents? We don’t want more things with toxic side effects. We don’t need another industry that is shortening people’s lifespans through diesel emissions, [poor] air quality, and high cancer rates, and all of those extremely negative side effects. Are there other forms of light industry we can bring here?”

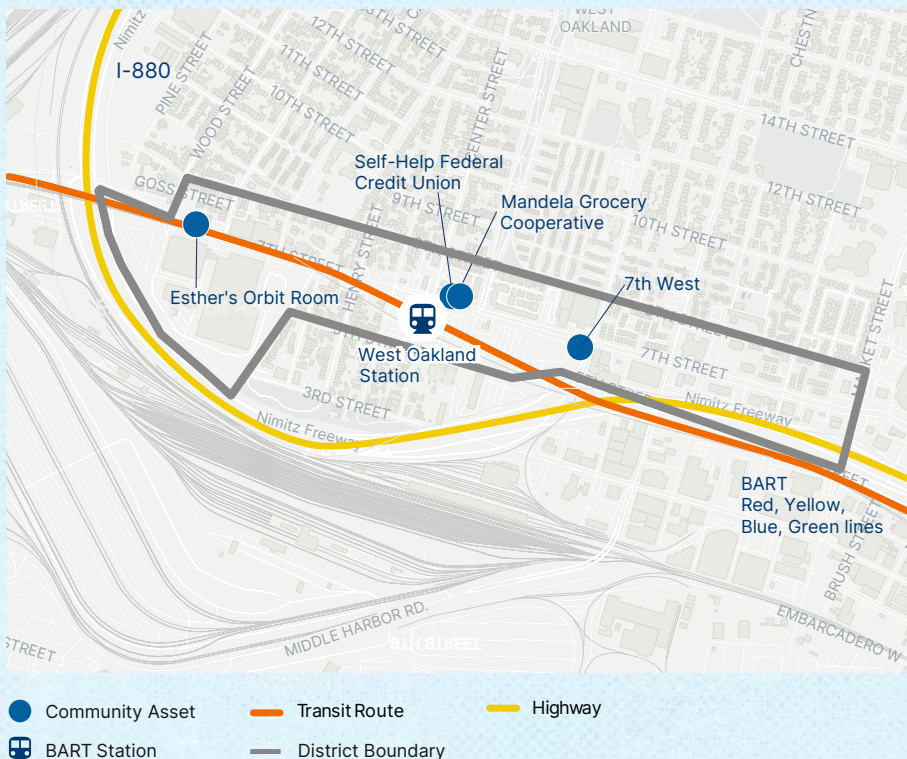
SOUTHWEST DETROIT  
STAKEHOLDER

These decisions continue to hamper quality of life for residents in CCEI districts like Southwest Detroit (see Figure 6), which is in the 98th percentile in the state of Michigan and 95th percentile in the nation for the release of toxins into the air, according to 2023 statistics from the Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>19</sup> Yet many residents rely on industrial employers for jobs, which ties them deeply to the community for economic mobility despite the often-high levels of toxic release.<sup>20</sup>

Legacies of government *inaction* have also left a lasting impact on historically disinvested neighborhoods. In many cities, white flight and segregation corresponded with municipalities abandoning basic public services like trash collection, street cleaning, and fire suppression in majority-minority communities. Sometimes known as “benign neglect” or “planned shrinkage,” this city abandonment rendered neighborhoods prime for blight removal and eminent domain redevelopment programs or contributed to unhealthy environments for their residents.<sup>21</sup> These patterns of neglect have remained ever-present in CCEI communities, like West Oakland’s 7th Street corridor (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7

### 7th Street Corridor’s CCEI district in West Oakland



“7th Street gets ignored, which has a ripple effect in so many different ways. About 18% of the streetlights are out in the corridor—we learned that the city hasn’t even had an updated streetlight map of the corridor since the 1970s. Same with trash, same with a number of different services that the city should be providing for the corridor that it hasn’t been. A place like 7th Street gets lower on the totem pole, and my fear is that this city will continue to be in the way of a sustainable solution, short of us doing it ourselves. But they’re not going to let us fix the streetlights.”

7TH STREET STAKEHOLDER

SOURCE: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

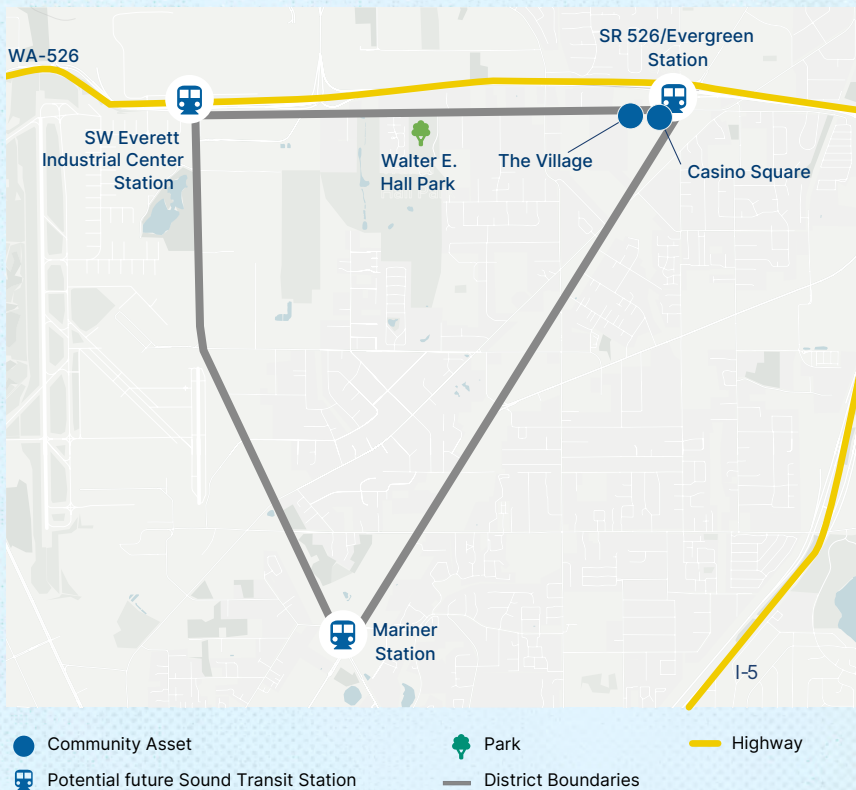
Brookings Metro

Secondly, the policy roots of neighborhood disadvantage matter for practice because they shape how residents perceive their government, new neighborhood development, and their own willingness to participate in civic and political decision-making processes. These impacts can engender significant consequences for even well-meaning and equity-focused, transit-oriented, development initiatives designed to foster more environmentally friendly, walkable, and affordable communities, due to the long-standing legacies of harm, displacement, and disenfranchisement that past development efforts have seeded.<sup>22</sup>

A prime example is the legacy of seizing residents' land in majority-minority neighborhoods through eminent domain for the construction of public spaces (like Washington, D.C.'s, Capital One Arena and Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium).<sup>23</sup> Between 1949 and 1973, for instance, eminent domain was applied to Black communities at a rate five times higher than their share of the population.<sup>24</sup> The lasting impact of land seizure remains ever-present for residents in CCEI cities as they face contemporary infrastructure projects, like a proposed Sound Transit light rail line station, which threatens to displace Casino Road's predominantly Latino small business corridor (Figure 8).<sup>25</sup>

FIGURE 8

### Casino Road's CCEI district in Puget Sound



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“It’s almost like the city knows that this place is going to be demolished in the long term. Our organization advocates for the people. When we see this neighborhood, we see people. And when the city sees the neighborhood, they see development, construction, buildings, new stores, and money. But when I see it, I see the people.”

CASINO ROAD STAKEHOLDER

In South Los Angeles, these seeds of distrust were magnified by the fact that, under initial plans, the new Crenshaw/LAX Line constructed at-grade in the heart of the Black commercial corridor did not include a stop for Crenshaw residents (Figure 9).<sup>26</sup>

Acknowledging the contemporary ramifications of discriminatory public policies is a first step for local leaders to be able to co-create more effective policies that address the complex, deeply rooted trauma associated with neighborhood development—and to recognize that an infusion of outside capital or tax breaks for employers cannot repair the harm caused. Such an acknowledgement is also necessary for facilitating the successful co-creation and implementation of city and regional transit-oriented development projects that have the potential to positively transform regional economies, if they are implemented with the backing and support of a broad local coalition.

FIGURE 9

### South Los Angeles' CCEI district



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“Cities in the U.S. are not set up to support the lowest-resource communities. Instead, we’re set up to allow them to fail. Crenshaw was disconnected west because the train is going right in between communities and incentivized gentrification without any safeguards. And then planners just didn’t care about the community and didn’t want to add a stop in the middle of a community.”

SOUTH LOS ANGELES  
STAKEHOLDER

## DRIVER 2

### **Market forces, without proper intention, can further entrench place-based inequality and hold back inclusive regional prosperity**

Second, the CCEI model posits that private investment patterns and market forces—while necessary focal points in any economic development initiative—have often exacerbated patterns of disinvestment by withdrawing jobs, amenities, and wealth-building opportunities from already disinvested communities and by enabling the proliferation of more predatory alternatives.

Businesses like supermarkets and banks, for instance, followed white residents as they fled to the suburbs, and these businesses were replaced by institutions like payday lenders and convenience stores.<sup>27</sup> Racist perceptions of majority-minority neighborhoods led to the systematic devaluation of homes, businesses, and commercial real estate—with significant ramifications for asset- and wealth-building, fiscal health, and leakage (or the share of local spending that is not recirculated within the local economy).<sup>28</sup> Today, research clearly indicates that capital investment flows are inequitable both within and across cities: “the larger the share of Black residents in a neighborhood, the less investment that place receives,” according to a 2022 Urban Institute study of Chicago.<sup>29</sup> Across CCEI districts, this public and

“The city needs to keep finding solutions like JEDI Zones, but it has to beef them up to ensure that there’s no commercial displacement in these historically Black corridors. There should be more money attached to neighborhood stabilization. The JEDI Zone is not very well-funded. So we’re still missing a program that really focuses on what the community needs and ensuring that there’s a problem that’s solved by the community.”

SOUTH LOS ANGELES STAKEHOLDER

*Crenshaw in South Los Angeles*  
AUTHORS





private disinvestment manifested not only in majority-Black neighborhoods, but also in neighborhoods with a high share of other racial and ethnic minorities and new immigrants, such as Kalihi in Honolulu (Figure 10).

As the private market has increasingly withdrawn amenities and value from disinvested neighborhoods, residents have been left with few opportunities to access education, employment, and retail while being disproportionately saddled with wealth-building barriers that make it difficult to stay in place.<sup>30</sup> This trend has fostered a situation in which longtime residents of some of the first walkable urban neighborhoods have been forced to move away whether due to displacement pressures, health and safety issues, and/or the wholesale lack of economic opportunity.

FIGURE 10

### Kalihi's CCEI district in Honolulu



- Community Asset
- Public Housing Tower
- Train Station
- District Boundary
- Park
- Highway
- Transit Route

SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“Entrepreneurship exists within a lot of people, but they’re not able to flourish due to a lack of resources. If you look at the financial sector here, there are no national banks, only local banks and credit unions. And once they deny [someone] a bank loan or something, then the market for community development financial institutions (CDFIs) doesn’t really exist. It’s very small.”

KALIHI STAKEHOLDER



*Staff at Staff at theRoots Café and Market – a food hub that supports small and micro-producers to sell their healthy food products from the KKV Wellness Center to provide healthy options like free-range eggs, fresh poi, local fish, breadfruit, kalo, cassava, banana, and leafy greens to the Kalihi community*

KA'ŌHUA LUCAS

Seattle's Central District, for instance, is illustrative of this dynamic. The area was more than 65 percent Black in 1970 but is just 10 percent Black today,<sup>31</sup> with many residents moving to the southern suburbs, including the Skyway district in Puget Sound, as wealthier white residents and developers move in (Figure 11).<sup>32</sup>

Prince George's County, Maryland, is another suburban CCEI priority area facing similar challenges. Located just outside of Washington, D.C., it is often known as one of the wealthiest majority-Black counties in the nation. Despite this achievement, many of the residents in its Blue Line Corridor in particular face stark health and wealth inequities and lack access to basic amenities

FIGURE 11

### Skyway's CCEI district in Puget Sound



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“There’s a lot of displacement happening outside of the city, and poverty is migrating to more suburban areas. When we look at the city of Seattle, the demographics of a place like the Central District have already changed so dramatically that it’s a little bit too late.”

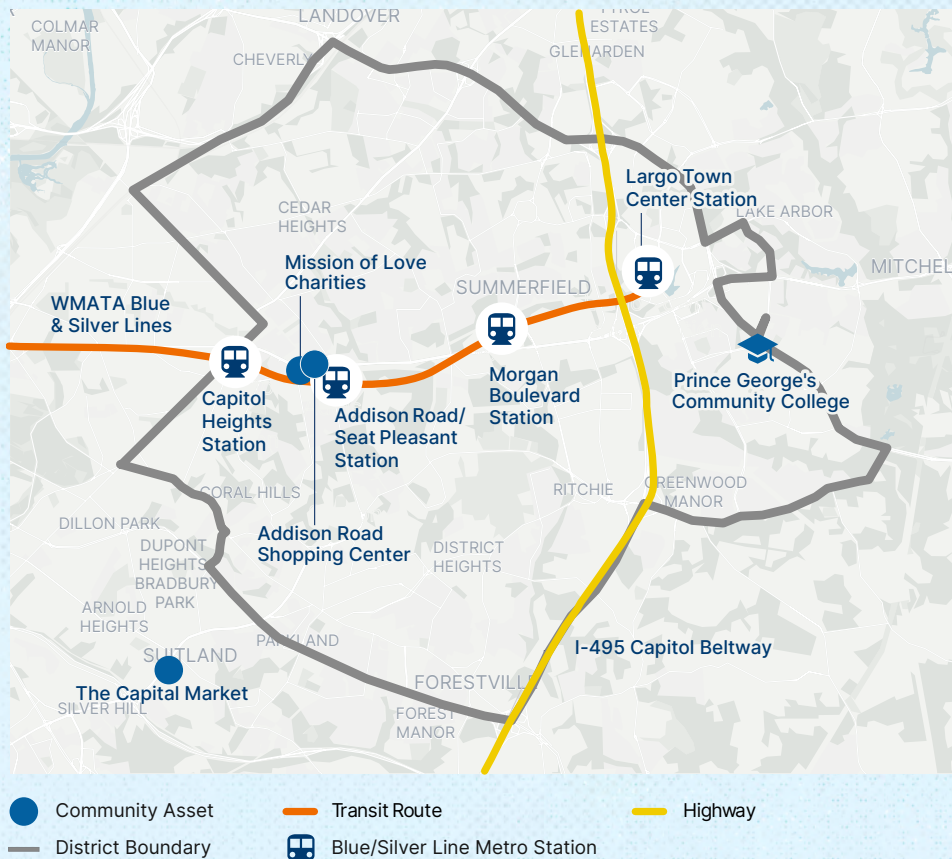
SKYWAY STAKEHOLDER

like grocery stores. Many of these challenges are heightened by the car-oriented built environment and a lack of municipal capacity in smaller and unincorporated suburban areas in the corridor (Figure 12).

