

# Re-Energizing Democracy Recommendations

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## Context

The City of Northampton is interested in and committed to achieving a more equitable reality for its residents. The City, in the development of and planning for four major projects, **Walk/Bike Northampton, Climate Adaptation Plan, Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan 2018 update,** and **ValleyBike Share** wanted to explore how to do an even better job of engaging and empowering its residents.

The City is committed to sustainability, and is one of the top ranked sustainable communities in North America in the **STAR Communities** rating of community sustainability. **Sustainability** requires a focus on:

**Economy** (creating opportunities for all)

**Environment** (addressing intergenerational equity)

**Equity** (addressing social equity and intragenerational equity)

What do we mean by equity?

Equity addresses the effects of power imbalances and the social, economic, and political differences that generate disparate outcomes for people in arenas like health, education, and employment. Equity recognizes that different people have different barriers to living healthy, fulfilled lives. In order to allow people to get the same outcome, we need to understand the different barriers and opportunities that affect different groups, and craft our approaches, policies and programs with those challenges and needs in mind.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> from "At the Intersection of Active Transportation and Equity" Safe Routes to School National Partnership

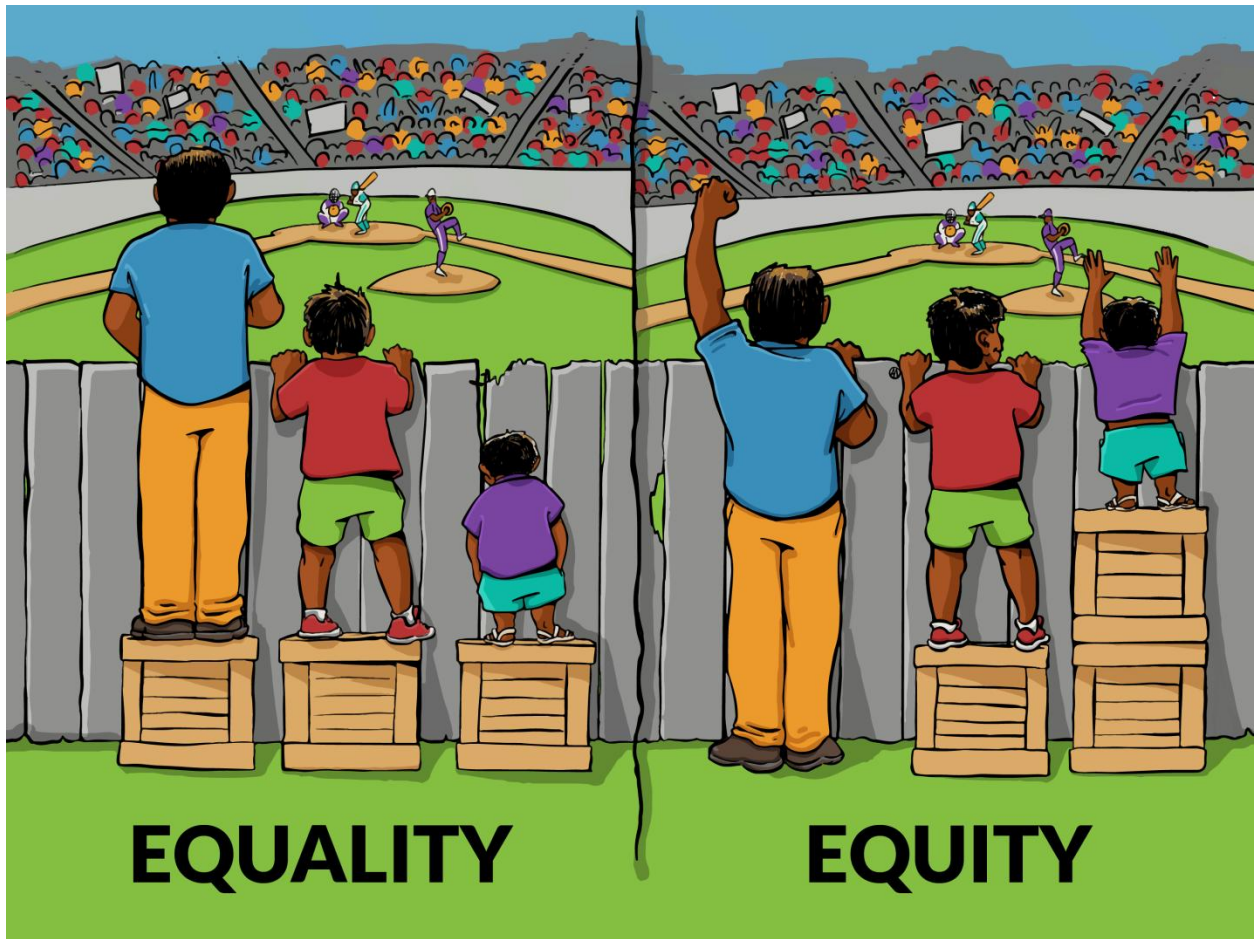


image source- Interaction Institute for Social Change

Northampton has a long commitment of and success in involving and serving all community members and stakeholders and focusing on social equity. Representative examples of these efforts include:

- An amazing diversity of community participation in decisions as diverse as the 2016 reconstruction of Pulaski Park and the 2008 *Sustainable Northampton Comprehensive Plan*.
- A focus on environmental justice in siting parks, wayfinding signs, and affordable housing and in cleaning up brownfields sites.
- Attention to public health issues and health inequities in seeking small community gardens and demonstration gardens to serve low income residents, funding food access interventions, and in hosting a 14-municipality grant aimed in part at reducing city and regional health inequities.
- Special efforts to engage typically underrepresented communities, ranging from a dedicated Youth Commission to funding specific outreach efforts with Casa Latina, Center for New Americans, and others.
- Funding, with both external grants and city funds, affordable housing, homeless shelters, transitional housing, fair housing, enhanced bus transit for transit dependent riders, and other efforts that serve low income residents.
- A Mayoral commitment and engagement to bring the budget to residents and encourage questions and comments.
- Early adopters of Open Checkbook, to make all city expenditures totally transparent.
- An award winning website with user subscriptions to allow all populations to keep up on city government actions and opportunities.
- Northampton Police Department Open Data Portal, the first in Massachusetts, to build transparency on data from police demographics, use of force, motor vehicle stop demographics, etc.
- Exploring how the City's planned bike share program can serve underserved and unbanked residents.
- Public file cabinet, providing easy on-line public access to tens of thousands of public records, including every planning permit application from the moment an applicant files.

Yet, Northampton always strives for more. The city has been and wants to remain a leader in this area.

Equity is a core value and also a goal for the City of Northampton, yet although the city and most businesses and resident strive, inequitable access to opportunity still exists for African American, Latino/Hispanic and other residents in Northampton and across the United States because of our country's history of institutionalized racism.<sup>2</sup> While the tragically cruel story of African American experience in the USA is not what other racial and ethnic minorities have experienced, there is a long

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<sup>2</sup> reference "Rewrite the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy" Roosevelt Institute, June 2016

history in the United States of mistreatment of black and brown people/people of color. Our goal is to re-energize democracy in Northampton with a series of recommended actions that aim to achieve more equitable access to opportunity.

In addition to racially marginalized residents living in the 87% white City of Northampton, our engagement work identified young adults and economically disadvantaged residents as additional marginalized groups in Northampton. These recommendations are designed to improve participation in City government by all three categories of marginalized populations: 1) people of color, 2) economically disadvantaged residents, and 3) young adults. These improvements, if successfully implemented for historically marginalized groups, will improve access to the city for all residents.

## Background/Process

Government exists to serve people. In the United States our cherished history of government being created by the people for the people and with the people compels local governments concerned about accountability to continuously seek ways to improve the ability of residents to get involved. In 2015-2016, the City of Northampton, through its Department of Planning and Sustainability working with the Mayor, Department of Public Works (DPW) and other departments, initiated Walk/Bike Northampton, a comprehensive walk and bicycle planning effort designed to serve as a standalone plan and eventually as part of the city's comprehensive plan. The City is always committed to achieving broad community participation from all stakeholder groups for all of its strategic and comprehensive planning process, but especially for walking infrastructure that serves populations who have fewer travel options. The City identified two grants and facilitated grant applications to fund an effort to broaden public participation in the process and seek to empower underrepresented populations to join in on-going implementation.

