

Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities

ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY SERIES



ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY
**in Ann Arbor-Washtenaw
County, Michigan**



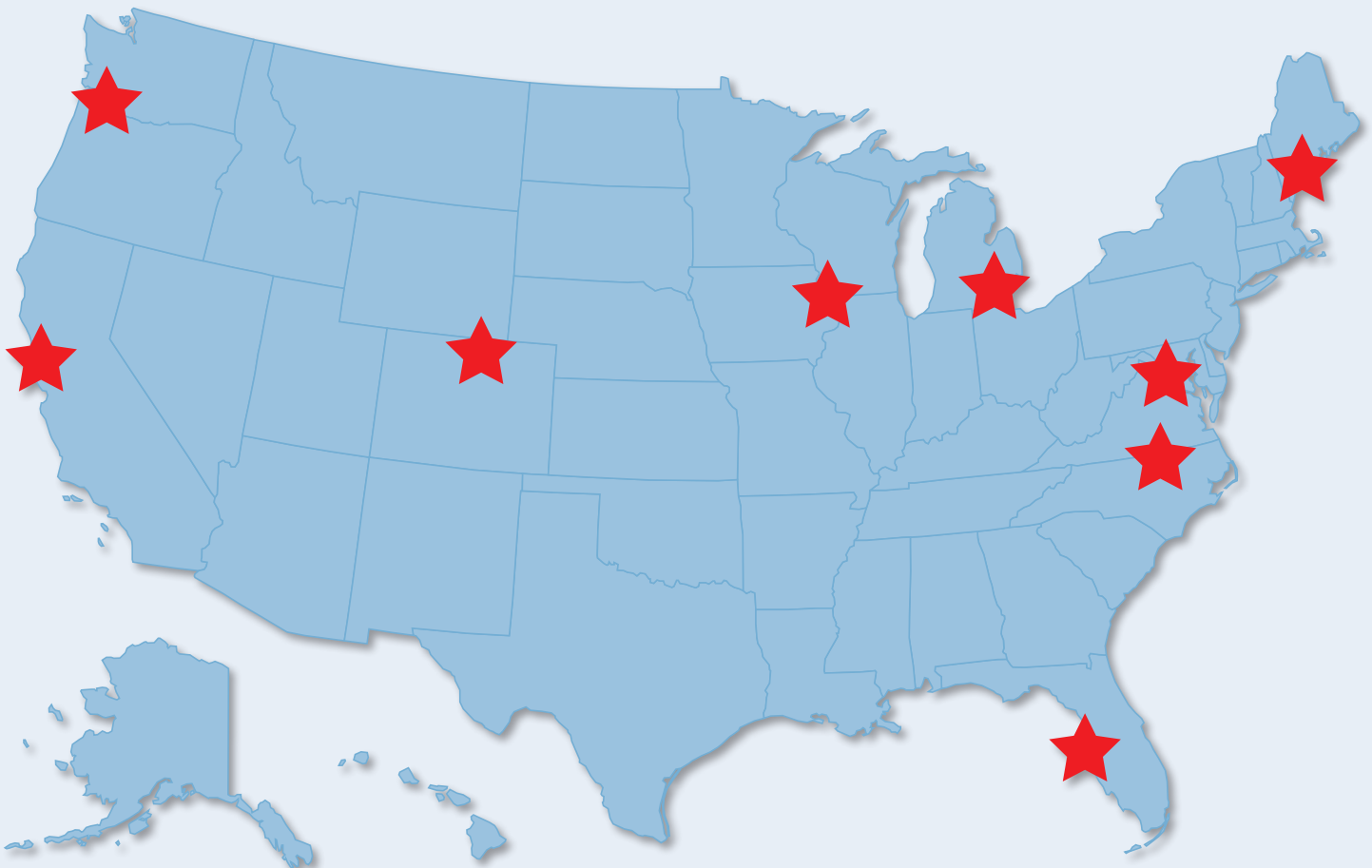
ICMA

ABOUT THIS PROJECT: ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

This research was conducted by ICMA and Arizona State University to identify and describe current activities, leading practices, and achievements of sustainable communities created through a comprehensive, integrated approach supported by inclusive engagement. Based on results of the ICMA Sustainability Survey in 2010, a follow-up survey was sent to 300 local governments whose original responses showed high levels of sustainability activity. Using results from the follow-up survey and primary and secondary research on leading social sustainability practices around the United States, nine communities whose responses indicated high levels of social equity-related activity were selected for case studies. Case study communities include the following:*