What these historical trends and narratives reveal is that, without intervention, private investment patterns can produce winners and losers in the competition for jobs, investment, housing, and people—with significant consequences for health, economic growth, and social cohesion. But these patterns also demonstrate that there is potential for private firms to be critical partners in breaking the cycle of disinvestment, devaluation, and displacement—if they come to the table and align regional growth priorities with a keen understanding of the assets and priorities of the communities that make up strong regions.

FIGURE 12

### The Blue Line Corridor CCEI district in Prince George’s County, MD



SOURCE: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“There are so many underused resources here. The Blue Line Corridor is full of food deserts. There isn’t a grocery store from I-495 to the DC line—that’s almost eight miles of community that this highway goes through without grocery stores. Certain communities have been under-resourced—not just in terms of financial capital where people can’t access money, but also in terms of lacking access to the structures and processes that prop up and sustain the businesses and other assets in the community.”

BLUE LINE CORRIDOR  
STAKEHOLDER

## DRIVER 3

### Top-down and siloed policy “fixes” often fail to move the needle on inclusive city, regional, and national outcomes

Third, the CCEI model contends that economic and community development approaches have traditionally been either too siloed, top-down, or underresourced to be effective—flaws that plague place-based policy at the community, regional, statewide, and federal levels. Most broadly, traditional economic development policy has often focused on attracting businesses and outside investment with the stated aim of “lifting all boats,” rather than targeting specific places or place-level outcomes.

Respondents across all CCEI districts had critiques of this approach, with examples ranging from cities’ outsized focus on sports, tourism, and attracting large employers. Stakeholders in Atlanta, for instance, pointed to the city’s legacy of prioritizing large-scale developments like stadiums for economic development, rather than taking a more holistic neighborhood investment approach (Figure 13).

Mercedes-Benz  
Stadium, Atlanta  
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



FIGURE 13

### Sweet Auburn’s CCEI district in Atlanta



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“If you look at where the city invests, it’s around a huge economic driver. You can say that a stadium is going to be great for the neighborhood, but at the end of the day, you didn’t bring the stadium here for the neighborhood. And because we don’t have a stadium for you, there isn’t the same kind of support on this side of Atlanta as they have in some other areas. That’s the biggest issue—we just don’t get the same type of investment.”

SWEET AUBURN  
STAKEHOLDER

Even well-meaning, place-based economic development policies have often missed the mark by failing to meaningfully improve outcomes for existing residents. An evaluation of Enterprise Zones, which provided tax and other incentives for businesses to locate or expand in disadvantaged areas, found that while lawmakers had envisioned small businesses taking advantage of the program, most participants were larger businesses that were less likely to hire from within the zones.<sup>33</sup> Opportunity Zones have similarly been criticized for serving outside investment, for failing to incentivize community engagement or mitigate displacement, and for benefiting wealthy investors at the expense of low-income, minority residents.<sup>34</sup>

Across CCEI districts, stakeholders also pointed out the shortcomings of well-meaning place-based policies at the city-level that could have been improved with more capital and community input. For instance, interviewees in Los Angeles described the place-based Jobs and Economic Development

Incentive (JEDI) Zones—city council–designated areas prioritized to receive capital and technical assistance—as a promising but underfunded policy.<sup>35</sup>

On the community development side, hyperlocal community-based entities, since the 1960s, have been dedicated to place-based revitalization, often responding directly to the harms of urban renewal and disinvestment.<sup>36</sup> Despite the successes these entities have garnered in affordable housing, commercial corridor revitalization, and other drivers of public health, they are often hampered by limited capacity and capital themselves. This theme was present across all CCEI districts, including San Diego’s City Heights, which is home to numerous community development, social services, and immigrant- and refugee-serving organizations that have long been advocating for better outcomes for residents with various levels of capacity and support (Figure 14).

FIGURE 14

### City Heights’ CCEI district in San Diego



SOURCE: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

“We’ve been in the City Heights community now for nearly 40 years. Our organization started by organizing against the freeway that cuts up the community—our origins really come from a place of our community fighting against real environmental injustice and the displacement of community. Today, members of the community speak more than 76 languages, and we have more than a hundred dialects. Many of our businesses are not brick and mortar businesses—they’re sidewalk vendors or home-based businesses. What we’re trying to do is level the playing field for the economic climate of City Heights.”

CITY HEIGHTS STAKEHOLDER

“ The separation of housing, economic development, public works, employment, and workforce development as separate departments is a mistake. And it’s a repeated pattern that keeps these processes in silos and keeps them separate from the places that actually need their impact.”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER

*A young resident practices juggling at Fern Street Circus, a neighborhood site of growth and exchange through circus arts, City Heights, San Diego*

JANA RIVER MEDLOCK  
PHOTOGRAPHY





A 2023 Urban Institute study of community-based development organizations found that lack of funding was one of the largest barriers to neighborhood revitalization work. The study also found that community-based organizations led by directors of color, compared to those run by white directors, had both lower yearly revenue and spending and were more likely to run budget deficits.<sup>37</sup>

These capacity challenges, at times, have led to well-intentioned plans with little follow-through or the proliferation of duplicate efforts across multiple nonprofits that stretch limited resources and diffuse impact. CCEI stakeholders spoke to these challenges as having hampered previous neighborhood revitalization efforts, such as in Detroit’s Milwaukee Junction district and nearby North End neighborhood, where residents had often experienced over-planning with little follow-through or capacity-building support to facilitate successful implementation (Figure 15).

FIGURE 15

### Milwaukee Junction’s CCEI district in Detroit



SOURCE: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

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“The North End has been planned to death over the last 50 years, with not a lot of positive change. Planners come to the area and pop-up organizations start forming, but they’re often small, understaffed, and volunteer-led. CDCs get just enough funding to not create a cohesive method to implement plans, and in the end, you don’t see any real change, any coordination, or really any capacity.”

MILWAUKEE JUNCTION  
STAKEHOLDER

The inefficiencies of siloed economic and community development approaches are clear. Evidence from a comprehensive review of place-based development initiatives between 1965 and 2015 supports this conclusion. It found that neither regional economic development approaches nor neighborhood approaches—on their own—have proven to be enough.<sup>38</sup> Residents, practitioners, and elected officials working on the ground in CCEI districts echoed this sentiment in their interviews, calling for more holistic, aligned approaches at the city and regional levels.



*“Laffayette and Mr. Gardner” mural in Milwaukee Junction, Detroit, painted by local artist Ijanja Cortez during the 2021 Detroit BLKOUT Walls street art festival.*

AUTHORS

## DRIVER 4

### **Power imbalances prevent the collaboration needed for more inclusive and effective development**

Neighborhoods are shaped by a complex interplay between markets, institutions, policies, and regulations. But at their heart is an often-overlooked asset that forms the backbone of neighborhood resiliency: the people that live, work, and operate a business within a given community. The potential to combine the place-based knowledge of residents, workers, and small businesses with the political and financial capital of city and regional decision-makers dedicated to inclusive economic development is far too often missed—creating false divisions between those with lived experience of place-based inequities and those with the resources to address their priorities.

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“We have reached out to the public sector—to the state Department of Transportation and others. What we essentially were told was—unless it’s about widening highways or increasing the frequency level of services, there’s nothing to be done. We had to create a study ourselves because they didn’t have the ability or capacity to do it. And once we presented something to them, they just responded to everything by saying, ‘this can’t be feasible; no, no, no, do this instead.’”

SOUTHWEST DETROIT STAKEHOLDER

This was a common theme across CCEI districts, where residents and community-based organizations felt like, outside of one-off town hall meetings or community engagement sessions, they were disconnected from public and private decision-makers.

Addressing this fourth driver requires neighborhood revitalization efforts to move beyond one-off community meetings and well-meaning plans that sit on the shelf to instead foster a broad coalition of community, city, and regional actors with the knowledge, tools, and credibility to steward revitalization. By bringing together the deep knowledge of residents and community-based organizations with the resources, capacity, and connections of city and regional economic development stakeholders, the CCEI model aims to make community-led efforts more achievable at scale, while making city and regional efforts more equitable and attuned to neighborhood priorities.



# 3

## How cities have adapted community-centered economic inclusion to their unique market contexts

All eleven CCEI neighborhoods had a broad understanding of the model before they adopted it, but as a place-based approach, CCEI requires flexibility and adaptation to meet the distinct challenges, opportunities, and priorities of neighborhoods across an array of regional market contexts. To that end, the process unfolded differently across the eleven districts in three key ways related to the where, the who, and the what of the CCEI model (codified in the [Playbook](#) published by Brookings and LISC).

## 1. THE WHERE

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### **Community-centered economic inclusion districts shared common socioeconomic challenges but had varied levels of ongoing investment activity already underway**

The CCEI approach targets investments in hyperlocal hubs of economic activity, where assets cluster and connect but have often been devalued or disrupted by discrimination, disinvestment, or displacement. The community, city, and regional stakeholders engaged in the CCEI process used three primary criteria to identify these priority areas.

- The presence of economic inequities, as exhibited by data (such as relative poverty rates, investment flows, labor force participation, and other statistics); community engagement; and history of neighborhood investment
- The concentration of assets within the district that can be leveraged for community benefit, such as industrial land, infrastructure projects, or dense concentrations of small businesses
- The buy-in of the neighborhood and at least one core community-based organization with the capacity and desire to steward the economic inclusion process

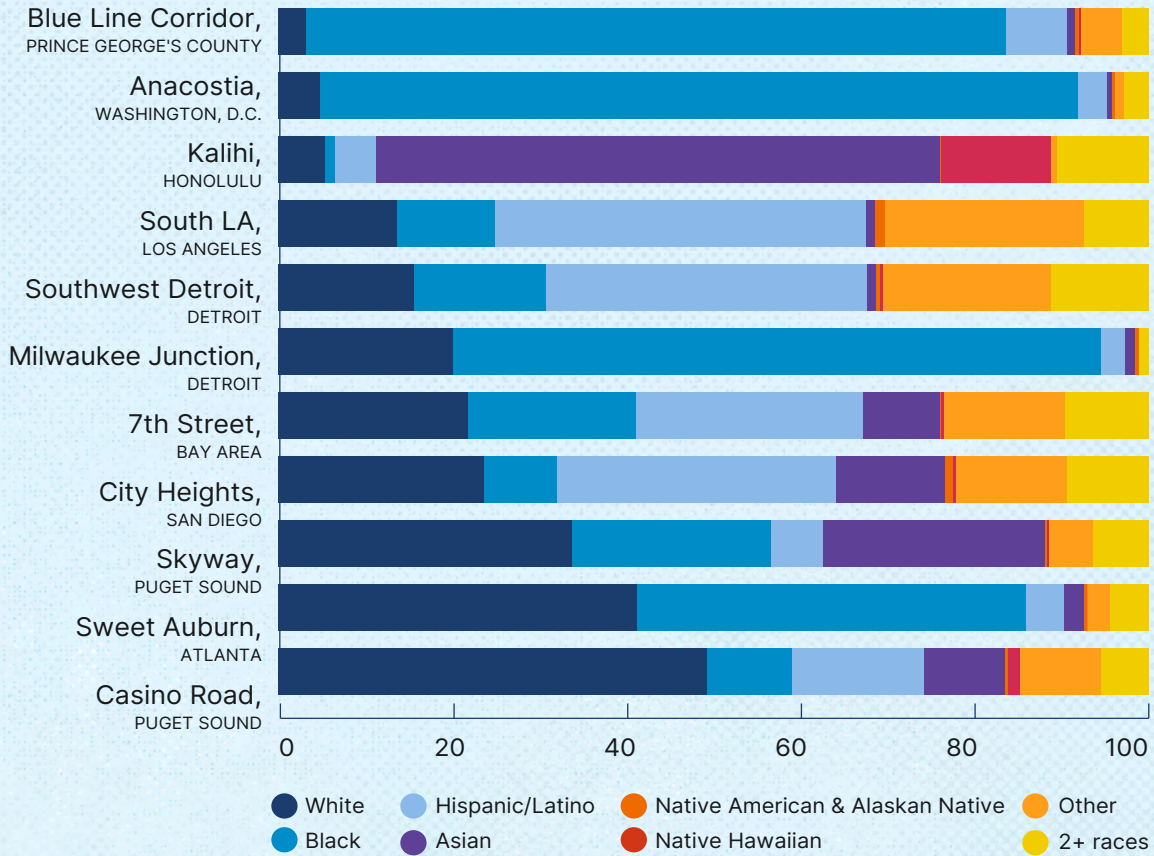
Using these guiding factors, CCEI community, city, and regional stakeholders chose eleven priority districts with several commonalities across market contexts. All of the districts are majority-minority, all exhibited indicators of economic disadvantages relative to their city/region, and most exhibited public health challenges like shortened life expectancy, or higher rates of toxic pollutants (Figures 16–18). While the degree of difference differed across districts, CCEI districts diverged from national averages in areas including poverty, unemployment, and educational attainment rates.