This report is a result of work in Northampton, Massachusetts and the recommendations were developed by residents of Northampton with the staff team and our collaborators, and we anticipate their utility for all other governments in the United States. Thanks to the generous support of the Funders Network for Smart Growth and the Bloomberg Foundation matched by the support of the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, we worked with a diverse group of Northampton residents, city staff, elected officials, and community based organizations over a 10 month period in 2016 to develop these recommendations to re-energize democracy. Although the City initiated this process, the grants were awarded directly to PVPC and these recommendations are presented by the PVPC team for city consideration and evaluation.

The focus of our work was on marginalized populations in Northampton which means people of color, specifically African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino (mostly Puerto Rican) residents as well as young adults and all economically marginalized people. Many urban and regional planners are familiar with the notion of 80/80 cities, that is, if you make streets safe and comfortable for residents aged 8 and aged 80, everyone will benefit. Similarly, if we can achieve democracy, i.e. meaningful access to government by our marginalized groups, then everyone will benefit.



## Research

We conducted a considerable amount of both primary and secondary research including conversations with staff at PolicyLink, the City of Seattle, the Funder's Network for Smart Growth and the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, review of recent publications and other information available from the Roosevelt Institute, Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN), the American Planning Association (APA), NextCity.org, Smart Growth On-Line/Planetizen, Living Cities Racial Equity and Inclusion Toolkit, and the Adaptation Clearinghouse, especially their newest resource focus on Equity. We also reviewed numerous reports and the new book: Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy by Tina Nabatchi and Matt Leighninger, Jossey-Bass.

Some of the most useful websites are included below:

- <http://www.policylink.org/equity-tools>
- <http://rooseveltinstitute.org/rewrite-rules/>
- <http://www.adaptationclearinghouse.org/networks/adaptation-equity-portal/>
- [http://smartgrowth.org/getting-residents-engaged-in-participatory-mapping/?utm\\_source=SGN+2016-0125&utm\\_campaign=sgn-news-2016-0125&utm\\_medium=email](http://smartgrowth.org/getting-residents-engaged-in-participatory-mapping/?utm_source=SGN+2016-0125&utm_campaign=sgn-news-2016-0125&utm_medium=email)
- [http://hereandnow.livingcities.org/racial-equity-inclusion-toolkit2016?utm\\_source=Living+Cities+Catalyst+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=97e14ebda1-JAN+16+Catalyst\\_1.14.16&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_9aa53b28dc-97e14ebda1-303768197&ct=t\(January\\_2016\\_Catalyst\\_Newsletter1\\_13\\_2016\)](http://hereandnow.livingcities.org/racial-equity-inclusion-toolkit2016?utm_source=Living+Cities+Catalyst+Newsletter&utm_campaign=97e14ebda1-JAN+16+Catalyst_1.14.16&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9aa53b28dc-97e14ebda1-303768197&ct=t(January_2016_Catalyst_Newsletter1_13_2016))
- <https://www.usdn.org/public/page/55/Equity-in-Sustainability?source=http%3a%2f%2fusdn.org%2fpublic%2fpage%2f55%2fEquity-in-Sustainability>
- <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/janette-sadik-khan-interview-complete-streets>
- <https://www.racialequitytools.org/module/overview/transforming-white-privilege>
- <http://www.equitycaucus.org/home>

## Capacity Building for Emerging Leaders

In collaboration with the City of Northampton's Healthy Hampshire initiative, we worked with six emerging leaders from marginalized groups in the City to build their capacity to serve the city and actively participate in local government. Over an eight-week period, these emerging leaders met every Wednesday from 6-8 pm, concluding in preparing a video highlighting how and why (and why not) people do or do not participate in City government.

We also hosted a three session capacity building training for emerging leaders identified by Casa Latina. The Casa Latina emerging leader trainees have committed to continuing their capacity building planning in 2017. The Casa Latina workshops sought to connect participants who are already leaders in their community with a list of who's who in city elected offices, and the range of committees on which residents can serve.

The participants self-described as leaders or others identified them as leaders because they are the go-to person when there is an urgent issue, or information is hard to find. Even though these individuals do have access to a certain amount of power within their self identified community, these residents are still marginalized and as a result knowledge of elected officials is minimal in part because of language barriers and as reported by these individuals, they receive many messages growing up that the mainstream society does not care about them so they create parallel communities, literally on the margin of the community in which they live.



Mayor David Narkewicz with emerging leaders from Casa Latina and Facilitator, Natalia Munoz

To help the identified leaders know who is in charge of what in the city, we provided sheets with information about the city and its top officers, with their respective telephone numbers and email addresses. One of the tasks for participants was to find out what ward they lived in so they would know who their city councilor is. We also provided information about a variety of city committees, including what they do and how residents can interact with them and/or volunteer to serve. Finally, we invited Mayor David Narkewicz to speak about how he got involved in the community, from his first jobs working with federal officials, to going door to door seeking signatures for his run for city councilor, to running for and being elected Mayor.

The mayor came to our workshop and generously shared his story with participants and was available for questions. He was unhurried and showed interest in every participant. Later, we all went to his office, where he introduced us to his staff, and the trip ended with a photo with the Mayor. The photo was possible because we had already established and/or strengthened rapport among the participants with trust and the dignity of every person as our foundation. We served a homemade hot meal at each workshop, provided child care and established an environment of equals. Through this process of breaking bread with one another and sharing stories and wishes, we became a cohesive group.

We believe the way to re-energize people to participate in democracy, be it through volunteerism on municipal or private non-profit boards of community-based organizations, or running for office or helping someone else run for office, starts with building trust among one another, not just for a short-term goal, but for a long time. Trust begins with small meetings and conversations.



## Priority Recommendations for Action

1. Create a **volunteer-driven pilot Resident Engagement Team** which will recruit and train residents to serve as Engagement and Inclusion workers on behalf of the City and Residents with the main goal of reaching and empowering marginalized residents to inform them of opportunities to participate and how to do so.
2. **Simplify access to important information** about opportunities to participate. Given the pace of technological change, we are not proposing any specifics, but could be: on-line subscription service, engagement app, text message system, Facebook page with push notifications, ... Consider developing a transparent system to track who has expressed interest in serving on boards when an opening occurs. Explore training opportunities, such as the existing city civilian police academy, to provide training so that more people are trained to serve on boards.
3. Expand on existing City Council or department sponsored **"Get to Know One Another" events**-- coffees etc. with City staff and elected officials visiting with residents. Throughout the outreach conducted for this effort, residents enthusiastically supported public forums/meetings at which people could learn about the boards that are volunteer based and how to serve on them.
4. Commit to **participation in undoing racism training** to explore, understand and advance the process of dismantling institutional/systemic racism. Prioritize training key people: elected officials, department heads, and others most often engaging with the public.
5. Create a **Volunteer Mentor program** for "Savvy" residents to donate their time to 'translate' the system for marginalized residents--people would be paired up for a fixed period of time, a la Big Brothers and Big Sisters to translate the system and build capacity of marginalized residents to get more actively involved in local government.
6. **Institutionalize the current Mayor's efforts to work with the community on the City's budget process.** While there was considerable community and staff support for the idea and goals of participatory budgeting, the experience of current staff and research from cities across the country and in Europe experimenting with participatory budgeting suggest that this tactic can end up empowering the already most powerful voices in the community who are not necessarily broad new voices. In the last few years 2014-2016, the Mayor has launched a much more inclusive process of reaching out in the budget development process to assure broad resident and community input. It is important that this approach become a part of the City's budget process, guaranteed to remain throughout future Mayors.

In addition, the city representatives who consulted on this work proudly affirm their intention to continue to make every effort to affirmatively advance opportunity for residents who face additional barriers in all city actions and decision-making. For example, give extra points to sidewalk and bikelane projects in neighborhoods with significant numbers of minority, poor, elderly and/or youth residents, recognizing that these areas have less pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure than neighborhoods where wealthier white residents live.

And the City firmly intends to sustain the current focus on **overcoming logistical barriers** as needed, to make it possible for all residents to meaningfully engage in city government, i.e. continue to offer translation services at public meetings, provide childcare, transportation, and other assistance as

needed, and continue to pursue opportunities to advance capacity building for emerging leaders, especially from under-represented groups in the city.

Planning and Sustainability found that the targeted focus groups were the most effective way, at least in this process, to meaningfully engage marginalized populations. While the City has always had a goal of getting marginalized groups to participate in all public workshops, forums, and activities at the same rate as the general population, this has proven to be extremely difficult for both the city and the Re-Energizing Democracy effort because of the challenges. The focus groups, however, include traditional elements that lead to success, direct invitations and a welcoming environment, and a limited demand for resources.