- Washtenaw County, MI (Pop. 344,791) and Ann Arbor, MI (Pop. 113,934)
- Dubuque, IA (Pop. 57,637)
- Hayward, CA (Pop. 144,186)
- Manatee County, FL (Pop. 322,833)
- Lewiston, ME (Pop. 36,592)
- Durham, NC (Pop. 228,330)
- Arlington, VA (Pop. 207,627)
- Clark County, WA (425,363)
- Fort Collins, CO (Pop. 143,986)

Each case study details findings from individual communities that provide insight into how they have been able to promote social equity and achieve greater social sustainability through their policies, programs, and other activities. Data was collected primarily through face-to-face interviews and secondary sources.



*Populations based on 2010 Census base.

Advancing Social Equity Goals to Achieve Sustainability: Case Study Series

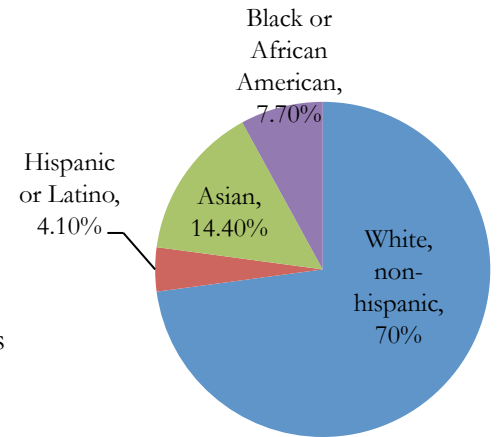
Advancing Social Equity in Ann Arbor-Washtenaw County, Michigan
By Katherine Takai, ICMA

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Community Profile – Ann Arbor, Michigan

- **Form of Government:** Council-Manager
- **County Commission:** Ten council members and a mayor
- **Demographic Information (2012):**
 - **Total Population:** 116,121
 - **Poverty Rate:** 21.9%
- **Annual Budget (FY2013):** \$382,373,695 in budgeted expenditures
- **Sustainability Budget:** No budget is dedicated specifically to sustainability.

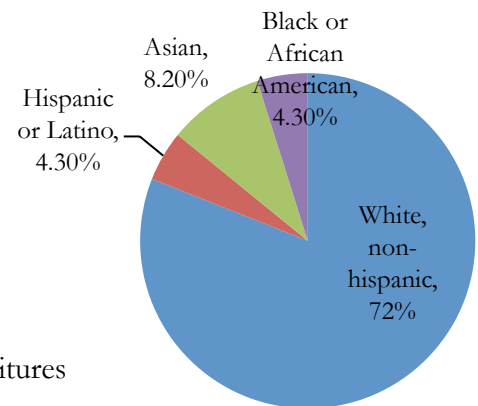


Population by Race (2010)

- **Sustainability Plans and Strategies:** Ann Arbor’s Sustainability Framework was adopted as an element of the Master Plan by the City of Ann Arbor in 2013, as part of a project funded by the Home Depot Foundation. The framework reorganizes over 200 existing city plan goals from over 20 plans into an overarching set of 16 sustainability goals for Ann Arbor.
- **Number of Sustainability Staff:** Two – the city’s environmental coordinator, who directs sustainability activities, and one full-time sustainability associate, whose position is grant funded. A number of staff within service areas work on sustainability issues.
- **Location in Government:** Sustainability activities take place across all city departments.
- **Major Social Equity Activities in the Community:** Affordable Housing, Transportation Planning, Parks & Recreation, Sustainability Planning, Climate change and Adaptation, Energy Efficiency

Community Profile – Washtenaw County, Michigan

- **Form of Government:** Commission-administrator
- **County Commission:** Nine commissioners
- **Demographic Information (2012):**
 - **Total Population:** 345,350
 - **Poverty Rate:** 14.6%
- **Annual Budget (FY2013):** \$207,183,751 in budgeted expenditures