*Historic Auburn Avenue,  
Sweet Auburn, Atlanta*  
LISC ATLANTA



FIGURE 16

**People of color comprise the largest demographic share in all community-centered economic inclusion districts**



SOURCE: Authors' analysis of 2016-2021 American Community Survey

Brookings Metro

“ We gained a transit stop and dreamed a bigger dream. This was us saying, ‘we’re going to do this in a greater way than you even imagined.’ We’re going to put together the greatest Black collection of art on the West Coast, and it’s going to be right here so that when people take that train, that’s all they’re going to look at. That’s the experience people are going to get when they come into our community.”

SOUTH LOS ANGELES STAKEHOLDER

FIGURE 17

### Community-centered economic inclusion districts exhibit a variety of barriers to opportunity

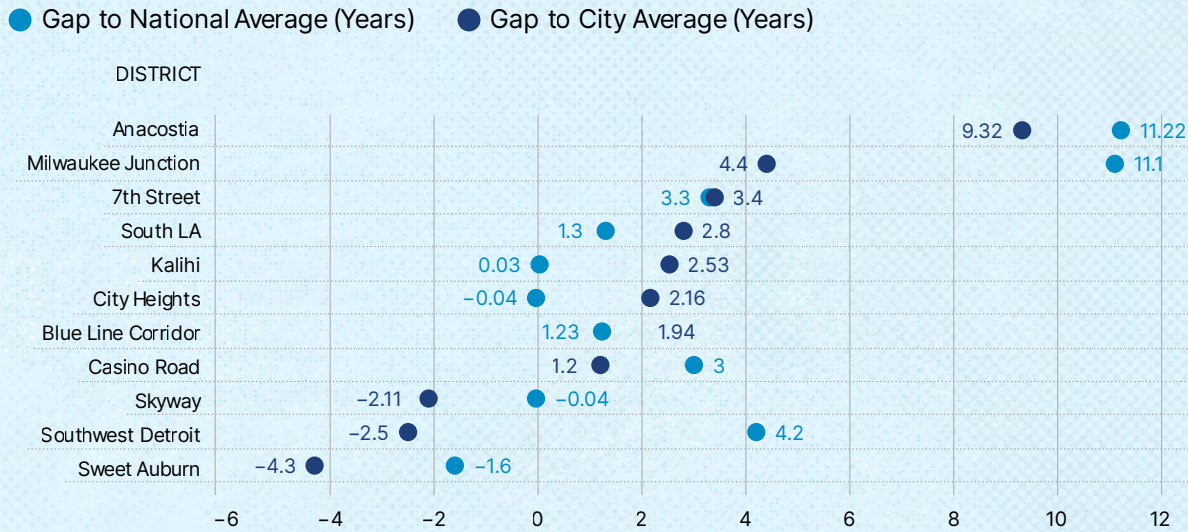
● Worse than national average    
 ○ Better than national average    
 ○ National average

CCEI district	Households in poverty	Share of vacant houses	Unemployed residents	Households without Internet	High school as highest degree
National Average	13%	10%	6%	10%	27%
<b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA	37	11	16	16	33
<b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	22	5	10	9	28
<b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	11	5	8	10	34
<b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	11	5	4	6	32
<b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	27	4	9	12	25
<b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU	21	6	8	16	34
<b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	45	35	29	21	28
<b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND	15	5	5	8	17
<b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES	24	4	9	15	24
<b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT	29	17	7	15	29
<b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA	29	12	4	9	15

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration data **B** | Brookings Metro

FIGURE 18

## Community-centered economic inclusion districts have life expectancy gaps of up to 11 years compared to the national average



SOURCE: Authors' analysis of CDC National Vital Statistics System U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates Project (USALEEP) 2010-2015

Brookings Metro

CCEI districts began to diverge from each other in terms of the qualitative factors that local leaders used to select the districts, like which assets to prioritize or how to align with ongoing civic processes impacting a given neighborhood. In particular, local stakeholders in some CCEI cities selected priority districts by varied criteria such as neighborhoods where significant new investment activity was already underway (such as through a large infrastructure project or new citywide neighborhood initiative), places where there was strong political alignment to focus on the district, or areas that had been overlooked by recent citywide initiatives and that had continued to experience widespread neglect and disinvestment.

Anacostia, Prince George's County, and South Los Angeles targeted districts where major catalytic infrastructure projects were already underway in or very near their respective CCEI corridors. These projects included public, private, and philanthropic funding for Washington, D.C.'s, 11th Street Bridge Project bridging Anacostia and Capitol Hill; \$400 million in bond financing for transit-oriented development along the Blue Line Corridor in Prince George's County; and the construction of the Crenshaw/LAX Line through South Los Angeles and the corresponding community-led Destination Crenshaw placemaking project designed to honor Black arts and culture.<sup>39</sup> Southwest Detroit, Kalihi, Casino Road, and Sweet Auburn also had large infrastructure projects in or adjacent to their priority areas (Figure 19).







FIGURE 19

**Community-centered economic inclusion districts include a diverse array of urban and suburban commercial, transit, and industrial corridors**

CCEI district	District type	District designation	Current infrastructure or transit project in district
<b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA	Urban commercial corridor	N/A	<a href="#">Mandela Station</a> : a 432,500 square foot mixed-use private development at the West Oakland BART station with 760 residential units, offices, and retail space that was approved for construction in 2020 <sup>40</sup>  <a href="#">7th Street Connection Project</a> : a public initiative to improve cycling and pedestrian infrastructure on 7th Street with construction slated to begin in 2027, with funding coming from a \$14.1 million grant from the California Active Transportation Program Fund <sup>41</sup>
<b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	Urban commercial corridor	Anacostia Arts and Cultural District  Anacostia Historic District	<a href="#">11th Street Bridge Park</a> : an elevated park across the Anacostia River to be on the remaining piers of the old 11th Street Bridge, with an anticipated opening date in early 2025; the city committed nearly \$38.3 million toward the park, with the remaining \$100 million or so coming through fundraising <sup>42</sup>
<b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	Suburban transit corridor	Blue Line Corridor TOD	<a href="#">Blue Line Corridor TOD</a> : a string of development projects around Blue Line metro stations in Prince George's County, with catalyzing funds obtained from the Maryland state government by the Prince George's County Administration <sup>43</sup>
<b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	Suburban commercial corridor	N/A	<a href="#">Sound Transit Everett Link Extension</a> : a 16-mile light rail extension to connect Snohomish County communities to Seattle and the rest of the regional light rail network; about one-fifth of the funding will come from federal sources, while the remaining will come from local, state, and corporate sources <sup>44</sup>
<b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	Urban commercial corridor	Little Saigon Cultural District	<a href="#">City Heights bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvement</a> : construction of bike paths and pedestrian infrastructure like lighting and paths to connect new affordable housing complexes to public transit plazas using a \$3.3 million state Sustainable Transportation Equity Project grant announced in 2024 <sup>45</sup>
<b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU	Urban commercial corridor	Chinatown Historic District  Honolulu Arts District  Kalihi Neighborhood TOD	<a href="#">Honolulu Rail Transit Project</a> : an elevated rail system across the southern shore of Oahu. Funding for the estimated \$5.1 billion project comes from the Federal Transit Administration through Federal New Station Funding grants (32%), state general excise taxes, and local city transient accommodation taxes <sup>46</sup>

(continued)

FIGURE 19 (CONT.)

CCEI district	District type	District designation	Current infrastructure or transit project in district
 <b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	Urban industrial corridor	Historic North End Main Street	<p><a href="#">Joe Louis Greenway</a>: a 27.5-mile trail encircling 23 of the city’s inner neighborhoods, largely on former railways; \$20 million in funding will come from Wayne County’s American Rescue Plan Act funds, \$6 million in annual maintenance funding from the City of Detroit, and the remaining construction and maintenance funds are being raised by public-private partnerships<sup>47</sup></p> <p><a href="#">The Q Line</a>: a 3.3 mile, fare-free streetcar running through Milwaukee Junction/New Center, Midtown, and Downtown, that opened in 2017; the line was developed by and is owned and operated by the nonprofit M-1 Rail<sup>48</sup></p> <p><a href="#">Detroit’s New Center Intermodal Facility Project</a>: a planned intercity rail (Amtrak) and bus station that the Michigan Department of Transportation received a \$10 million federal Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity grant to fund in 2021, but work has not begun as the city explores alternative sites for the project<sup>49</sup></p>
 <b>South Los Angeles</b> LA	Urban commercial, industrial, and transit corridor	Destination Crenshaw Main Street Affiliate	<p><a href="#">The LACMTA K Line/ Crenshaw/LAX Line</a>: a light rail expansion project that connected the Crenshaw and Inglewood neighborhoods to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), a crucial transit project to support the multiple sports stadiums located in Inglewood, which will see particularly heavy traffic during the 2028 Olympic Games;<sup>50</sup> Destination Crenshaw, a 1.3-mile placemaking public art and park project, is a public-private initiative funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Project Funding Grants, state funding, New Market Tax Credits, the city’s pandemic recovery funds, and private philanthropic investment<sup>51</sup></p>
 <b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT	Urban industrial corridor	Mexicantown-Hubbard Communities Main Street <sup>52</sup>	<p><a href="#">The Gordie Howe International Bridge</a>: a new crossing to increase capacity between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario, that is publicly owned, with the Canadian government responsible for its construction, financing, and operations<sup>53</sup></p>
 <b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA	Urban commercial corridor	Sweet Auburn National Historic Landmark District  National Register of Historic Places  GA Main Street Downtown Affiliate Network	<p>The <a href="#">Atlanta Beltline</a>: a network of public parks, multi-use trails, transit, and affordable housing along a historic 22-mile railroad corridor is enhancing mobility, connecting intown neighborhoods, and improving economic opportunity and sustainability<sup>54</sup></p>

**NOTE:** Skyway Puget Sound is not included because it does not currently have an infrastructure or transit project.

In Atlanta, Detroit, and Puget Sound, political alignment and ongoing city initiatives also played a defining role. In Atlanta, the city had recently reopened the East Side Tax Allocation District, which had historically been a primary source of redevelopment dollars for Sweet Auburn—prompting the community to become organized to best leverage these new dollars in community-centered ways.<sup>55</sup> In Detroit, local leaders selected districts that were not fully included in the city’s Strategic Neighborhood Fund but that had significant investment and placekeeping potential.<sup>56</sup> And in Casino Road, conversations with city council members and public sector officials helped guide their decision-making based on their perceptions of municipal capacity gaps.

“The East Side Tax Allocation District was getting ready to reopen and because we’re mostly nonprofits and churches, we wanted to be able to compete with some of the market rate development that was going to happen . . . We said: ‘let’s go ahead and create this framework that leverages our development projects to solve some of the social ills that we have in our neighborhood. Because of the support we had, it just felt like the right time. And no one told us no—which is actually a really big deal.’”

SWEET AUBURN STAKEHOLDER

Oakland’s 7th Street Corridor and to an extent, Puget Sound’s Casino Road, were on the opposite end of the spectrum—having been overlooked and neglected by both public and private sector investment and having suffered from a lack of investment in the public realm and a dearth of economic opportunity.

The different qualitative decision-making factors that determined the where of the CCEI model produced a diverse patchwork of priority districts across the participating cities, allowing for an evaluation of the model across urban commercial and industrial districts, as well as more car-oriented suburbs outside of urban cores.

“The city doesn’t have a neighborhood economic development strategy. For 7th Street specifically, they don’t have the data to show what taxes businesses in the corridor are paying. There hasn’t been a mayor who has put their eyes on or been attuned to 7th Street. It gets lost in the shuffle.”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER

Left: Mural in Oakland, California. AUTHORS



## 2. THE WHO

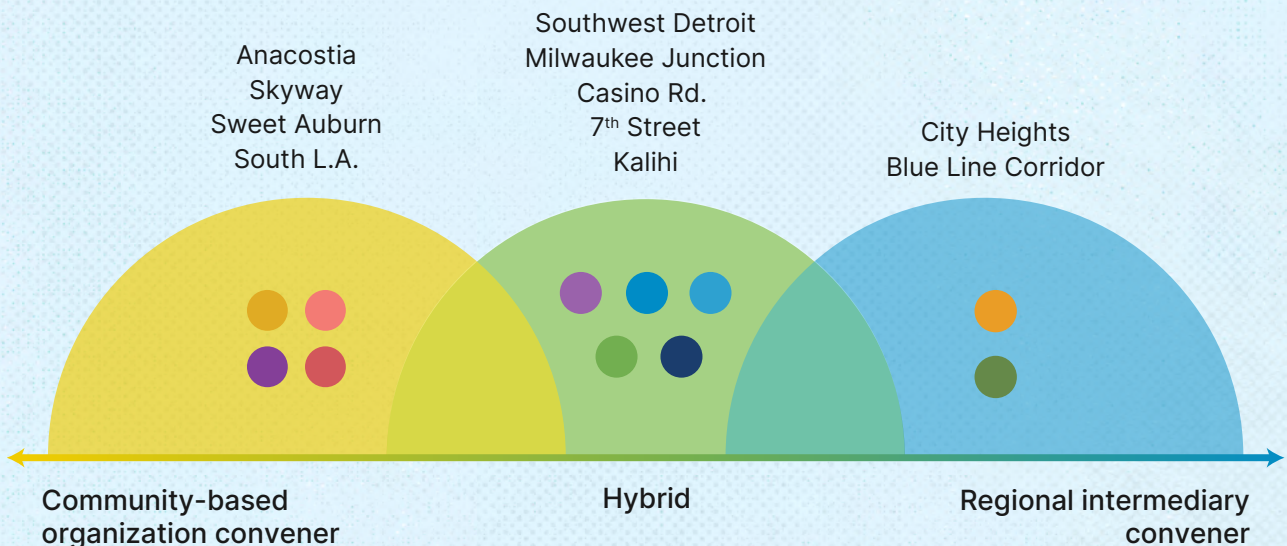
### All CCEI districts co-developed economic inclusion priorities with core community partners, but they varied in the extent to which they shared governance

The CCEI model must be stewarded by an interdisciplinary coalition of community-based stakeholders, intermediaries, and city and regional powerbrokers. It also requires the strong support of at least one core community-based organization to serve as a backbone to champion the agenda locally (see pages 27–34 in the [Playbook](#) for guidance).