Using focus groups, however, requires ensuring that the focus groups are open to all who want to participate and ensuring that the focus groups are inclusionary of all populations, and not a new way to include some marginalized community members at the expense of others.

For the City, the most important steps moving forward are creating low cost ways to engage such focus groups, but with the focus groups including a clear and open priority of empowering participants so that they will later feel empowered to participate in all the workshops, forums, and other activities that other community members participate in. This opens up potentially new areas of collaboration between the city and community partners and place based and social-equity focused foundations and funders.

Both the City of Northampton and the PVPC have benefitted greatly from the partnership with the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts (CFWM) made possible by the funding from the Funder's Network for Smart Growth. This initiative was the first time the CFWM has supported Complete Streets planning with an emphasis on engaging marginalized populations in local planning processes and agency staff are very eager to explore ways they can continue to support such work in the region.

## Pathways to Power

As we were working, one of our preliminary recommendations was to consider a "Marginalized Community" seat on City Council as a means of undoing institutional/systemic racism in the City and thereby expanding access to opportunity to marginalized residents. However, over the course of researching comparable efforts to re-energize democracy in cities across the United States, we have moved away from this recommendation because it could lead to tokenism and/or resentment and other cities' experience suggests that such an office often leaves the person of color serving on the job feeling as if they are not valued and are simply fulfilling a quota. Instead we are recommending a variety of means to improve access to information and to overcome feelings of despair, cynicism and not feeling welcome.

Our analysis of existing pathways to power in the City of Northampton suggests that many City Councilors and previous Mayors started serving the City by volunteering on Boards or Commissions or working groups. Therefore, we are focusing our recommendations on these pathways to power and overall engagement by ALL residents of the city with an affirmative emphasis on marginalized residents because of inequitable access to these opportunities.

As a means of affirmatively hiring of residents of color we encourage the City to aggressively apply the State bonus points for working with Minority and Women owned businesses. In early drafts of the Re-Energizing Democracy strategies, we considered suggesting breaking up contracts into smaller pieces which makes it more likely for smaller businesses that may be minority owned to pursue a contract, based on research conducted, including interviews with City of Seattle staff; however, the likelihood of significantly higher costs to the City combined with the increased difficulty of project coordination, argued against inclusion of this strategy in the final report. At a minimum, the city should be tracking the percentage of contracts (total number and economic value) that go to minority owned businesses. The City could also track the racial make-up of staff and report this information to residents.

## Themes

These are the themes that surfaced time and again in our research, and should be integrated into all city efforts as appropriate.

- *Trust Building, Relationship Development & Maintenance--Two-Way Street*
- *Institutional and Organizational Change*
- *Youth Pathways*
- *Economic Opportunity*
- *Partnership, Collaboration & Cooperation*

## Barriers To Participation

Throughout the course of our work we identified three different categories of barriers to resident participation in City of Northampton planning/development processes:

1. *Lack of Knowledge/Time*
2. *Logistics*
3. *Lack of Trust/Faith in Government*

Within these three categories, we identified nine different barriers:

### Lack of Knowledge/Time

- 1) Residents do not know HOW to participate
- 2) Residents do not have enough time to participate
- 3) Residents are frustrated by the amount of information on the City website and cannot find what they are looking for in an efficient manner
- 4) Residents do not know how to gain the experience or skill sets required to serve on city boards

### Logistics

- 5) Some residents do not speak English as their first language and have difficulty understanding
- 6) Economically disadvantaged residents may require childcare at meetings
- 7) Economically disadvantaged residents may require subsidies for transportation to be able to attend meetings

### Lack of Trust/Faith in Government

- 8) Residents reported not feeling welcome at meetings
- 9) Residents reported/communicated Despair and feelings of powerlessness
- 10) Residents expressed feelings of Cynicism and Hopelessness
- 11) Residents reported not receiving the direct person invitation to meetings that other groups receive

Our recommendations are designed to overcome the barriers in a variety of ways with the ultimate goal of re-energizing democracy in Northampton and assuring equitable access to opportunity for all.

## How?

We worked with the City's Human Rights Commission, as our primary Advisory Group for this initiative, so initially recommended that the HRC be the city entity charged with advancing these recommendations; however, after reviewing the official city charge of the HRC, it seems they may not be the most appropriate implementation oversight body. Since the surprising election of President Trump, Northampton City Councilors have reported a significant upsurge in resident engagement. The Mayor and his leadership team and community volunteers can determine how best to act on the

recommendations in this report. The responsibility for deeper citizen engagement requires equal actions on behalf of the City and volunteer community members.

We suggest that this process be understood as the City's conscious effort to partner with communities of color, economically marginalized residents, and young adults within the City and their community-based organizations to collect and connect stories and cultural experiences to a broader narrative of self governance to influence policy creation. Likewise, we hope that those communities will become better engaged and active; self-empowerment is obviously a part of the process.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Estimated Cost per year</b>
1) Engagement Team	Volunteers with very limited staff coordination, est. cost: \$2,000-5,000 or volunteer or in-kind equivalent
2) Improve/expand ways residents and city connect	Varies—given fast pace of technological innovation, could be extremely low cost
3) Get to know one another potlucks, dinners, and events	Est. \$2,000-3,000 or volunteer and in-kind equivalent
4) Undoing Racism Training	1-2 training(s)/year at est. cost \$6,000 or volunteer and in-kind equivalent
5) Volunteer Mentors	Volunteers with very limited staff coordination, est. cost: \$2,000-5,000 or volunteer or in-kind equivalent
6) Institutionalize Mayor's Inclusive Budgeting Process	Undertaken within existing budget
TOTAL	\$15,000-20,000 per year to implement ALL recommendations, with some combination of cash, volunteer, and in-kind time.

## **Resident Engagement -Phase 1**

### **Summary of Tasks:**

The following is a snapshot of tasks completed during the Walk/Bike Northampton planning process:

- Hired a community organizer from Casa Latina to assist with outreach
- Ongoing collaboration with the City's Human Rights Commission
- Distributing fliers at Northampton Housing Authority to promote Public Forum #1
- Participation in Walk/Bike Northampton Public Forum #1
- Launched survey on state of engagement practices in Northampton's planning processes
- Focus Group at Casa Latina

- Distributing fliers at Northampton Housing Authority's seven properties advertising upcoming drop-in meetings
- Launched Wiki-map application
- Hosted drop-in meetings at seven Northampton Housing Authority properties at which we publicized and promoted the Main Street Design Workshop and Public Forum#2
- Door-to-door outreach at Northampton Housing Authority properties to leave information about Public Forum #2
- Participation in Walk/Bike Northampton Main Street Design Workshop
- Participation in Walk/Bike Northampton Public Forum #2
- Participation in the Walk/Bike Northampton Main Street Demonstration Day
- Documentation of Demonstration Day via video creation
- Ongoing participation at the Northampton Pedestrian and Bike Advisory Committee
- Recruited representative from marginalized groups to serve on Pedestrian and Bike Advisory Committee

In sum, the perspectives on walking and bicycling shared by residents engaged via Casa Latina, the Human Rights Commission and the Housing Authority properties were more about specifics for walking--with requests for more sidewalks to assure connectivity, especially to school and parks from residential neighborhoods as well as other important destinations, and highlighting the need for sidewalk repair and maintenance, especially for wheel chair accessibility and to avoid elderly falls due to cracks and un-smooth surface, combined with the importance of lighting for safe walking at all hours. With respect to bicycling, people engaged do not, for the most part, feel that bicyclists belong on the road, so the need for bike lanes on streets as well as off road bike paths was highlighted. We also understood this as an expression of need for a broad public information and education campaign to inform Northampton residents that a bicycle is a vehicle and as such belongs on the road.

A potential area of conflict surfaced with respect to the City's commitment to prioritize pedestrian infrastructure within a close proximity to the downtown--where services are concentrated, versus the high cost of housing within this same area. The residents we engaged, tend to be less well off economically and not including the people who live in the Housing Authority properties downtown, cannot afford to live close to the City center. These people would like sidewalks in the outlying neighborhoods.

Key issues identified in this outreach work include the following:

- The lack of sidewalks connecting to parks and schools
- The perception that bicycles do not belong in the road because it is dangerous
- The need for sidewalk maintenance. The state of disrepair makes it dangerous for the elderly and impassable for those in wheelchairs
- The presence of dog feces on the bike path
- The perception that the bike path is dangerous
- The desire for lighting to be added along the bike path
- The need to educate drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians about safe operating practices



## Public Forum # 1:

The first Walk/Bike Northampton public forum was held on March 7, 2016. This meeting was advertised through a variety of means by the City staff and consultants. In addition to the traditional outreach/engagement, we posted fliers at the City Housing Authority properties and at various community bulletin board sites identified by the community organizer at Casa Latina and by members of the Human Rights Commission. Outreach to marginalized populations started later than planned due to difficulty connecting with the Housing Authority staff. Once we connected with the Housing Authority staff they were helpful.

While the meeting was well attended, the populations in attendance included mostly the populations that typically participate in the City of Northampton's planning processes (white, upper- middle class, highly educated, older adults).

Spanish translation services were offered at the meeting through the UMass Translation Center and the Pioneer Valley Interpreters. Childcare was also provided on site through a local childcare provider. The translation services were not used. The childcare was well-received by the three or four families that used it. Some families reported that the presence of childcare made it possible for them to participate in this meeting.

The City distributed a survey at this public forum that assessed participants' ideas, attitudes, and behaviors with respect to their participation in government planning processes. Seventy-eight people in attendance completed and returned the survey.

### Survey Results:

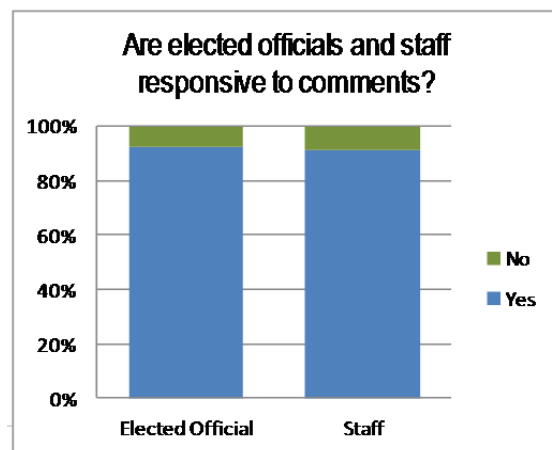
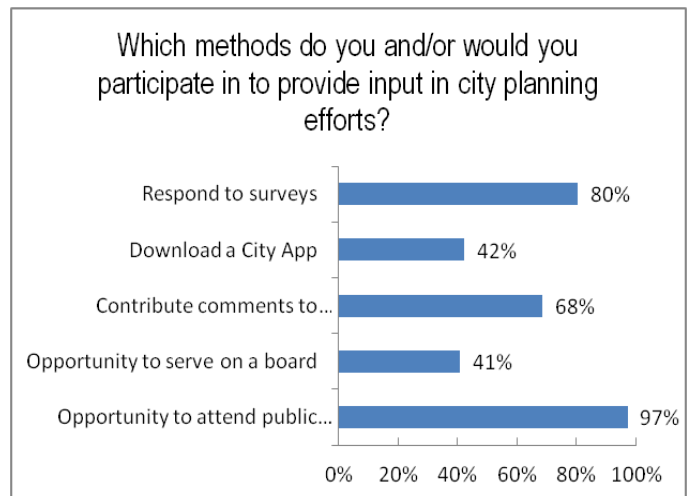
#### Residents in Attendance:

Almost all attendees identified Northampton as their place of residence. A few attendees, however, identified that they were from other places in the region including Easthampton, Amherst, Greenfield and Belchertown, suggesting that there is interest in

the bike and pedestrian planning that happens in Northampton from beyond its borders.

#### Current/ Preferred Engagement Techniques:

Respondents were asked to select the types of participation they currently take part in or that they would be willing to take part in in the future. There was a high response rate for the traditional means of engagement (Public meeting, responding to surveys and commenting directly to staff). A direct conclusion



that the status quo is functioning well should not be drawn. This question paired both current and preferred methods and because all respondents were filling out a survey at a public forum, they were likely to select that box.

Approximately 42 % of respondents said that they would participate using a smart phone app. Written comments either expressed a strong disdain for the app or suggested that it should also be available on the internet so that those with a smart phone can participate.

#### **Navigating Government Infrastructure:**

Respondents who attended the first public forum appear to understand how to navigate through the existing government structures in order to have their voices heard. Sixty percent of respondents who would be willing to serve on a committee know how to do so. Additionally almost 70% of respondents agreed that they know how to contact or reach an elected official or staff member in order to share their thoughts.

Beyond just knowing how to share their comments and get involved, many participants felt that the city was responsive to their comments. Ninety-two percent of respondents felt that elected officials were responsive, while 91% of respondents felt that staff were responsive.

#### **Challenges Impeding Engagement:**

Respondents were asked to identify the challenges that they face when participating in the city's planning processes. Top responses included not having the time to participate, not knowing how to participate or not receiving information about opportunities to participate. These challenges can be remedied by more effective communication. Articulating how and when there are opportunities for structured participation and what the participant will be expected to do could help lower the barriers to participation. Other barriers to participation include the long time frames tied to planning processes and the inability to often track how these particular forums impact the end results.



Very few respondents (1.79%) cited an unwelcoming environment as a challenge to participation. They also didn't feel that the language used by decision makers or staff members was confusing to understand. Access to transportation to get to meetings was also identified as a very low challenge to participating. Some respondents commented that they felt very welcomed when they come to participate and others shared that they appreciated the child care provided on site.

These results likely only tell part of the story. The people at these meetings clearly knew where to be and when in order to participate. Following the city-wide meeting, we held additional engagement

events at Northampton Housing Authority properties, with the Human Rights Commission and at Casa Latina.

*"The bike/ped subcommittee meets early in the morning. The transportation committee meets at 4pm. I would have to leave work early."*

*"I would love to see a meeting like this at a low-income housing community with Spanish translation."*

*"Thank you for providing day care!! On site."*

*"Want to see results. I wonder if these meetings result in anything."*

### Focus Group at Casa Latina:



We worked with Casa Latina to host a focus group on Tuesday, March, 29, 2016. Participants were invited to share a meal, talk about what walking and biking around Northampton is like for them and participate in a map based activity. There were approximately ten people in attendance. The group was mostly women who play an active role in their communities. They expressed that they felt knowledgeable enough to speak on behalf of Northampton's Latino population.

A few key themes emerged. While not directly related to walking and biking, participants shared that transit improvements are very important and they believe that more Latino residents use transit than walking and bicycling as their primary means of transportation. They also shared that they don't feel comfortable going to and hanging out in downtown Northampton.

For example, some participants stated that even though they live in Northampton, they are much more likely to spend time in Holyoke where they feel accepted by the community.

Three major themes arose from the conversation regarding walking and bicycling:

- **Infrastructure improvements should be prioritized near parks and schools.** Many of the schools lack sidewalks on the streets surrounding them, making it more challenging for children to walk or ride a bicycle to school. There are also a number of parks that lack sidewalks or bike lanes connecting to the neighborhoods. Participants shared that they will drive their car from

their house to the nearest park in order to walk for exercise, but would be more likely to walk to the park if there were better sidewalk connections.

- Many participants enjoy the bike paths in the city, but feel that they could be improved with better connections and amenities. Some shared that they would like to see bike lanes and sidewalks leading to the paths. There was also a discussion of lighting, bicycle parking, and bike fix-it stations that would make the bike paths more enjoyable spaces.
- **Better education for all people (drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists) is needed.** There was a consensus that drivers, cyclists and pedestrians could all use a primer on the rules of the road. There were concerns about distracted drivers and jaywalking pedestrians. A few of the participants were also parents and suggested that education in the schools on walking and biking might be the most effective because the children are likely to come home and excitedly share what they learned with their parents.

### Door to Door Outreach:

Between March 29 and April 8, 2016 we went door to door in seven Northampton Housing Authority properties with information about upcoming meetings. If residents were home, we shared information about Northampton's efforts to create a bike and pedestrian plan and outlined when we would be in their community seeking input. Some of the residents with whom we spoke with were interested in the work being done and expressed excitement that the meetings would be held in their building. If residents were not home, a flier that was in both English and Spanish, advertising the upcoming meetings was left at their door.