All eleven districts successfully partnered with community backbones to co-lead the CCEI process, ultimately selecting a range of organizations across the fields of economic development, community development, real estate, and public health. The common denominators across all these community partners included: a long history of work in the district, the trust and credibility they command with residents, and the organizations' desire to take on a more transformative, equity-focused process like CCEI.

FIGURE 20

#### The spectrum of governance across CCEI districts



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

Brookings Metro

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“Our staff all came from this community. So it’s really important for us to be advocates, allies, and a trusted resource when it comes to this type of engagement. This is truly heartfelt work that we are committed to because this is our community.”

SOUTHWEST DETROIT STAKEHOLDER

Where some districts struggled, however, was in identifying a community backbone that also had the capacity and desire to take on economic development activities. Many of the neighborhoods did not have either CDFIs or community development corporations (CDCs), which often meant that more traditionally social service–focused nonprofits had to take on this role. This process took time as well as relationship building and trust building between local LISC offices and community-based nonprofits.

The variation in different CCEI districts’ nonprofit ecosystems—particularly the lack of economic development capacity in some of them, often due to insufficient funding support—shaped their decisions around governance and convening across the CCEI districts (see Figure 20). In districts with strong CDC or business development partners, like Anacostia and Sweet Auburn, the community backbone took on the bulk of responsibility for convening, stewarding, and liaising with partners. In other districts without a CDC presence, like Prince George’s County, LISC had to take on a stronger governance role as a regional intermediary partner. Many districts fell somewhere in the middle with shared governance duties between LISC and community-based partners.

*Ideal Group, a locally owned and operated industrial manufacturer, planted a garden beside their plant that serves as a community space and an environmental industrial buffer.*

TOM WOODMAN



### 3. THE WHAT

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## All community-centered economic inclusion agendas focused on holistic drivers of community well-being through layered investments

The CCEI model seeks to help districts grow from within by investing in local assets, people, and small businesses that generate positive economic and public health outcomes. It equips local leaders with a four-part integrated framework (see Figure 2 ) to guide their place-based agendas— encouraging them to invest not only in a place’s economic ecosystem but also in its built environment, health and wellness, and social civic infrastructure.

A look across the CCEI agendas reveals that local districts did, in fact, prioritize a diverse array of priorities spanning several disciplines. As Figure 21 demonstrates, economic ecosystem investments made up the largest share of agenda priorities. However, capacity-building, public space revitalization, and small business and entrepreneurship priorities were also key components of all 11 agendas. Public health and wellness investments were the least drawn from—appearing in eight of the 11 agendas—but importantly, many of the other investment categories also contributed significantly to community health and well-being. Overall, the majority of districts (8 of 11, or 73 percent) included at least one agenda item from each priority type.

Critically, each city’s CCEI agenda stressed the importance of how these multifaceted aims work together. This means they recognized that a new small business initiative or food co-op, on its own, wouldn’t move the needle on neighborhood outcomes, but when they aligned and layered multiple investments across these areas in tandem, they could significantly transform neighborhood well-being.



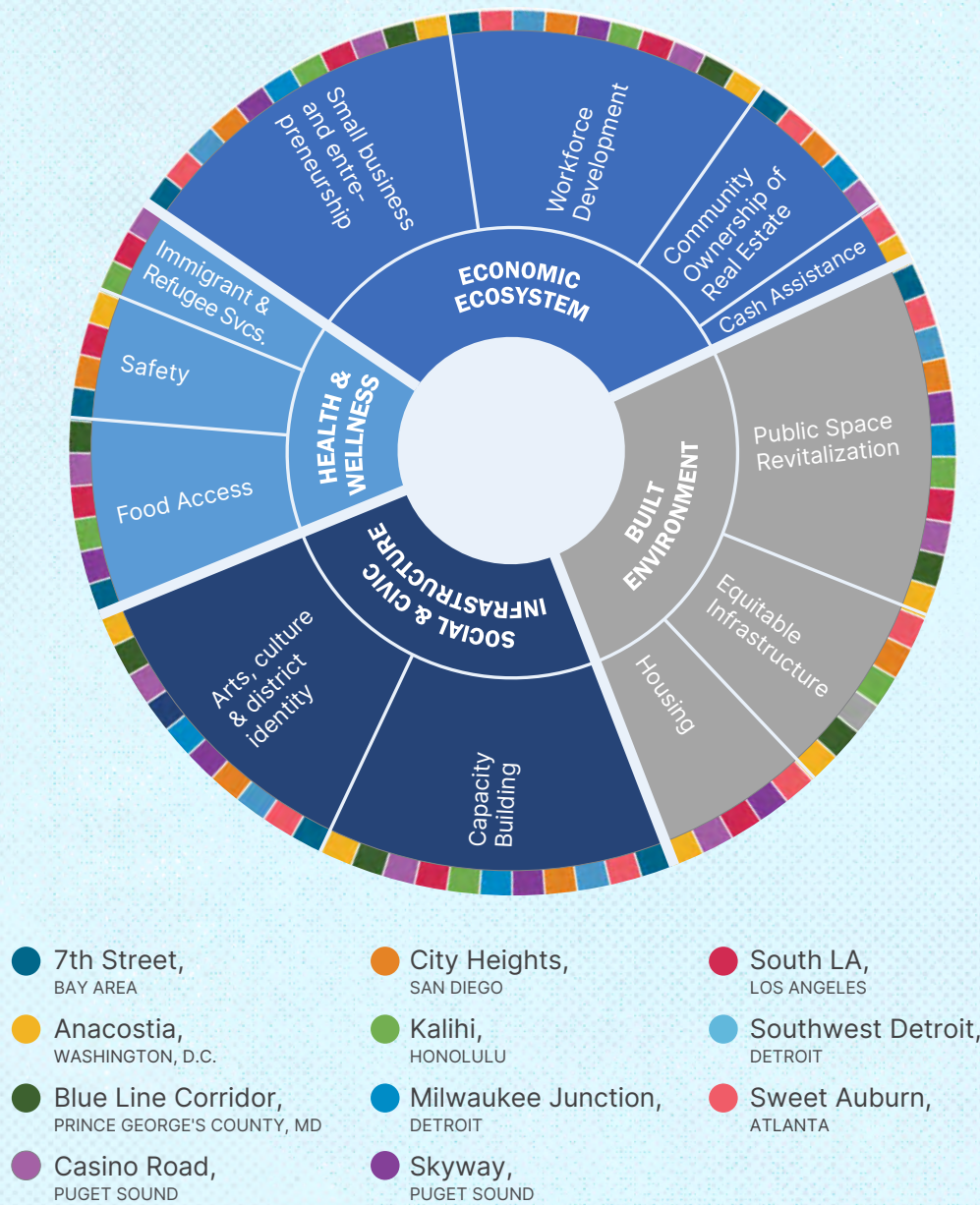
*Mural in City Heights, San Diego*  
AUTHORS

“It’s always been more about the revitalization of the buildings, less about how they will work for the neighborhood. And this is different. We’ve never had a plan where we’re creating an urban agriculture ecosystem that encompasses multiple developments and where there are also resources attached to it.”

SWEET AUBURN STAKEHOLDER

FIGURE 21

**CCEI agendas focused on a layered set of interdisciplinary priorities**



SOURCE: Authors' synthesis of CCEI agendas and interview

# 4

## Community-centered economic inclusion outcomes: Five key wins in transforming regions' landscapes of opportunity

Too often, place-based initiatives are funded and implemented without the time or resources to track who benefits or how they benefit over time. This lack of evaluation capacity can contribute to poorly understood results, wasted resources, and even exacerbated community distrust owing to false or unfinished promises. To be accountable to the communities they aim to serve, place-based initiatives must have shared mechanisms for tracking progress toward short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes. To this end, this section tracks early and mid-term outcomes from efforts in the 11 CCEI districts in this study.

It is important to first contextualize these outcomes in time. Measurable changes in population-level indicators such as poverty rates, homeownership trends, and life expectancy are critical for understanding the long-term impact of place-based interventions, but they can take years for data to be available and for these measurable changes to occur.<sup>57</sup> Because cities with CCEI agendas have been implementing their approaches for relatively short periods of time—some, like Oakland and Kalihi, just starting last year—their outcomes must be understood as in-progress or even as a starting point (see Figure 22).

Through our qualitative interviews and a review of local investment data, five key outcomes emerged from the implementation of these eleven districts' CCEI models.



“The funders are coming to us now, asking what our strategy is to support different infrastructure projects, which wasn’t a question before we started CCEI. So now instead of walking in and having to prove something, there’s a proven track record.”

DETROIT STAKEHOLDER

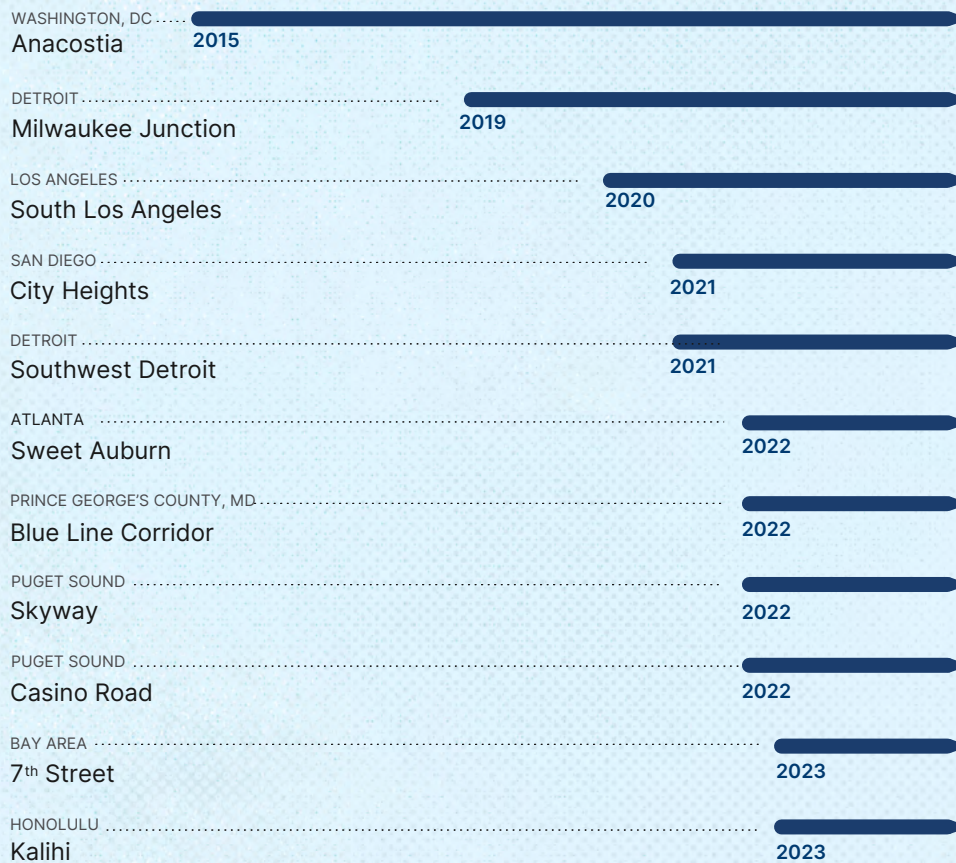
*Right: Students in an Atlantic Impact youth workforce development class learn hard and soft skills to support a career in the in-demand skilled trades.*

VANGUARD CDC



FIGURE 22

### Districts’ CCEI agenda implementation periods



Source: Authors’ synthesis of CCEI agendas and interviews

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# 1. CAPITAL INVESTMENT

The CCEI model significantly increased public, private, and philanthropic investment in neighborhood districts, while also building new funding relationships between community-based partners and city/regional funders.

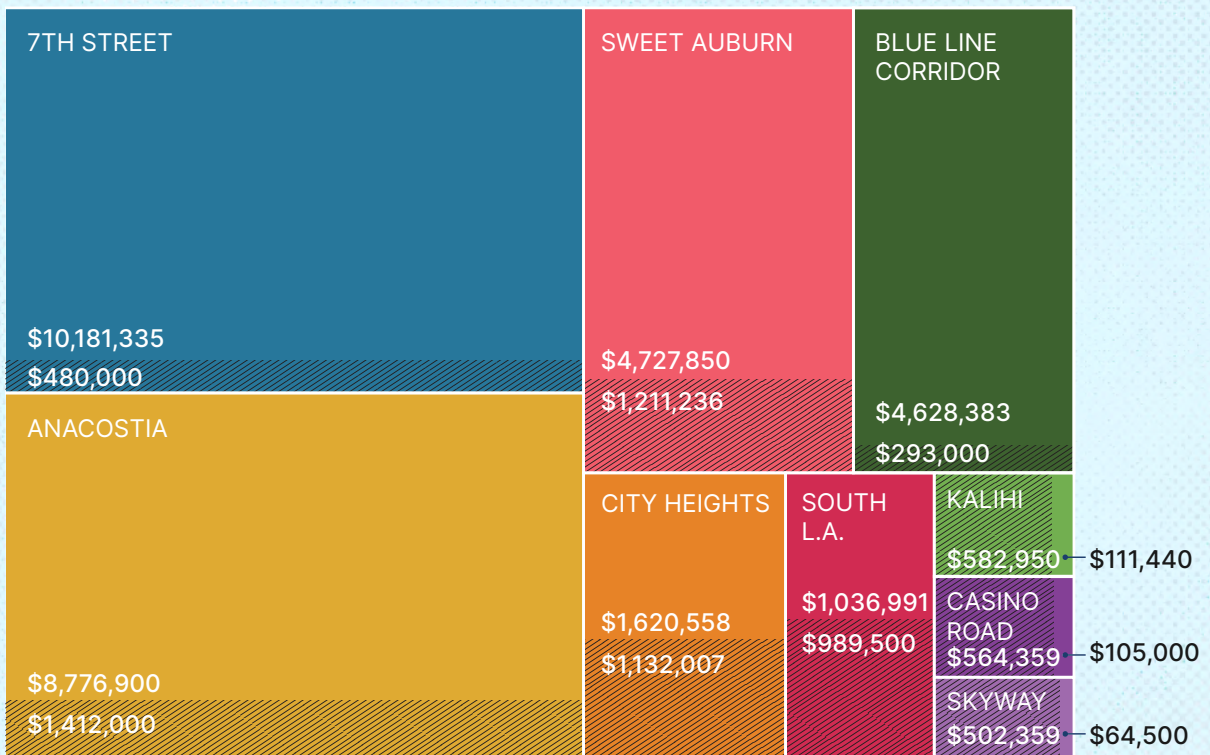
Using a blend of over \$7 million in catalytic Kaiser Permanente capital and additional leveraged funds from other public and private sources, nine of the CCEI districts invested over \$38 million total, increasing the initial Kaiser capital by a factor of 4.4 (see Figure 23).<sup>58</sup> (Data was not available for Detroit's two CCEI districts, as they did not receive Kaiser funding.)