### Drop-in Meetings at Northampton Housing Authority's Seven Communities:

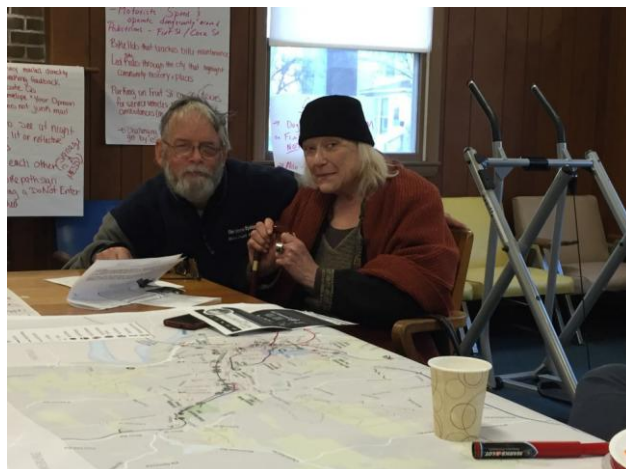
Between April 11 and April 20, 2016, drop-in meetings were held at the following Northampton Housing Authority properties:

- Cahill Apartments
- Florence Heights Apartments
- Forsander Apartments
- Hampshire Heights Apartments
- McDonald House
- Salvo House
- Tobin Manor

Meetings were held in each building's community room from 5:00-7:00pm. Residents were invited to share their ideas and concerns regarding walking and biking, take surveys, ask questions and enjoy food. Over the course of the seven meetings, approximately 90 people provided input. There was a strong representation of youth and elderly, as well as individuals with mobility challenges. A brief description of each meeting follows and complete notes are available.

### ***Cahill Apartments***

The meeting was attended by eight people-four people that arrived exactly when the meeting started and stayed for a while and four people that dropped in briefly. A significant amount of detailed input was received. Major concerns included the needed for lighting on the bike path, clear and consistent signage, ongoing sidewalk maintenance and education to all about sharing the road. There were also a lot of input from individuals with mobility devices that cited bumpy sidewalks, too short of crossing times at intersections and areas lacking pedestrian crossing signals.



### ***Florence Heights Apartments***

The community room at Florence Heights is a unit in the development, that was located in a far corner of the complex. This made being visible to passers-by a challenge. Good weather allowed us to set up outside increasing our visibility. A core group of young people and a few parents participated and encouraged others to participate. A smaller number of very specific comments were received. They included concerns about using the rail trail due to crime, dog feces and bicyclists riding fast. They also want to see sidewalks and bike lanes connecting to schools.



*I wish there were sidewalks so I could walk to school. -Dion and Jomar, youth at Florence Heights*

### ***Forsander Apartments***

Forsander Apartments has a very active tenant association and president, who worked to promote our meeting after we had gone door to door with information. This meeting was well attended with many residents arriving right at 5:00pm and staying for over 1.5 hours.

Of particular concern to residents were the lack of lighting, presence of dog feces and crime happening on the bike path. The prevalence of jaywalking and motorists that fail to yield for pedestrians was also a major concern.



### *Hampshire Heights Apartments*

A core group of five young people and their parents attended, plus a few young people and neighbors dropped-by briefly. The community room was a small unit at one 'cul de sac' of the development, but weather was good so we were outside and very visible to passers-by. Information from this meeting was quite different than other locations, likely due to the youth presence. Input was also more spontaneous and in response to questions. The main feedback we received was regarding increased bike parking throughout the city and better bike and pedestrian connections from the neighborhood to the school, downtown and the bike path.



### *McDonald House*

This meeting was attended by a smaller group of committed residents. Our meeting time overlapped with regularly scheduled bingo event, so we were able to get input from residents that were waiting for bingo to begin. Attendees were most concerned with traffic downtown and challenges navigating the nearby area in a wheelchair or with a walker. Individuals using mobility devices stressed that cracked sidewalks, missing curb cuts and inconsistent snow removal on sidewalks and curb cuts makes navigating the city challenging. Additional comments included feeling unsafe due to speeding motorists, panhandling and recent crime on the bike path.

### *Salvo House*

The community room is right off the lobby and includes a large and TV room. A motivated core group of 12 people stayed for a minimum of 45 minutes and some whole time, plus 7 passersby who stayed a range of 3-20 minutes. Significant, meaningful, detailed input was received during this meeting. Many felt that the bike path is a great community benefit, but had concerns about safety. There were also concerns that redesigning main to provide accommodations for all modes would impact businesses.

### *Tobin Manor*

An active group of residents promoted the meeting in addition to our door to door research. These same residents were in attendance along with a number of other drop-ins through the evening. Participants at Tobin articulated that they would like to see sidewalk bulb-outs to increase pedestrian visibility, public information campaigns about sharing the road, and pedestrian crossing signals. They also stressed the importance of trail etiquette, lighting and maintenance.





### **Collaboration with the Human Rights Commission:**

The City's Human Rights Commission was informed and engaged in the Walk/Bike Northampton planning process. Staff presented to the HRC twice as a means of getting input.

### **Main St. Design Workshop:**

A design workshop focused on Main Street was held on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Outreach for this event was limited, as the focus was on soliciting input from those that would be most impacted by a redesign of the street. We did have fliers about the workshop available in both English and Spanish at all of the Housing Authority meetings and encouraged residents to participate. Spanish translation and childcare were also provided at the meeting. Translation services went unused, but childcare was used.

The meeting was attended by a fair amount of people, but was not attended by the groups of people that we had been actively trying to engage in the process up to this point. Participants were asked to create a cross-section of a street they'd like to see built in downtown Northampton. Pictures were taken of each cross-section designed and will be used to inform recommendations regarding Main Streets redesign. Participants also had an opportunity to share why they allocated space in the right of way the way they did.

### **Public Forum #2:**

The second and final Walk/Bike Northampton Public Forum was held on May 18, 2016 from 5:30-7:30pm. Advertisements for the meeting were provided in both English and Spanish and were pushed out through various channels, including all seven of the Northampton Housing Authority properties where drop-in meetings were held. The meeting was well-attended, but mainly by the people that are always keyed into the process. There were at least two participants that had previously attended drop-in meetings. Both childcare and Spanish translation were available. The childcare was well-utilized, but the Spanish translation services again went unused.

At the meeting the Alta, Watson Active and PVPC presented on what had been done up to this point in the process, key findings, and recommendations that will be included in the City's plan. After the presentations, participants broke out into groups to discuss infrastructure recommendations likely to appear in the plan.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee:

The Northampton Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee's monthly meetings served as an opportunity for the various groups working on the plan update to convene and share information. We regularly attended these meetings and updated the committee on results from engagement efforts.

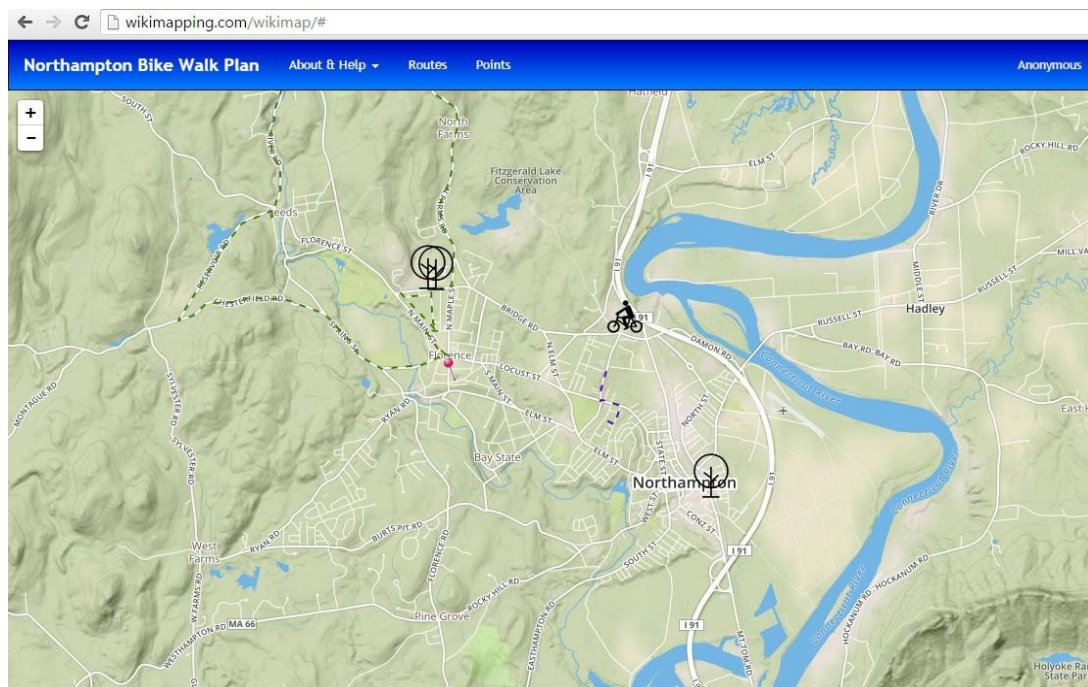
## Wiki-mapping Application:

PVPC launched a wiki-mapping application on April 8, 2016. The wiki-mapping application allowed users to share spatial information regarding bicycling and walking. Residents and visitors to the city could use the map to mark routes that are good for walking or biking or point out places that need improvements like sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, or new street trees. The wiki-map can be found here: <http://wikimapping.com/wikimap/WalkBike-Northampton-Plan.html>

The map was publicized through a press release, the city's email list and a number of email lists for prominent community organizations. About 110 people contributed to the map. The wiki-map was available for use at our seven drop-in meetings, but attendees were much more interested in talking and writing on physical maps. None opted to use the wiki-map.