FIGURE 23

## Nine CCEI districts invested over \$38 million in historically disinvested neighborhoods

Striped: Grant Funds

Solid colors: Leveraged Funds



SOURCE: Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting.

Across the nine districts, Oakland and Anacostia stood out for their success in leveraging Kaiser capital to secure significant investments from other sources—garnering more than \$10 million and \$8 million, respectively. Districts with a newer LISC presence and less developed CDC ecosystems, like Kalihi and Puget Sound, understandably relied more on Kaiser funds while building the funding relationships to diversify in the coming years.

“During the pandemic, we and three other amazing nonprofits launched THRIVE East of the River. It was the largest privately funded, unconditional cash transfer program that has ever been attempted in the United States. It gave \$5,500 in cash to 650 families east of the river to cover things like weekly groceries and monthly dry goods. I mean, it’s huge.”

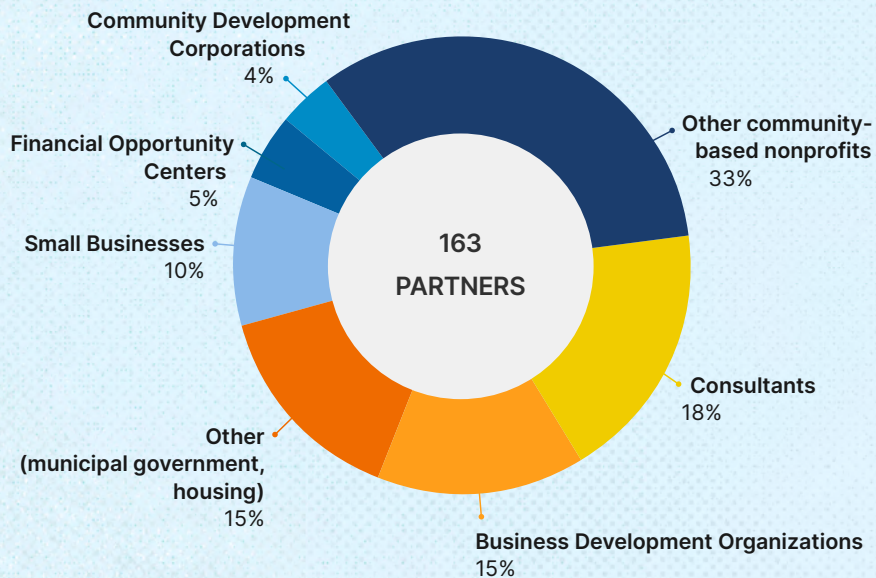
ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

These funds supported a diverse array of agenda items—described in the sections below—and were stewarded by 163 community-based implementation partners across the nine districts (see Figure 24).

FIGURE 24

### Nine CCEI districts funded implementation partners across sectors and disciplines

163 partners received grants as part of CCEI across 9 markets, February 2020-February 2024



SOURCE: Authors’ analysis of local data from LISC reporting.

While the capital itself was seen as a win—particularly for nonprofits that felt overlooked and unheard by more traditional funders—these investments also generated a more sustainable outcome. They helped build the capacity and relationships for community-based funders to more successfully fundraise themselves. Respondents across all the districts said that the CCEI process and agenda had opened them up to new funders and relationships they would not have had otherwise. This was the case in Detroit as well, even though stakeholders there had not received support from Kaiser to implement the CCEI model.

Importantly, funders were not only interested in supporting CCEI partners because they had new exposure or relationships, but also because the agendas themselves were firmly rooted in community priorities. Across these districts, the CCEI agendas themselves became a powerful tool to generate new resources because of the depth of engagement, care, and alignment that went into creating these cross-sectoral, community-centered investment roadmaps.

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“ We kept pointing out to these funders that this is a community-driven plan. Having this plan sends an important message—that this has been created by the local residents, that it’s multi-sectoral, and that it’s a chance to do things differently. So based on that, we’ve been fairly successful at raising money.”

ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

LISC DC and  
Brookings staff in  
the Anacostia CCEI  
district  
LISC DC





*Clockwise from top: Workforce development students in Milwaukee Junction, Detroit (VANGUARD CDC).*

*The DC Go-Go Museum bus, parked in the center of Historic Anacostia, features mini exhibits sharing the history of Go-Go music, along with a rooftop stage and DJ booth to bring that history to life. (AUTHORS)*

*Seams Wonderful participants working on developing professional sewing and English skills (SEAMS WONDERFUL).*

*Vanguard CDC presents on the new Main Street designation and forthcoming small business association, Milwaukee Junction, Detroit (VANGUARD CDC).*

## 2. ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEMS

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**Community-centered economic inclusion fostered greater capital access, capacity building, and market opportunities for small businesses owned by people of color, as well as for workers and residents of color.**

Minority-owned businesses nationwide are at a systematic disadvantage for business development and growth, as they have been denied equal opportunities for wealth accumulation and have been devalued in the marketplace. This is particularly true in majority-minority neighborhoods, where businesses' bottom line takes a cut simply by virtue of where they are located.

To overcome these challenges—many of which were heightened in the disruptive period of the pandemic recovery—CCEI districts invested \$3,834,397 in 1,453 small businesses across the nine districts, 97 percent of which were owned by people of color and 45 percent of which were owned by women (Figure 24).<sup>59</sup> South Los Angeles drove a large share of this investment, while newer districts with less preexisting capacity for economic development in the neighborhood spent more time on relationship building and trust building with minority-owned businesses through engagement processes and needs assessments.



*Ongoing construction for Destination Crenshaw in South LA, which will be a 1.3 mile open-air museum dedicated to preserving the history and culture of the Black community.*

AUTHORS






FIGURE 25

## Community-centered economic inclusion districts supported minority- and women-owned businesses in accessing capital, capacity, and growth opportunities

CCEI district	Capital access, capacity building, and growth support for minority- and women-owned small businesses
<p><b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded a small-business needs assessment to identify the priorities of businesses owned by people of color in the district</li> <li>• Provided free technical assistance to businesses in the corridor</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched an initiative to connect minority-owned, district-based small businesses with new construction and procurement opportunities</li> <li>• Established a Small Business Preservation pilot program to assist legacy businesses in the corridor on consulting marketing, accounting, and applying for government grants</li> <li>• Organized an executive leadership program for district-based small businesses to attend nearby graduate school courses</li> <li>• Supported an Anchor Program to connect minority-owned small businesses with construction and procurement contracts at anchor institutions</li> <li>• Provided technical assistance and grants to food entrepreneurs ready to launch and grow their businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted outreach and provided technical assistance to local minority-owned construction and construction-related businesses to connect to new opportunities in the Blue Line Corridor TOD</li> </ul>
<p><b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won a \$1 million grant from the State of California Employment Training Panel to allocate direct grants to refugee and immigrant entrepreneurs that experience barriers to employment due to limited English proficiency and/or immigration status<sup>60</sup></li> <li>• Created an initiative to support refugee women from East Africa and Burma to launch and/or expand food-based businesses</li> <li>• Provided digital literacy and technological skills training for district-based small businesses</li> <li>• Funded a microlending initiative for district-based small businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported capacity building for a culinary food incubator to grow and scale small start-up food businesses in the corridor</li> </ul>

(continued)

FIGURE 25 (CONT.)

CCEI district	Capital access, capacity building, and growth support for minority- and women-owned small businesses
 <p><b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offered credit-building and credit-repair courses for district-based small businesses</li> <li>• Hosted small business pop-up events to increase revenue and funded façade improvements for district-based businesses</li> <li>• Supported the development of a district-based business association</li> <li>• Supported a new Main Street program to support small businesses in the district</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted a small business outreach study to identify the needs and priorities of small businesses owned by people of color in the corridor</li> </ul>
 <p><b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported a legacy business preservation initiative for longtime district-based small businesses</li> <li>• Provided digital literacy training for district-based small businesses</li> <li>• Supported a Black Business Excellence initiative for Black-owned small businesses in the district</li> <li>• Funded branding, marketing, and financing training for Goodyear Tract industrial small businesses</li> <li>• Conducted a feasibility study to identify industrial small business owners’ desire and potential priorities for a Goodyear Tract Business Association</li> <li>• Conducted the “Community Ownership of Commercial Real Estate” study to help legacy small business owners purchase real estate in the Crenshaw Corridor</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conducted door-to-door outreach to identify industrial small businesses’ priorities for neighborhood development and provided a series of follow-up webinars for these businesses based on their feedback</li> <li>• Supported zoning, permitting, and regulations assistance for district-based industrial small businesses</li> <li>• Offered technical assistance with environmental grant applications for district-based industrial small businesses</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created a new Innovation Lab in a district-based historic building that provides technical assistance, funding, and retail space to small businesses</li> <li>• Distributed \$31,000 in savings match incentives to residents engaged in financial education and coaching<sup>61</sup></li> <li>• Deployed \$500,000 in federal grants to support mentorship, technical assistance, and access to capital for small businesses looking to sustain and scale in the Auburn Avenue corridor<sup>62</sup></li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors’ analysis of local data from LISC reporting.

**NOTE:** Casino Road, Puget Sound was excluded from this table as that district did not invest in this category as part of the CCEI initiative.




In addition to the technical and capital assistance provided to minority- and women-owned small business owners, many stakeholders described their greatest win in this realm as building new relationships and trust with underserved businesses that had never received outside capital before. Particularly in districts with large immigrant and undocumented populations—including South Los Angeles, City Heights, Casino Road, and Kalihi—this was seen as a significant win for supporting these small businesses in future efforts as well.

As part of supporting healthy economic ecosystems, CCEI agendas also targeted efforts to support workers and residents in accessing high-quality jobs. The workforce development investment portfolio was smaller across the nine districts—with a total investment of \$1,887,855—but agendas also included innovative new programs that take a place-based and community-centered approach to bridging training gaps for underserved residents (Figure 26), including two new cash-assistance pilots for underserved residents.

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“I take it as a very large victory that the majority of applicants had never received capital before. We were successful in reaching the most marginalized business owners. It was not easy—there’s a lot of mistrust. We had to do on-the-ground canvassing and work with partners to gain that trust. With the applicants that we received, they’re now more engaged some of our other programs.”

SOUTH LOS ANGELES STAKEHOLDER



*Dulan's On Crenshaw, a locally owned soul food restaurant on Crenshaw Boulevard weathered the construction of the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line and now hopes the new transit connections will drive growth for the community.*

AUTHORS

FIGURE 26

## The CCEI model supported underserved workers and residents through new cash assistance, workforce development, and digital skills training

CCEI district	Financial support and training for underserved workers and residents
<b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported THRIVE East of the River, a guaranteed-income pilot that provided emergency cash relief of \$5,500 to almost 600 Washington, D.C., households during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>63</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported the development of an asset-building and financial/coaching-services program for district-based residents</li> <li>Provided relief funds for family childcare providers in the district</li> <li>Launched a math-skills training program with an immigrant-serving community-based nonprofit</li> </ul>
<b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched two digital literacy initiatives to support families in the district in achieving access to economic self-sufficiency through core digital literacy skills and new technology</li> </ul>
<b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported a family- and wealth-building program located in Kalihi’s second-largest public housing complex to offer financial literacy services, English as a second language (ESL) classes, and workforce development programming</li> <li>Supported a Family and Opportunity Center in a Kalihi public housing complex to combine economic development and social service assistance to residents</li> </ul>
<b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with Goodwill Industries to hold job fairs for residents</li> </ul>
<b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided assistance to district-based small businesses to obtain federal workforce development grants to attract livable-wage jobs, with community partnerships in place to connect existing community residents with those jobs</li> </ul>
<b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported the Georgia Resilience and Opportunity Fund, a guaranteed income program focused on Black women</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors’ analysis of local data from LISC reporting.

**B** | Brookings Metro

**NOTE:** The following districts were excluded from this table as they did not invest in this category as part of their respective CCEI initiatives: 7th Street, Bay Area; Blue Line Corridor, Prince George’s County; Skyway, Puget Sound; and South Los Angeles.



“When you’re doing this kind of comprehensive neighborhood work, you can’t draw a clear line between the various pieces of this work and say, ‘well, we’re only going to talk about businesses and family wealth building and workforce development, but we’re not going to talk about housing.’ Especially because that’s residents’ number one concern.”

PUGET SOUND STAKEHOLDER

Top: Participatory planning in Casino Road, Puget Sound  
RYAN BERRY

Left: Tiny homes in Skyway, Puget Sound  
LISC PUGET SOUND

Right: January 2024 groundbreaking at the Skyway Resource Center, Skyway, Puget Sound  
LISC PUGET SOUND

### 3. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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#### **CCEI facilitated a range of physical improvements that foster opportunity and well-being, including the reuse and redevelopment of vacant real estate, affordable housing development, and creative placemaking.**

The physical environment and a sense of place are key contributors to the economic and physical health of community members—impacting how rooted, invested, and connected residents feel to their neighborhood and community and affecting the stability of economic drivers like entrepreneurship and homeownership. Given that CCEI stakeholders reported a high concentration of vacant and underutilized commercial properties across the CCEI districts, the revitalization of these sites became a top agenda priority in nearly every market. CCEI agendas seeded real estate revitalization and reuse projects with a range of community-serving priorities—including a new beauty school and salon in Anacostia and a Community Hub and Resource Center in Skyway (Figure 27). Across the CCEI districts, projects targeted vacant and underutilized buildings and land, activating the spaces to improve how neighborhood felt—safe, comfortable, and welcoming. Some projects enhanced community ownership of real estate, and others increased opportunities for community members to gather in and engage with local spaces.

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“There are a lot of areas in Detroit with industrial buildings, but a lot of them are gone... There are still a lot of buildings intact in Milwaukee Junction...but all our buildings—both residential and commercial and industrial—are being lost at a pretty rapid clip. So if you wanted to save any of them, now is the time.”

DETROIT STAKEHOLDER

Across all districts, access to a safe and affordable place to live was increasingly out-of-reach for low-income and residents of color and surfaced as a top priority for the community. Three districts in particular – Anacostia, Casino Road, and City Heights—also made explicit housing and homeownership part of their CCEI agendas in recognition that housing first dictates residents’ ability to be healthy, access employment, and raise a family.

FIGURE 27

## CCEI catalyzed the revitalization of new projects related to real estate and public realm improvements

CCEI district	Real estate and public realm improvements
<p><b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported a community-based partner in feasibility assessment and acquisition of vacant commercial properties for community ownership</li> <li>• Advocated for long-overdue built environment improvements in the corridor, including fixing lighting and cleaning up trash</li> </ul>
<p><b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the redevelopment of a vacant property into a beauty school, barbershop, and salon owned by a Black legacy small business leader</li> <li>• Funded built environment improvements in underinvested district blocks without pedestrian-friendly infrastructure to support community safety</li> </ul>
<p><b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the redevelopment of a vacant building into a new headquarters and incubator space for a district-based nonprofit</li> <li>• Provided technical assistance to determine the feasibility of reactivating a piece of city-owned land in the district to support a community-driven real estate project led by developers of color</li> <li>• Facilitated activation of underutilized public spaces adjacent to Blue Line Corridor metro stations through pop-up placemaking events</li> <li>• Supported the redevelopment of a historic district asset into an art installation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided training and technical assistance for a district-based land trust to acquire commercial real estate for community ownership</li> <li>• Funded public space enhancements to a public park in the corridor, including shading, seating, and cooking equipment</li> </ul>
<p><b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported placemaking interventions, including tree planting, lighting, and walkability in the corridor</li> </ul>
<p><b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the redevelopment of a new coworking space in Chinatown focused on local artists and creative industries</li> </ul>

(continued)

FIGURE 27 (CONT.)

CCEI district	Real estate and public realm improvements
<p><b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported the redevelopment of a vacant city-owned property (234 Piquette) into a catalytic project designed to benefit the community</li> <li>Funded the revitalization of vacant land into a public open space for community events</li> <li>Supported new wayfinding, signage, and streetscapes improvements in the district</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported the redevelopment of a former U.S. Bank branch to be a community resource hub for the district</li> </ul>
<p><b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported a study on community ownership of real estate in the Crenshaw Corridor to determine feasibility of commercial real estate ownership for legacy small businesses in the district</li> </ul>
<p><b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported the planned redevelopment of a vacant city-owned property into an industrial kitchen and business incubator space for a Latino-owned small business</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded the Front Porch Project, a mixed-use development with new commercial space and affordable housing</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting

**B** | Brookings Metro

**NOTE:** The following districts were excluded from this table as they did not invest in this category as part of their CCEI initiatives: Kalihi, Honolulu; Milwaukee Junction, Detroit; Skyway, Puget Sound; South Los Angeles; and Southwest Detroit.

*Future site of the Skyway Resource Center, Puget Sound*  
LISC PUGET SOUND



Outside of larger real estate and housing projects—which can take years to show tangible benefits to the surrounding community—CCEI partners also described the impact that smaller and less-resource intensive placemaking interventions had by energizing their communities and sustaining buy-in for longer-term CCEI priorities (Figure 29). In Puget Sound, for instance, community members saw small placemaking wins like new seating and shade in public parks or new murals on traffic signal boxes as key early wins that helped fuel momentum for the CCEI model.

FIGURE 28

### CCEI districts supported housing access and affordability

CCEI district	Housing access and affordability
 <b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supported a program for faith-based entities in West Oakland to leverage land assets for the production of affordable housing</li> </ul>
 <b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched tenant advocacy and housing counseling for district residents</li> <li>Launched free home repairs for multigenerational homeowners east of the Anacostia River: \$15,000 per homeowner for things like roof repairs or lead abatement</li> <li>Formed a land trust to preserve permanently affordable housing</li> <li>Supported a transitional housing program that provides residents experiencing homelessness with housing and assistance securing permanent supportive housing</li> <li>Financed the preservation of 53 units as affordable units and the construction of 25 additional affordable units, including nine family-sized (three-bedroom) homes</li> </ul>
 <b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financed the construction of a microgrid housing development for first-time homebuyers with integrated solar panels</li> <li>Financed a mixed-use, mixed-income, transit-oriented housing development</li> </ul>
 <b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched an affordable housing task force to align a place-based Casino Road housing preservation and affordability strategy</li> </ul>
 <b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched a Black Homebuyers program to provide first-time homeowners with counseling and grants for downpayment assistance</li> <li>Funded the Front Porch Project, a mixed-use development with new commercial space and affordable housing</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting.

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**NOTE:** The following districts were excluded from this table as they did not invest in this category as part of their CCEI initiatives: Kalihi, Honolulu; Milwaukee Junction, Detroit; Skyway, Puget Sound; South Los Angeles; and Southwest Detroit.

Far too often, the assets in historically disinvested communities—including those related to the arts, music, and history—are overlooked and undervalued, preventing residents from benefiting from these strengths. Across the CCEI districts, valuing the identity and culture of the districts was an essential component of revitalizing not only physical space but also the social and civic fabric of the communities.

FIGURE 29

### CCEI spurred new investment in creative placemaking, arts, and district identity

CCEI district	Creative placemaking, arts, and other investments in district identity
 <b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded a Black Music Entrepreneurship incubator to acquire a physical space for the community</li> </ul>
 <b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded the redevelopment of an arts center as an inclusive community hub</li> <li>Funded artist stipends to implement placemaking and beautification efforts in the community, as well as placemaking walks for residents to share their ideas during the design phase</li> </ul>
 <b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded a technical assistance panel event hosted by the Urban Land Institute to amplify community-driven priorities for the corridor<sup>64</sup></li> </ul>
 <b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded a placemaking initiative to paint murals on traffic signal boxes</li> </ul>
 <b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided capacity-building support to a community-based circus program for youth in the district</li> </ul>
 <b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided capacity-building support for community partners to paint murals and invest in signage and wayfinding</li> </ul>
 <b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funded community events designed to bring more residents to local businesses in the corridor</li> </ul>
 <b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provided significant capacity-building support for Destination Crenshaw, a 1.1 mile placemaking project designed to honor Black arts and culture</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting

 Brookings Metro

**NOTE:** The following districts were excluded from this table as they did not invest in this category as part of their CCEI initiatives: Kalihi, Honolulu; Southwest Detroit; and Sweet Auburn, Atlanta.





“Some of the things that are really not very big investments, like getting the picnic tables and the picnic shade done, showed the importance of early and small wins. I talked to the city councilperson whose district that project is in, and she’s like, ‘Oh my god, we’ve been talking about doing that for 10 years.’ It’s the same thing with the traffic signal boxes. She said they’ve been talking about that forever. So these things that have been kicking around as ideas for a long time and just needed someone to catalyze the work and get it done—I think that has really energized people.”

PUGET SOUND STAKEHOLDER

*Top: Project Create, a CCEI grantee in Anacostia, Washington, D.C. offers arts programs that promote healthy development, growth, and healing.*

AUTHORS

*Right: The mobile Go-Go museum van serves as a venue for encounters with the D.C. music genre, while a permanent museum campus opened in Historic Anacostia in February 2024.*

AUTHORS

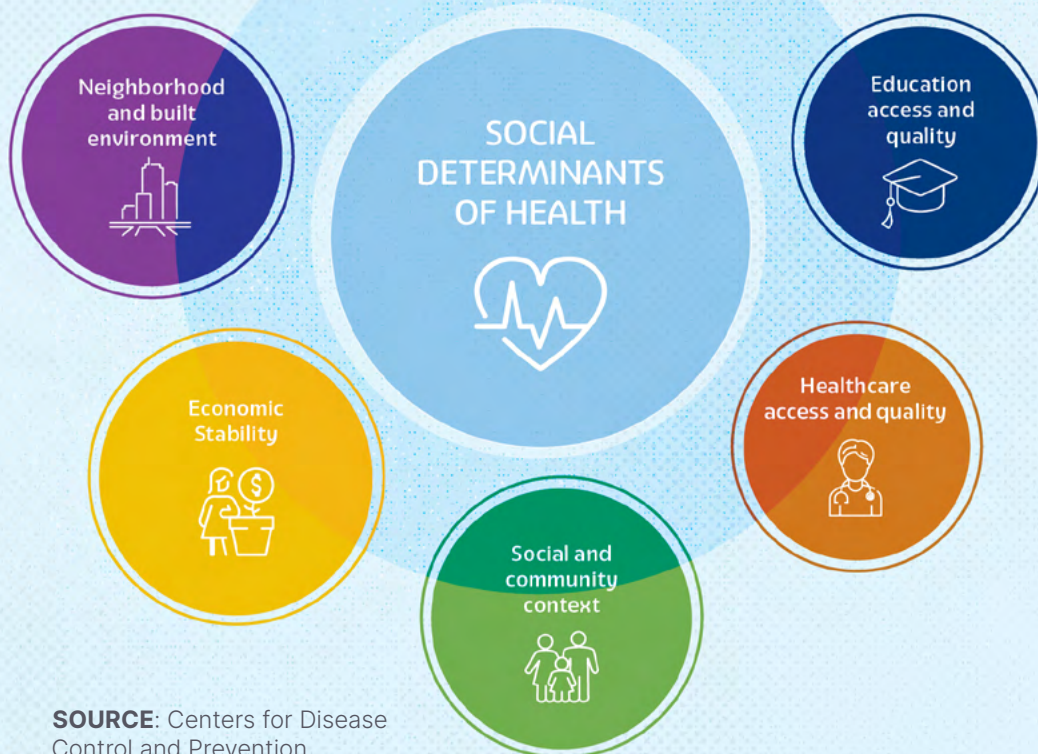
## 4. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

### CCEI encouraged new approaches to promoting health and wellness in CCEI districts, including through food entrepreneurship, built design, and affordable housing.

Healthy communities are not only the product of high-quality healthcare access; they require a constellation of place-based supports—including access to jobs, public spaces, housing, and education—to contribute to individual and family well-being. While the importance of neighborhood investment for improving what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and others call the “social determinants of health” (Figure 30) is well-known among many in academia and healthcare-related fields, the CCEI model inspired a broader range of practitioners in areas like economic development, arts and culture, entrepreneurship, and real estate to begin to view their work as part of a broader public health mission.<sup>65</sup>

FIGURE 30

#### The social determinants of health



**SOURCE:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

In Anacostia, for instance, community and economic development practitioners began to call out the intersections between neighborhood disinvestment, legacies of destructive infrastructure, and public safety in the district, and ultimately embraced new investments to make public realm improvements to higher-crime areas as part of a public health approach to violence reduction.



While all of the CCEI investments featured in this report thus far—including support for small businesses, real estate development, and workforce programming—also promote community health and wellness, most CCEI districts made direct programmatic investments in more traditional approaches to enhancing physical and mental well-being, such as expanding mental health services, increasing access to food, and planting trees for fresher air and greater environmental sustainability (Figure 31). Food access—through the support of new urban farms, culinary kitchens, farmers markets, and more—was a particularly well-adopted strategy for increasing residents’ access to healthy foods and for supporting food-based businesses and entrepreneurs.

“The 395 overpass is a classic example of a highway that separates communities . . . it’s not a safe area to walk. And when you go further up in the district, it’s been a hotspot for violence. A huge driver of this is disinvestment . . . we have a long-term opportunity to weave in safety and space design through a health lens in that district.”

ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

FIGURE 31

### CCEI supported new investments at the intersection of health and economic development

CCEI district	Health investments
 <b>7th Street Corridor</b> BAY AREA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the district’s only co-op and source of fresh food for residents.</li> <li>• Organized trash cleanups and environmental awareness activities on the corridor.</li> </ul>
 <b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funded capacity building for a nonprofit commercial kitchen for food-based businesses</li> <li>• Funded safety through built environment programming to make light and sidewalk repairs, and underpass artwork, in a part of the district that was well-known for higher crime rates</li> <li>• Supported a Recovery Café to provide a supportive transitional place for residents dealing with trauma, addiction, homelessness, and returning from periods of incarceration</li> </ul>

(continued)

FIGURE 31 (CONT.)