One of the purposes of the wiki-map was to test whether it would be an effective method for gathering input from populations that are not normally represented in planning outreach in Northampton.

Demographic data collected by the wiki-map's survey shows that highly-educated and higher income residents were over represented, while lower income residents were under-represented.



## Main St. Demonstration Day:

A demonstration day highlighting physical changes that could be made on Main Street was held on Saturday, June 18th. The demonstration included the creation of a temporary buffered bike lane and two pocket parks. There were also tables and chairs added to the sidewalks and the city had an area with maps, information and opportunities for people to add their ideas.



This endeavor was publicized through a press release to local media outlets and a flier that was distributed in English and Spanish.



This event gave people the opportunity to literally feel how Main Street could function differently with amenities that would make the street more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. People were invited to share their thoughts during the event and the happenings were captured through video recordings.

## Public Forum #2:

The second and final Walk/Bike Northampton Public Forum was held on May 18, 2016 from 5:30-7:30pm. Advertisements for the meeting were provided in both English and Spanish and were pushed out through various channels, including all seven of the Northampton Housing Authority properties where drop-in meetings were held. The meeting was well-attended, including more young adults, but very few people of color were visible.

There were at least two participants that had previously attended drop-in meetings. Both childcare and Spanish translation were available. The childcare was well-utilized, but the Spanish translation services again went unused.

At the meeting the Alta, Watson Active and PVPC presented on what had been done up to this point in the process, key findings, and recommendations that will be included in the City's plan. After the presentations, participants broke out into groups to discuss infrastructure recommendations likely to appear in the plan.



## Resident Engagement -Phase 2

*“Re-energizing Democracy? I think that means helping people recognize and feel empowered to exert their power as a group, for the greater good of all.”*

-Survey Respondent

A survey was distributed to participants at a number of meetings seeking to understand the major barriers to participation in Northampton and as an initial litmus test for strategies that might work towards increasing participation. As stated, we learned that there are three major barriers to participation: (1) Lack of Knowledge on how to participate or time to participate (2) a lack of trust or faith in the government (3) Logistical Barriers. Based on this understanding, additional survey results on how people would like to be engaged, and best practices research, PVPC developed nine recommendations that sought to break down the identified barriers to participation. These nine proposed recommendations included:

- 1.) Create a Resident Engagement Team which will recruit and train residents to serve as Engagement and Inclusion workers on behalf of the city.
- 2.) Simplify access to important information about opportunities to participate but creating an on-line subscription service or app.
- 3.) Create a new staff position of Ombudsperson—whose job is to explain government processes to residents
- 4.) Hold semi-regular “Get to Know One Another” events with City staff and elected officials visiting with residents.
- 5.) Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understands and dismantle institutional/systemic racism in the City.
- 6.) Create a volunteer mentor program that partners well engaged residents with those that desire to be more involved, but don’t know how.
- 7.) Integrate participatory budgeting into the City’s budget process.
- 8.) Target investments to achieve an equity agenda and ensure that investments being made are not negatively impacting marginalized populations.
- 9.) Allocate funding to overcome logistical barriers as needed.

These nine recommendations were explored in a second phase of outreach.

### Public Meetings:

Throughout the months of October and November, four meetings were held to discuss the proposed recommendations.

### Northampton Housing Authority

Two meetings were held at Northampton Housing Authority Properties (one in downtown Northampton and the other in Florence). Participation at these meetings was limited, likely attributed to meeting notification being up to the discretion of the local tenant associations. Reactions to this work were mixed among participants at these meetings. Some residents were really passionate about the recommendations and others questioned why this work is necessary.

### *Northampton Young Professionals*

In the Walk/Bike engagement work, it became apparent that young people were not participating at a high rate. This could be seen looking around the room at public meetings, in survey results, and in wiki-mapping results. (The wiki-mapping, which was hosted and distributed via online channels did have the higher participation rates than other outreach for the Walk/Bike Plan.) To reach this population, we partnered with the Northampton Area Young Professionals to host a professional development event, where participants explored how local government involvement could impact their personal and professional life and discussed barriers to engagement. This event was well attended with over twenty young adults from around Northampton coming out. This group is eager to get involved.

### *City-wide Public Forum*

A City-wide public meeting was also held to gather feedback on the proposed recommendations. This meeting was covered via an article in the Gazette and information was shared on a number of the listservs that exist in town. In addition, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission advertised the event on Facebook and paid to promote it in order to reach a broader audience. This event was attended by approximately 50 people.

### *Survey*

A survey was used to succinctly capture participants' thoughts on the proposed recommendations. A paper survey was available at all meetings. Additionally, the survey was available online. Links to the survey went out with information about the city-wide meeting and the event aimed at young adults. Beyond this it was promoted on social media.

One-hundred and thirty six people responded to the survey. Almost 29% of survey respondents were between the ages of 18 and 35, almost 38% were between the ages of 36 and 50, and 34% were over the age of 51. A majority of the respondents (70%) were female, while 25% identified as male and 5% identified as transgender. Most respondents (89.1%) were white, 2.3% were Hispanic, 3.9% were Bi-racial and 4.7% identified as a different race.

### *Overall Results:*

Survey respondents were asked to rank each of the nine proposed recommendations based on importance (Very Important, Important, Somewhat Important, Neutral and Not Important). When taking into account all of the votes that equaled some level of importance, the recommendations in ranking of preference were as followed:

- 1.) Hold semi-regular "Get to Know One Another" events with City staff and elected officials visiting with residents.
- 2.) Screen investments to assess how funding impacts marginalized populations
- 3.) Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understand and dismantle institutional/systemic racism in the City.
- 4.) Allocate funding to overcome logistical barriers as needed.
- 5.) Simplify access to important information about opportunities to participate but creating an on-line subscription service or app.
- 6.) Integrate participatory budgeting into the City's budget process.



- 7.) Create a volunteer mentor program that partners well engaged residents with those that desire to be more involved, but don't know how.
- 8.) Create a new staff position of Ombudsperson—whose job is to explain government processes to residents
- 9.) Create a Resident Engagement Team which will recruit and train residents to serve as Engagement and Inclusion workers on behalf of the city.

Isolating only responses for Very Important responses, the top three recommendations include:

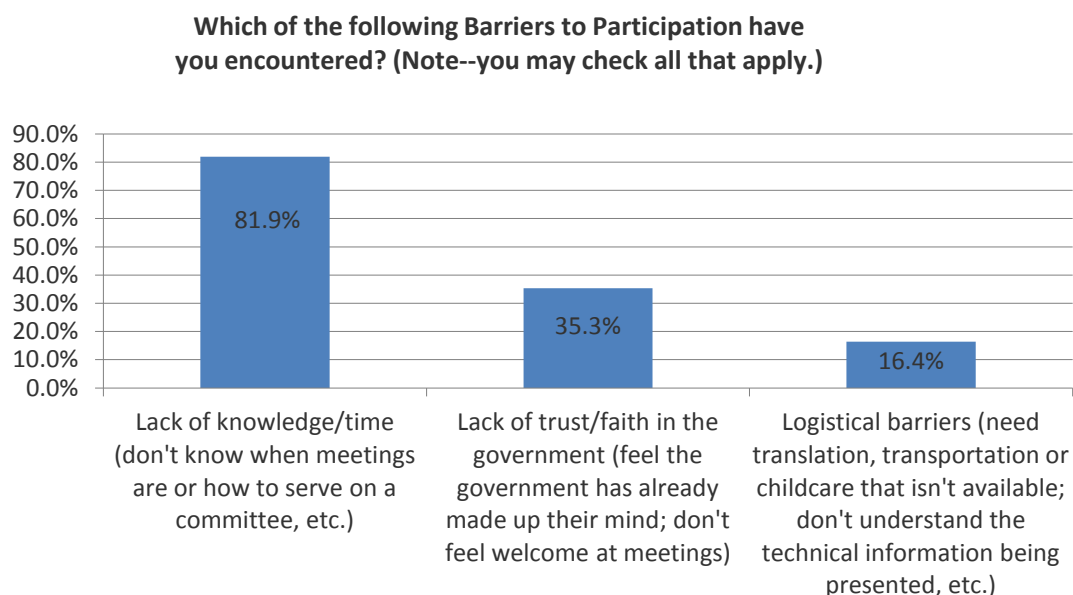
- 1.) Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understand and dismantle institutional/systemic racism in the City.
- 2.) Screen projects to assess how funding impacts marginalized populations.
- 3.) Allocate funding to overcome logistical barriers as needed.