CCEI district	Health investments
 <b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched placemaking farmers market activations at Blue Line Corridor metro stations to increase access to fresh food and foster social cohesion</li> <li>• Funded a training program best practices of multimodal transportation design to address key safety issues in the corridor</li> </ul>
 <b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched a small-business mental health initiative with free counseling and services for small business owners and their employees</li> <li>• Supported two youth-led organizations focused on improving mental health outcomes for youth of color</li> <li>• Supported the development of an urban farm hub to distribute fresh food to City Heights and provide technical assistance to urban farmers</li> <li>• Supported an initiative for refugees from East Africa and Burma to launch and/or expand food-based businesses</li> <li>• Supported tree planting to provide more shade for a part of the corridor that was not friendly to pedestrian traffic</li> </ul>
 <b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched the Building Capacity for Equitable Food Access Initiative to strengthen nonprofit food ecosystem work in Kalihi</li> <li>• Funded capacity building for a culinary business incubator to support start-up food businesses and help farmers reach new markets</li> </ul>
 <b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported a Black-led co-op and community-owned grocery store adjacent to the district</li> </ul>
 <b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaled the capacity of the urban farmers market to hire new staff and increase frequency of markets</li> </ul>
 <b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched an outreach program to industrial business owners to encourage industrial buffering with trees and other greenery</li> </ul>
 <b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchased equipment and furniture for free preventative health services for residents of a permanent supportive housing development in the district</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting

 Brookings Metro

**NOTE:** The following districts were excluded from this table as they did not invest in this category as part of their CCEI initiatives: Casino Road in Puget Sound and South Los Angeles.

Undoing the harm and vital inequalities caused by decades of racist land-use policies requires dedicated, long-term work. In combination with supportive investments in areas like housing and economic development made in all these districts, direct investments in residents' health through nutrition and mental and physical care provisions specifically addressed the most immediate needs contributing to inequities in health outcomes.



Local artist Sydney James' mural, "Girl With the D Earing", painted prominently on the Chroma building in Milwaukee Junction, Detroit, celebrates Black women in Detroit's past and future.

AUTHORS

## 5. CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE

### **CCEI enhanced the capacity of community-based entities, facilitated improved relationships between neighborhoods and the public sector, and contributed to early policy wins.**

In disinvested neighborhoods nationwide, community-based organizations provide critical civic infrastructure to support residents' needs—including affordable housing development, loan capital and technical assistance to small businesses, and social services—when other systems have failed them. Yet the reach and scale of many community-based organizations are not sufficient to address the challenges of economic exclusion in affected communities. In places where an established network of community-based organizations does exist, these organizations often lack the funding and staff to sustain their current programs. In other neighborhoods, no network of established community-based organizations exists, meaning residents are left without access to the critical civic infrastructure needed to realize their priorities.

Across the CCEI districts, stakeholders overwhelmingly pointed to the capacity-building investments in community-based nonprofits and resident leadership as the most impactful and sustainable win for long-term neighborhood revitalization (Figure 32).

“Getting a community-based organization to expand and take on economic development is huge, especially for a traditionally housing-focused organization. The new business association was huge—there’s never been a business association in the area, let alone one led by a longtime legacy Detroit organization designed to support Black-owned small businesses, especially as speculation is happening and those property values are going up.”

MILWAUKEE JUNCTION STAKEHOLDER

*Vanguard CDC is working on raising funds to develop the empty lot behind their building into Black Bottom Park which will be the first open green space in the Milwaukee Junction neighborhood of Detroit.*

AUTHORS



FIGURE 32

**CCEI investments in neighborhood capacity building, leadership, and governance**

CCEI district	Capacity-building, leadership, and governance investments
 <b>7th Street Corridor,</b> OAKLAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided more than \$1.2 million in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>Anacostia</b> WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported a community leadership empowerment workshop to provide residents with personal leadership skills and urban planning knowledge to run a successful community meeting</li> <li>• Provided \$377,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched the Civic Leadership Institute for residents and municipal leaders on transit-oriented development and inclusive economic development</li> <li>• Funded a district-based nonprofit to revitalize its headquarters into a central and dynamic hub for workforce development and social services</li> <li>• Provided \$247,500 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported regional funders to participate in a national training program on inclusive district revitalization</li> <li>• Provided nearly \$525,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>City Heights</b> SAN DIEGO, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided \$485,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>Kalihi</b> HONOLULU, HI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the operations of a Financial Opportunity Center in the district<sup>66</sup></li> <li>• Provided nearly \$392,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
 <b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocated for and helped support a formal Main Street designation for a community-based nonprofit</li> <li>• Supported the salary of a full-time economic development manager in the corridor</li> </ul>

(continued)

FIGURE 32 (CONT.)

<p> <b>Skyway</b> PUGET SOUND</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided nearly \$200,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
<p> <b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created the Elevate Black Leaders program to support Black-led nonprofits on efforts to build capacity as well as social and economic power</li> <li>• Provided over \$896,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported community-based partners to participate in a national training program on inclusive district revitalization</li> <li>• Supported the salary of a full-time district manager for the corridor</li> </ul>
<p> <b>Sweet Auburn</b> ATLANTA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported the operations of a Financial Opportunity Center in the district</li> <li>• Provided funding to the Georgia Resilience and Opportunity Fund for a permanent staff position<sup>67</sup></li> <li>• Provided over \$630,000 in capacity-building funding to district-based nonprofits</li> </ul>

**SOURCE:** Authors' analysis of local data from LISC reporting

 Brookings Metro

“ We have this community leadership empowerment program that works to strengthen local leaders and build in individuals the capacity, skillsets, and personal leadership of how to run a community meeting, how to deescalate conflict, and how to understand the basics of the urban planning process. Because too often, the public gets involved in development when they see the cranes going up. But by that time, those decisions were made five years ago.”

BLUE LINE CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER



In addition to these capacity-building wins, stakeholders overwhelmingly reported that the CCEI process helped them achieve three key relational, power-sharing, and policy achievements. These included a) strengthening collaboration between previously disconnected community-based organizations to forge a united platform for neighborhood priorities; b) facilitating new relationships between community-based organizations and city/regional officials, the private sector, and philanthropic stakeholders; and c) influencing city policy to prioritize inclusion districts in citywide economic development decision-making.

### **CCEI strengthened collaboration between previously disconnected community-based organizations to align work, coordinate funding, and avoid duplication of efforts**

Community-based organizations have long been working to enhance quality of life in underinvested communities, but they often have not had the resources or capacity to coordinate with other similar organizations to align workstreams and maximize the success of their efforts through collective action—a tendency that has inadvertently led to the duplication of efforts across multiple different organizations dedicated to similar aims.<sup>68</sup>

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“The agenda really moved us in a direction of working with new partners and also with each other. I would say new relationships have formed between groups that weren’t aware of each other before that.”

CITY HEIGHTS STAKEHOLDER

One of the key successes of the CCEI model was its ability to improve collaboration between the community-based organizations working within underinvested neighborhoods. As an inherently collective and community-led effort, CCEI provided funding to local organizations to co-develop and co-implement district strategies together (resources that can often be difficult to obtain from other funding sources). Many stakeholders said that the CCEI process gave them a reason to meet one another and collaborate when they may not have otherwise done so due to funding constraints and the lack of capacity to staff these forms of collaboration.

Community-based stakeholders across all CCEI districts remarked on the catalytic impact that these new kinds of collaboration had on fostering a shared sense of hope for more collective and collaborative action.

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“We’ve been able to meet with developers looking at the district and help build those relationships with community partners to connect them to potential investments.”

DETROIT STAKEHOLDER

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“The organizing and relationship building that we’ve been able to activate—we’re galvanizing each other around a new vision of hope for the corridor by way of our ability to show up. We’ve got a new crop of people who are gathering to try to support 7th Street Thrives.”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER

### **CCEI facilitated new relationships between community-based organizations, public sector officials, philanthropy, and the private sector**

CCEI has the explicit purpose of bringing together often-siloed stakeholders across a range of sectors including community development, economic development, city and regional policy, and philanthropy to work toward similar aims. The goal of this cross-sectoral collaboration is to make community-led priorities more achievable (by obtaining the support and resources of city and regional stakeholders) and to make city and regional efforts more attuned to the realities of disinvested communities.

Across the CCEI sites, stakeholders consistently pointed to the new relationships formed between the public sector and underinvested neighborhoods as one of the largest wins coming from the initiative. In particular, they discussed public sector support as garnering new funding relationships and credibility for neighborhood priorities across the regions writ large.

They also overwhelmingly pointed to the impact that the CCEI model and early grants from LISC had on their relationships with new funders. As discussed above, funders were often more interested in providing new support to community-based partners engaged in CCEI because the

“LISC was one of the first funders at the table, our first grant actually. I don’t think we would’ve been able to move forward without that support. And since then, we’ve been able to circulate the framework nationally and have had some really good conversations with major national funders . . . it seems that they’re more interested in this type of work than our other work.”

SWEET AUBURN STAKEHOLDER

*Right: Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church, Sweet Auburn, Atlanta*  
LISC ATLANTA



districts' economic inclusion agendas were firmly rooted in consensus building, collective action, and cross-sectoral approaches to realize community priorities.

Finally, CCEI helped facilitate new relationships between private sector stakeholders ranging from financial institutions to private developers. While this was the most nascent relationship to be formed across these places, the vast majority of CCEI districts reported that, by forming new relationships with the private sector, they were able to leverage these ties for community-centered investments that benefit legacy residents and businesses.

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“The relationships we’ve started to build with various levels of the public sector is a key win. The fact that a councilwoman believed in this enough to give us a grant and that the state delegate is holding us up as an important piece of the county’s larger investment in the corridor is huge.”

BLUE LINE CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER



*The Dojo Café, a City Heights coffee shop with the goal of creating a safe and welcoming place for underserved communities. Founded by a former social worker, the space also serves as a hub for resources and support for the diverse local community.*

AUTHORS

## CCEI laid important groundwork in shifting city priorities and policies toward place

Traditionally, city and regional policies have largely been agnostic to place, meaning that they have not centered on improving outcomes for neighborhoods. When they have been place-focused, they have more often than not sought to drive business and employment growth through outside capital investment and tax breaks—efforts with a poor track record of failing to benefit existing residents or small businesses.

For these reasons, a long-term goal of community-centered economic inclusion is to reorient city and regional economic development policies to prioritize place more proactively and equitably—and to do so in genuine partnerships with community leaders in disinvested neighborhoods.

In Los Angeles, LISC was able to use the community-centered economic inclusion process to better coordinate and maximize the benefits of the city's new JEDI Zone program, (which offers city incentives to local small businesses looking to expand their footprint).

“We’ve been able to use the plan to build a better relationship with the city and for them to think of LISC and this process as an asset. For instance, with the JEDI Zones—without this plan we would have never been in conversations with them about that.”

SOUTH LOS ANGELES STAKEHOLDER

*A mural in South Los Angeles pays homage to local rapper Nipsey and other prominent Black figures in American history.*

AUTHORS



While there is a long way to go yet toward reorienting city policy and practice to respond to the needs and priorities of disinvested neighborhoods, the relationships and connections established during this first year have laid critical groundwork for these neighborhoods to be seen, heard, and empowered (Figure 33).

FIGURE 33

### Emergent policy wins from CCEI efforts

CCEI district	CCEI policy wins
<p><b>7th Street Corridor,</b> BAY AREA</p>	<p>The City of Oakland’s participation in the 7th Street Thrive Coalition prompted them to pilot and scale Neighborhood Enhancement Teams across the city to better align and coordinate the delivery of basic services in underinvested neighborhoods.</p>
<p><b>Blue Line Corridor</b> PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY, MD</p>	<p>Several of the county’s smaller municipalities have galvanized around inclusive TOD planning based on their participation in the Blue Line Corridor Task Force and sought out additional technical assistance from task force members to encourage denser development around underutilized transit stations.</p>
<p><b>Casino Road</b> PUGET SOUND</p>	<p>Snohomish County adopted the CCEI model’s affordable housing workplan to champion community priorities through formal requests for proposals and city decision-making processes.</p>
<p><b>Milwaukee Junction</b> DETROIT</p>	<p>The City of Detroit cited Milwaukee Junction’s CCEI agenda in its request for proposals related to efforts to rehabilitate a historic building in the district for community benefit, and the city is now working with a real estate development group to create a flexible and accessible space for food, offices, and retail space based on agenda priorities.</p>
<p><b>South Los Angeles</b> LOS ANGELES</p>	<p>The City of Los Angeles sought advice from CCEI stakeholders on policy formulation for its JEDI Zones place-based initiative and fully incorporated the CCEI district as part of the final policy.</p>
<p><b>Southwest Detroit</b> DETROIT</p>	<p>The City of Detroit is now actively engaging with stakeholders based in Southwest Detroit on zoning ordinance reforms, particularly with the aim of ensuring more industrial buffering and greenery in the area, which has weathered heavy environmental impacts.</p>

**SOURCE:** Authors’ analysis of local interviews across districts

**B** | Brookings Metro

**NOTE:** Any districts not included have not yet secured policy wins that they are ready to report, but they are in the process of building upon their new relationships to garner them.



“This was never the plan, but we’re advising nearly a dozen similar projects around the county about how you invest in underinvested communities without gentrifying and displacing the same residents? We’re working with communities in LA, San Francisco, Buffalo, Grand Rapids, and Dallas that now are developing their own strategies, engaging with the community, and implementing them and using the same processes that we’ve developed here.”

ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

Top: Sweet Auburn, Atlanta  
STEPHANIE BROWN

Left: Fern Street Circus,  
City Heights, San Diego

JANA RIVER MEDLOCK  
PHOTOGRAPHY

Right: Mural in Anacostia,  
Washington, D.C.

LISC DC

# 5

## Recommendations for practitioners, public officials, and philanthropy to better support and scale community-centered neighborhood revitalization

Just as important as documenting the early- and mid-term outcomes from CCEI districts is acknowledging how these initiatives could have improved to inform future CCEI and other aligned place-based efforts. Several key lessons and recommendations emerged from this evaluation that can help other cities and regions achieve long-term economic inclusion goals. These lessons are organized below by key implementation stakeholders, including community and economic development practitioners, public sector officials, and funders and philanthropic institutions.

# 1. Recommendations for community and economic development practitioners

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While economic and community development practitioners within CCEI regions achieved considerable wins—particularly in bridging the siloed fields of community, economic, workforce, and real estate development with public health initiatives to generate broad-based inclusion outcomes—there were five key areas in which these practitioners could learn from.