When looking at results based on the number of Non-important votes they received, the following recommendations received the highest number of results:

- 1.) Create a new staff position of Ombudsperson—whose job is to explain government processes to residents.
- 2.) Create a Resident Engagement Team which will recruit and train residents to serve as Engagement and Inclusion workers on behalf of the city.
- 3.) Allocate funding to overcome logistical barriers as needed.

### Barriers to participation:

Almost 82% of respondents identified a lack of knowledge and/or time to participate as their major barrier to participation. A lack of trust or faith in the government and logistical issues (childcare, translations and transportation) were less of an issue, with 35.5% and 16.4% citing these as barriers respectively.



### *Lack of Knowledge*

In both the survey and the public meetings, the main reason for not being involved was the lack of knowledge about how to plug into current processes. The current structures in place in Northampton present the information required to participate and often the ways that this information is shared goes beyond what is required to be in compliance with open meeting laws, but everyday City residents haven't figured out how to navigate these structures. Participants expressed frustration about information regarding public meetings being posted in the Gazette, which many don't read because they aren't subscribers. This highlights the need to meet people where they are during engagement processes, even with advertising and meeting notices. There was interest in having more information on social media and in activity hubs in the neighborhoods, like libraries.

There was also strong interest in participating on boards and committees, but not knowing how to or feeling like they may not be qualified enough. A few participants also shared that they had expressed interest in serving on a committee before and were never contacted. A more transparent process for how people are appointed to boards as position turn over and a greater campaign on how to navigate that process could help bring fresh voices to the table and increase interest.

Overall, participants have a desire to be more involved. They were eager for more tangible ways to plug in beyond the meetings we held. The City of Northampton should act to capture this current energy that is apparent.

*"I would love to be more involved, don't know how to get involved or volunteer to serve on committees, etc."*

*"I am interested in becoming more involved but the greatest barriers for me are a lack of knowledge around how to serve on commissions/committees and how the nomination process works. It feels like these decisions are made out of public sight on a "who you know" basis (thinking of a recent appointment to the Human Rights commission that caused some controversy). I would appreciate more transparency around this process."*

### *Logistical*

While logistical issues, such as childcare, transportation and translation, were not considered to be a barrier to participation by many, there were still a few concerns shared. The need for childcare available at meetings was highlighted in multiple comments. Throughout the Walk/Bike Northampton process and this Re-energizing Democracy childcare was utilized when provided.

*"I am a single mama of two, who has my kiddos on Thursdays, I can't attend city council meetings without spending at least twenty dollars for a babysitter. That twenty dollars adds up quickly over the course of a month, or further a year of meetings. Access to discounted or free child care would help to make me a more active citizen."*

An additional logistical barrier that surfaced in this phase of the work was meeting schedules. A couple of people shared that they are aware of opportunities to participate, but because of work schedules they are shut out of the process.

*"Have wished I was involved in local politics, haven't found an avenue and I work evenings so don't know how I could attend meetings."*

*"As a parent of young children, evening meetings are ... a challenge."*

Public meetings in most cities and towns are held in the evenings, so that they don't conflict with work schedules, but this scheduling fails to capture those working evenings. While every meeting can't be schedule to accommodate all, ensuring that other mechanisms are in place to gather feedback for those

that cannot attend in person is important. Additionally many city committees meet in the morning or late afternoon. This can make it difficult for a person that doesn't have a flexible work schedule to serve.

### Skepticism

Approximately 35.5% of people identified a lack of trust and/or faith in the government as a barrier to participation. This data point converges with levels of trust in the city staff and government in the exploratory survey on engagement practices during the Walk/Bike Northampton Process. It may be likely that the feelings of distrust in government at the national level post-election may have led to increased levels of distrust in the government being expressed in this survey.

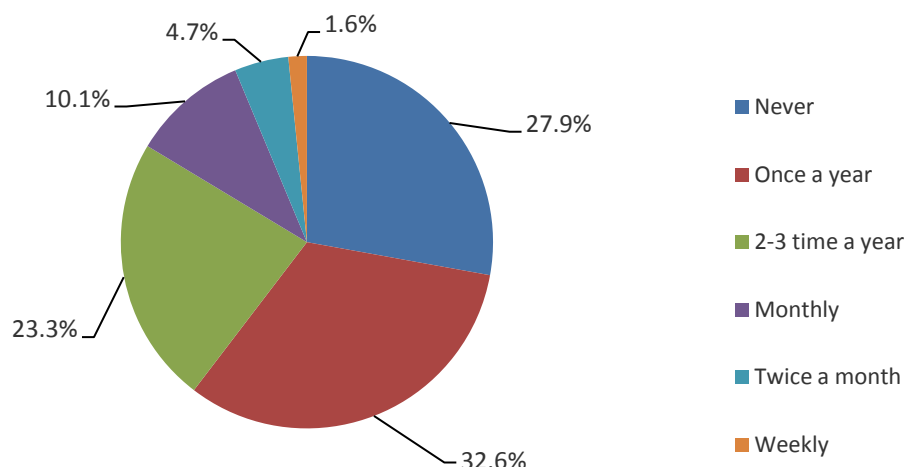
There were, however concerns that committee appointments are not transparent and based more on connections than simply expressing interest through the established process. Others, in both the survey and public meetings, suggested that by the time the government is asking for the public's decision on an issue that the decision is already made.

*"All too often the funding for studies & analysis seem to be a set up to justify what's already known or project deals already dealt."*

### Participation

The overall aim of this work aimed to propose recommendations that would get those that don't currently participate in government processes—for whatever reason—to participate. In order to achieve this, it was key to understand how often survey respondents participate in order to ensure that our recommendations will benefit those that are currently unengaged in local government processes. At many of our events, participants shared that they do not typically get involved in their local government (attend public meetings, serve on a committee, attend city council meetings, talk to City councilors, call the mayor, etc.). Almost 84% of the survey respondents said that they interact with local government, in the ways mentioned above, less than quarterly. Similarly, in our meetings many participants stated that they do not participate in government processes regularly.

How often are you involved with local government processes (attend public meetings, serve on a committee, attend city council meetings, talk to your City Councilor, call the Mayor, etc.)?



Isolating the survey results of those that never participate in local government processes or only participate once a year, highlights the fact younger residents in Northampton are less likely to participate. Approximately 40% of those that never participate or participate once per year were

between the age of 18 and 35, 41% were between the age 36-50 and 19% were over the age of 51. Among this group, however, the biggest barrier to participation remained the lack of knowledge on how to get involved.

The ranking of recommendations by those that participate less than quarterly didn't deviate much from the survey results as a whole. When looking at the selection of recommendations based on "Very Important" preferences the following recommendations rose to the top"

1. Screen investments to assess how funding impacts marginalized populations
2. Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understand and dismantle institutional/systemic racism in the City.
2. Integrate participatory budgeting into the City's budget process.
3. Allocate funding to overcome logistical barriers as needed.

When looking at preference of recommendations based by all levels of importance (Very Important, Important and Somewhat Important) indicated, the following recommendations were considered the most important:

1. Simplify access to important information about opportunities to participate but creating an on-line subscription service or app.
2. Create a volunteer mentor program that partners well engaged residents with those that desire to be more involved, but don't know how.
2. Integrate participatory budgeting into the City's budget process.
2. Screen investments to assess how funding impacts marginalized populations
3. Commit to aggressive participation in undoing racism training to explore, understand and dismantle institutional/systemic racism in the City.