## Heed quantitative asset mapping and market analyses when selecting CCEI districts

The first of these recommendations centers on the importance of predevelopment planning and the need for a stronger focus on the activities that pre-date the launch of a CCEI initiative, including: place selection, asset mapping, and market analyses; civic engagement to ensure alignment across community, city, and regional stakeholders; and role clarification for the sustainability of respective CCEI efforts.

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“Access to data helped us understand and learn a lot about the corridor. That’s been critical to get us thinking about what assets are in the corridor—because physically, when you look around, you can imagine that there’s nothing, but that’s the wrong frame of mind.”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER

The CCEI model recommends that the selection of economic inclusion districts be based on the following criteria: 1) the presence of documented economic inequities within a district (such as high poverty rates, high unemployment, and high housing cost burdens); 2) a concentration of undervalued assets (including industrial land, anchor institutions, and clusters of small businesses); 3) a level of economic activity and a population large enough within the district to impact citywide economic outcomes; and 4) the buy-in of neighborhood residents and community-based organizations to lead the community-centered economic inclusion process.<sup>69</sup>

While all CCEI districts conducted a market analysis aimed at identifying both economic inequities and undervalued assets, as well as intensive civic engagement to align priorities, some localities missed the mark in selecting districts that had a combination of the necessary criteria.



Moving forward, CCEI and aligned efforts should ensure that they follow the where steps included in the [Playbook](#) and ask themselves this key question: Has there been a market analysis conducted with a rigorous assessment of regional economic opportunities, particularly as it pertains to the presence of good and accessible jobs and opportunities for underserved small businesses to tap into regional economic opportunities?

## **Obtain civic buy-in for CCEI place-selection priorities from community, city, and regional stakeholders**

Perhaps even more important than technical and quantitative analyses involved in predevelopment district identification is the civic engagement and political buy-in needed from community, city, and regional stakeholders to implement, fund, and steward the long-term success of CCEI priorities.

While all eleven districts conducted significant engagement with community-based stakeholders to identify their CCEI districts and align priorities, they varied in the extent to which they conducted meaningful engagement with public, private, and civic sector leaders at the city and regional level in this process. This is a critical step as it aims to ensure that CCEI priorities are not only community-led, but achievable and fundable to avoid past harms such as making false promises to underinvested communities.

Across the eleven initiatives, districts that heavily engaged city and regional stakeholders prior to formally launching their CCEI districts—including by obtaining their perspectives in district selection—ultimately garnered more buy-in, long-term engagement, and investment from these stakeholders. Other districts that, often understandably, did not conduct this pre-development engagement due to distrust from community-based partners towards these actors or a lack of clear connection to city/regional actors faced larger hurdles in scaling agenda priorities into concrete policy and funding outcomes.

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“There needs to be clarity on whether that organization really does want to take on economic development work. There needs to be an organization that can own the economic development work.”

SKYWAY STAKEHOLDER

At the other end of the spectrum, some districts engaged all of the aforementioned stakeholders but struggled in identifying a community-based partner that could lead a CCEI agenda—even with strong community, city, and regional support. This was not for a lack of trying or dedication from any party involved, but it speaks to the larger capacity and place governance

challenges that prevent many underinvested communities from having community-centered economic development organizations, such as CDFIs.

To successfully implement economic inclusion agendas with the community buy-in, funding, and broad-based political support needed to garner early and tangible wins for underinvested communities, predevelopment activities like market analyses and community-based engagement alone are not sufficient. Local economic and community development practitioners leading CCEI should follow the who steps in the [Playbook](#) and assess the following key questions:

- Is there strong community, city, and regional buy-in and civic capacity to launch, implement, and sustain CCEI in a particular district? Without all three of these entities, the success of efforts can be diminished.
- Have CCEI efforts rigorously considered what other actors are already doing in the priority area and whether these approaches can be enhanced by CCEI? (See pages 44–45 in the [Playbook](#))
- Is there a credible convener/facilitator able to bridge trust divides and align priorities across siloed groups? Importantly, this convener must also have an interest in pursuing economic development priorities in addition to having a dedicated focus on community development and quality of life.

Artisan market in  
Milwaukee Junction,  
Detroit

VANGUARD CDC



## Ensure that collective CCEI agenda priorities are achievable, fundable, and sustainable

Multidisciplinary place-based initiatives—while designed to correct for the flaws of top-down and narrowly focused development approaches— can run the risk of trying to accomplish everything without planning for the time, resources, and political alignment needed to bridge the disconnected stakeholders, funders, and city agencies necessary to implement such initiatives. To ensure CCEI agendas do not replicate past mistakes and make false promises, local stakeholders leading the effort should follow the why steps in the [Playbook](#) and ask the following questions:

- Is there community, city, and regional buy-in for the agenda priority?
- Is the priority addressing a genuine market failure that requires a new investment approach?
- Will the project benefit historically excluded people, small businesses, and community-based institutions?
- Is there sufficient capital to fund the priority sustainably?
- Is there an implementation partner that has agreed to lead this priority?
- Is there a governance partner to ensure the long-term success and impact tracking of the priority, including by combining quantitative and qualitative indicators of success?
- Taken together, are the items included within the CCEI agenda achievable, fundable, and able to attain a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts?

“All of the ideas went through a filter into one of three buckets. One: strategies that we could directly influence, like who gets hired to build the park. Two: strategies that we might not have direct control over, but ones that we can influence, like lending our voice to the city’s comprehensive plan. And then the third bucket: strategies that are really good ideas but that we have no influence and no direct control over. And all of those went into the bike rack, and that was really helpful.”

ANACOSTIA STAKEHOLDER

## Establish and sustain strong governance structures

CCEI relies not only the existence of strong community leadership to champion the agenda throughout implementation; its success also hinges on the role that city and regional stakeholders play during this period as collaborators, connectors, and implementation partners supporting the success of the agenda. Maintaining this kind of collaboration across previously siloed groups requires a shared governance structure that regularly brings together these actors during the implementation period. Establishing and sustaining a strong governance structure throughout the CCEI implementation period (see pages 27–34 in the [Playbook](#)) requires asking these key questions:

- Is there a lead convening agency with the capacity (including buy-in, funding, and staffing) to retain governance duties over the long term? If no such agency currently exists, what resources can be acquired to fund this role prior to the outset of implementation?
- Once formed, has the governing body agreed on shared oversight, decision-making, conflict-management, and impact-tracking roles?
- Has the governing body built in resources for plan iteration and interim community engagement during implementation to allow for flexible agendas that meet residents' evolving priorities?

Strong and sustained governance structures are critical to ensuring that CCEI strategies remain cohesively together and part of a large-scale theory of change rather than piecemeal projects or siloed initiatives. Only if these strategies are part of a collective whole can they begin to meaningfully transform neighborhood-level outcomes.

“At the city level, there must be the acknowledgment that economic development is not equitable. I don't think we've ever had a space where we can have that conversation in a more inclusive conversation in a room together.”

SWEET AUBURN STAKEHOLDER

*Participatory planning in Puget Sound*

RYAN BERRY



## 2. Recommendations for public sector stakeholders

While public sector stakeholders are typically not the lead conveners in CCEI initiatives to ensure sustainability outside of administrative cycles, they are integral partners that no CCEI process can function without. Our fieldwork identified three key recommendations for public sector stakeholders on how to better facilitate CCEI and other aligned place-based processes in the future.

### Acknowledging past harms goes a long way in building sustained and trusting relationships with community-based partners

All eleven CCEI districts had long legacies of distrust between the public sector and residents and small businesses. The impact of this distrust—cemented over generations into almost a fact of life for many of these places— at times prevented public sector stakeholders from wanting to engage fully in CCEI, or prevented community-based stakeholders from wanting them at the table. Of those CCEI districts that did make headway in terms of establishing genuine and sustainable new relationships between communities and public sector stakeholders, it almost always began with an acknowledgment on the behalf of public sector officials of the root causes underlying contemporary neighborhood conditions and the role that government institutions played in creating them. Such acknowledgments provided community-based stakeholders with the space to be truly seen, and this signaled to many that the public sector was coming to the table willing to be an open and honest co-creator.



*Renderings for Destination Crenshaw, an equitable development and placemaking project in South Los Angeles that will include walking paths, pocket parks, murals and large-scale art installations by Black artists, all telling the story of past, present, and future Black Los Angeles. The metal shade coverings seen in the rendering are modeled after African Giant Star Grass plants which were used as bedding by enslaved Africans as they were brought across the Atlantic.*

AUTHORS

## **Taking care of municipal basics (such as 311 call response times, streetlights, and trash collection) is a necessary prerequisite building community trust**

CCEI stakeholders also overwhelmingly revealed that just showing up was not sufficient unless public sector officials also ensured that basic city functions within neighborhoods were maintained. In neighborhoods where streetlights were consistently out, where 911 and 311 response times were painstakingly slow, and where trash collection was infrequent at best, it became very difficult for community-based organizations and public sector officials to dream big about inclusive economic development, when the 101 of basic government services had yet to be fixed.

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“The recommendation for cities is to reprioritize basic services as an act of governance, period. You cannot start anywhere with communities when trash is on the ground, when neighborhoods are not well-lit. That’s just baseline. So all of these approaches should consider first: Have we prioritized and met neighborhoods’ needs for basic services before moving onto something else?”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER

## **Institutionalize the practice of co-designing place-based policies with communities and formalizing feedback loops between the public and private sector**

Finally, the most important way that public sector officials could learn from these processes is not only how to engage more effectively with community-based partners in one-off initiatives, but how to institutionalize more community-centered policymaking practices over the long term. By reevaluating their structures for civic participation to extend beyond public information gathering and top-down, business-heavy models like Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that don’t work for all districts, public sector officials have the opportunity to correct for many of the flaws of past place-based policies that have relied on top-down decision-making to instead generate truly community-centered solutions that are effective, equitable, and scalable.

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“In the city, everything is set up for the BIDs—everybody asks for them because they think that’s the primary model of representation. So they keep externalizing the model into inappropriate neighborhoods, giving them \$150,000 for feasibility to go to a planning consultant when they don’t even know the difference between property ownership and tenancy.”

7TH STREET CORRIDOR STAKEHOLDER


### 3. Recommendations for funders and philanthropic institutions

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Coordinating across sectors and disciplinary siloes is often not an easy task due to public, private, and philanthropic funding structures that isolate interconnected challenges into siloed grants. While this Kaiser-funded effort was a bold departure from this norm—explicitly requiring that cross-sectoral collaboration be built into the entire process—stakeholders still had reflections on how funders of all kinds could better support CCEI and other aligned efforts.

#### **Fund capacity building for community-based partners to not only participate in CCEI but for greater efficiency and scalability**

While capacity-building investments were a critical component of (and a key win for) all CCEI districts, stakeholders remarked that the capacity-building support for community-based partners was not sufficient for them to fully take on a lead convening role to steward the entirety of the CCEI process, particularly in more expensive markets on the West Coast. By increasing the amount of capacity-building support for community-based organizations to govern and steward, not just implement, CCEI priorities, funders could enable CCEI agendas to achieve greater equity, efficiency, and scale. As we've acknowledged before, no single institution or sector can alone steward the multidisciplinary approaches embedded within CCEI, and expecting underresourced community-based organizations to participate in the process alongside city/regional authorities without commensurate capacity-building support creates power imbalances from the outset.



“ We have to take literally the phrase ‘moving at the speed of trust.’ If the relationships are not where they need to be, the work is not going to get done as fast. Building genuine relationships and caring truly for the community that you want to see change in—it really matters.”

PUGET SOUND STAKEHOLDER

## **Build in the timing flexibility needed to recognize the different starting places of various regions and the time needed to build trust in areas with fewer relationships**

While CCEI is meant to be implemented over a relatively short timeframe—three years—to focus on the immediate and actionable solutions that create stronger community-centered revitalization ecosystems, many CCEI stakeholders found that they needed far more time and funding for predevelopment planning at the outset of launching CCEI. Not having that window of time, at times, led to the selection of community-based partners that may not have been well-suited to that role, or the selection of neighborhoods where the policy and market contexts were not aligned to maximize impact. By providing a more flexible timing window and source of funds for predevelopment at the outset of such an initiative, funders could ensure greater success and scalability for CCEI districts over the long term.

## **Fund evaluations that include, but go beyond, metrics and data**

Finally, CCEI stakeholders overwhelmingly expressed their dedication to tracking impact and collecting equity-focused metrics, but they did not always feel they had capacity, resources, or time to do so during the CCEI grant implementation period. They recommended that in addition to requiring grant documentation on implementation inputs (such as the number of small businesses served or the number of real estate developments financed), funders should build in dedicated resources to fund research partners with the professional expertise and lived experience to support a more robust and community-informed evaluation of holistic outcomes at the neighborhood level.

“If you want to shift that gap, you should be hiring more social scientists., more seasoned researchers, more folks who have a direct knowledge of human development and community development. . . You don't just throw them the resources and check in with them when it's time for the grant report. You build the pathway together, which creates accountability, friendship, and revelation.”

7TH STREET STAKEHOLDER

*Right: Artwork in a neighborhood park in City Heights, San Diego*  
JANA RIVER MEDLOCK PHOTOGRAPHY







# 6

## Conclusion

Place-based initiatives take years, if not decades, to transform historically disinvested communities into places of opportunity where residents can access a healthy quality of life, upward mobility, and generational wealth. While CCEI is still too new in many cities for measuring population-level changes toward these critical aims, our findings reveal that the approach has garnered real successes in facilitating new capital investment to underserved small businesses and residents, strengthening the built environment of commercial and industrial corridors, and bolstering the social and civic infrastructure needed to sustain long-term, community-centered development.

At its core, CCEI provides cities and regions not only with a community-led agenda for investing in underinvested neighborhoods but also with a fundamentally different approach for allocating resources, crafting policy about place, and building partnerships with residents who have been excluded for too long.

*Young residents ride unicycles at Fern Street Circus, a neighborhood site of growth and exchange through circus arts, City Heights, San Diego*

JANA RIVER MEDLOCK PHOTOGRAPHY



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