### *Thoughts about how politics at the national level impacted this work*

All of the public meetings and survey for this phase of work were scheduled, unintentionally, right after the election. Many people questioned if this work was a direct response to the election or Northampton's standings as a sanctuary city.

Other people shared that this election ignited their desire to get involved, because they aren't pleased with the current trajectory of national politics and decision-making and hope that involvement at the local level can have an impact.

*"I have never participated in local government due to a lack knowledge/interest, but this election has changed my attitude."*

*"I have lived in Northampton for 5 years and felt I didn't need to be very involved because I figure the representatives were like-minded enough to let them take the lead. After this latest election cycle, I absolutely plan to be more involved with the hope that my involvement in local and state politics will affect federal politics. I just need an easy resource to know when, where and what. And I will get my friends to join too."*

### *New Ideas:*

During the public engagement phase of this work, participants shared additional ideas about how to increase participation in local government processes. Many recommendations focus on improved ways of communication about meetings and events slated to take place. Other recommendations included new ways to engage people outside of the traditional public meeting.

## Disseminating Information

Many people shared ideas on how to best get information about opportunities to participate. Utilizing social media to share information was a common theme in ideas shared in both the public meetings and the open response option of the survey. The City already uses social media to share some information, but it is isolated to certain offices or departments. Using various social media platforms to share information allows for a variety of mediums that the newspaper just isn't capable of doing—including hosting videos, the ability to show interest in an event and receive reminders, and providing real time information. While there was a push for social media, participants also noted that not everyone has access to the internet, so information should continue to be available in paper versions.

*“Reach out in social media to solicit as many people as possible for input on anything and everything their government is, or should be, or shouldn't be involved in. Show them that their input has an impact. Respond to them directly, or by implementing efforts that demonstrate their input was incorporated.”*

*“I appreciate the info put out by the mayor's office with social media, but would appreciate the same kind of info by other city agencies/committees (especially the city council).”*  
*“partnering w/NCTV to better share/disseminate video content (on mobile platforms especially!) - there's loads of interesting video clips from open meetings that can be shared.”*

*“Have information available in print format not everyone has access to online information or has internet or a smart phone. Make information available on the web that is friendly for smart phones on web pages without needing an app. Have information available at Lilly and Forbes as I go there for other things and rarely in city hall and not easy to get to or park or drag a kid to ask a question.”*

## Miscellaneous Ideas:

Additional Ideas that were shared include the creation of a High School Mentorship program that teaches students about various government departments and their purposes so that they have the knowledge necessary to plug in, energizing the ward committees that already exists, planning policy talks that have a social aspect to them, and having information stations at community events where city staff share information about current projects and policies being reviewed in town.

Additional interesting comments from the Survey and Meetings:

- I'm all for undoing racism trainings for everyone involved in public service in Northampton
- Like ombusman and education
- I don't know what a resident engagement team is.
- I shouted when I saw your Ombudsman idea, because that is basically my ideal job. If nothing else, I'd be a damn fine member of your Resident Engagement team. I could use the training. It'd be awesome.
- Re: participatory budgeting, we already have ward and at-large councilors. Aren't they the conduit to share residents' opinions on the budget? It's already participatory, people just don't do it!
- Simply asking for public opinion on budget issues is a recipe for disaster in my opinion

- I'm sure some of the ideas are good (certainly the racism training & the effect-on-marginalized-populations ones), but I consider that Democracy is pretty energized already in the city
- It would be great for the city to take a look at themselves. More than 90% of people who work for city are white and there is not antiracism training mandated to them. For a person of color to join the city work, it has to be in a way that fits into the white culture setup, if not, we are considered trouble makers or become isolated. Many of the city councilors have the antiracism definition by heart but they don't "walk the talk", this is white liberals at their best.
- why do many of the recommendations above suggest that the residents volunteer for tasks that should be part of city employee job descriptions
- Emails announcing city meetings are great



## Summary of Accomplishments

### 1. Brief executive summary

We were successful in developing a complete streets plan for Northampton MA (called Walk/Bike Northampton) with an emphasis on equity and prioritization of projects based on socioeconomic status of residents and connectivity. The plan is available for download at:

<http://www.northamptonma.gov/1647/WalkBike-Plan>. We also developed a video documenting the city's Complete Streets demonstration day and successfully leveraged an additional \$100,000 funds for the project.

These additional funds enabled the City to engage the services of Alta Planning to lead the Walk/Bike Northampton Plan development process, allowing PVPC and City staff to focus on: 1) engaging people too often left out of traditional planning processes in the Walk/Bike Northampton Plan development process; 2) developing capacity among underrepresented emerging leaders to actively participate in City government, and 3) identifying actions the City can undertake to learn from this experience and modify current city practices to improve citizen participation in government planning processes. We refer to this work as "re-energizing democracy".

#### Achievements:

- **Assured robust participation of marginalized residents in the City of Northampton's Walk/Bike Plan**, including holding a series of on-site meetings at properties of the Northampton Housing Authority and Casa Latina-an educational and cultural center representing, celebrating, and advocating for the Latino community; working with community organizers to flier and go door to door in housing developments and neighborhoods where marginalized residents live; including a wiki map option for on-line place based participation, holding a focus group with young professionals, identified as missing from City meetings and processes, and assisting one African American resident identified early on in our outreach, to join the City's Ped/Bike committee.
- **Created a video of the City of Northampton's Complete Streets demonstration day**, available for viewing at: <http://www.pvpc.org/content/video-complete-streets-demonstration-day-northampton-ma>
- **Facilitated two multi-session capacity building initiatives** for City residents self identified as from marginalized populations;
- Collaborated with the City of Northampton Human Rights Commission, the Office of Planning and Sustainability and the Mayor's office to research, propose and refine over time a **series of actions to "re-energize democracy"** in Northampton related to walking and bicycling (and keeping track of other unrelated ideas).

### 2. Project activities and accomplishments:

1) We achieved the goal set out in our proposal. The city has a new Walk/Bike Plan that: improves connectivity; was developed with robust participation of marginalized residents, and includes significant recommendations focused on addressing built environment needs in areas of the city where residents of lower socioeconomic status live.

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

A significant success of this work, outside of the obviously important fact that we achieved our goal and developed the plan, is the ongoing improvement of relationships between the city government and its marginalized residents. We defined marginalized residents as people of color, people with low incomes and/or from immigrant or refugee communities, and young adults, as well as the elderly and disabled. Residents responded enthusiastically to having meetings at their buildings, in their neighborhoods and at locations where they felt comfortable (Casa Latina). Marginalized residents reported support for the provision of childcare at meetings and for interpretation services. The emerging leaders from marginalized residents who participated in the capacity building sessions felt that it was a very positive experience. An African American woman who lives at one of the Housing Authority properties was identified early on in our outreach and engagement efforts and with the support of this initiative joined the City's Bike/Ped committee. Achieving greater diversity among residents serving on city committees is a goal of the City's Sustainability work, so this was a significant achievement.

The new Walk/Bike Plan, which emphasizes connectivity and ranking of projects including the socio-economic status of residents in the city, will improve equity by assuring safe and comfortable walking and bicycling infrastructure throughout the city. The need for the plan was motivated by the recognition that the city's pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure has been historically inequitably distributed, especially during the period of rapid suburbanization in the 1950s and 1960s, and our goal as to affirmatively address this history of inequity.

### **3. Lessons learned:**

This grant project affirmed the growing awareness among Sustainability Directors and others committed to advancing sustainability, that to achieve full participation of all community members in community planning processes, it is necessary to take affirmative actions and also to consider changing 'business as usual' practices of local government. The financial support provided by the Funder's Network enabled us to anticipate and offset known barriers to participation by marginalized residents. These known barriers are lack of child care, not speaking English, not knowing about the meetings, and not having time and possibly no transportation to meetings. Providing this additional support of participation, we reached a significant number of marginalized residents who indicated that they would not have participated in the planning process without the extra support.

Recognizing that many residents, especially marginalized residents, may not be familiar with what on street bike lanes look like, and may in fact, fear that they will make it harder to drive and/or park, the Complete Streets demonstration day was a very worthwhile event to literally show residents what an on-street bike lane could look like, and having the additional funding enabled us to document the day via video and as a result many more people have the opportunity to 'participate' in the day. This is a practice that we encourage other Sustainability Directors to replicate.