Population by Race (2010)

- **Sustainability Budget:** Approximately \$15,000,000 annually is dedicated to social sustainability.
- **Sustainability Plans and Strategies:** No formal plan for sustainability; however a number of County plans and strategies refer to sustainability, including the Washtenaw County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2010), Washtenaw County Five-Year Consolidated Plan (2013), Washtenaw Urban County Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (2012), HUD Sustainable Communities Community Planning Challenge Grant (2011), Neighborhood Stabilization Program (2010), Re-Imagining Washtenaw Avenue (2009), and the Local Economic Development Framework (2013). Additionally, references to social equity are integrated into mission statements of the Office of Community and Economic Development and departments, such as the Department of Parks and Recreation.
- **Number of Sustainability Staff:** No staff dedicated specifically to sustainability.
- **Location in Government:** Across county departments. The primary department focusing on addressing issues facing low-income and vulnerable communities is the Office of Community and Economic Development reporting to the county administrator.
- **Major Social Equity Activities in the Community:** Community action and coordinated funding activities focusing on six human service areas: safety-net health, hunger relief, housing and homelessness; aging, early childhood, and school-age youth; investments in affordable housing; community-based economic development activities; parks and recreation amenities and services; and workforce development

Findings in Brief

Leadership & Vision

- FINDING 1 – Sustainability language in mission statements and policies that promote social equity has institutionalized organizational commitment and encouraged consideration of social equity into everyday decision making.
- FINDING 2 – Visionary leadership and hiring staff with an understanding and desire to pursue social equity goals are critical to making progress toward achieving those goals.

Partnerships

- FINDING 3 – Shared services in administering city and county community development activities through one office has allowed staff to address inefficiencies in service delivery. Identifying economies of scale has resulted in cost savings and higher impact, and has provided added justification for pursuing social equity goals.
- FINDING 4 – Public-private partnerships have proved critical in strategically funding social equity-related initiatives.

Policies & Programs

- FINDING 5 – A comprehensive approach to community development addresses both social and economic issues to provide all individuals in the community, including low-income and minority populations, with equal opportunity to obtain a job and achieve self-sufficiency.¹
- FINDING 6 – An array of transportation options offers equal access to jobs and community services as well as connectivity between different geographic areas of the community.
- FINDING 7 – Regional collaboration has facilitated meaningful conversations about strategically meeting the affordable housing needs of low income residents.

Performance Measures

- FINDING 8 – Data-driven decision making, especially in financial investment, is essential to maximizing impact and effectively allocating resources; however, identifying effective performance measures remains a challenge.

History of Sustainability and Social Equity in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County, Michigan

Washtenaw County, in southeastern Michigan, encompasses 27 cities, villages, and townships. Its county seat, the city of Ann Arbor, is also one of the county's primary partners and home to one of the state's largest public universities, the University of Michigan. The county is primarily rural, with some urban areas, including the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

Washtenaw County has a long history of commitment to sustainability and social equity. Ann Arbor, whose Human Rights Commission was created in 1957 to ensure civil and political rights and prohibit discrimination for any reason,² is considered an early adopter of sustainability initiatives. Its curbside recycling program, founded in 1978 by a local nonprofit called Recycle Ann Arbor, was the first in Michigan, and its energy conservation efforts began in 1981 with the designation of a \$1.4 million energy bond to implement efficiency measures at 30 different city buildings.³ Both Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County have living wage and antidiscrimination laws. The living wage ordinances require employers who provide services to or receive assistance from the jurisdiction to pay their employees a fixed amount, depending on whether they also provide health care. The hourly rates are updated annually to reflect cost-of-living increases. These policies are meant to maintain a high quality of life and recognize diversity and inclusion for area residents.

The Great Recession of 2008–11 had a tremendous impact on the employment rate in the county. Unemployment increased from 8 percent to 11 percent, largely because of the loss of high-paying manufacturing jobs in the eastern part, where residents saw a 30 percent decrease in median income during that period. The drop in income left many residents without homes, the financial means to improve their livelihoods, the skills necessary to obtain a job, or the capacity to regain self-sufficiency. Additionally, the departure in 2008 of one of the largest employers and philanthropic contributors led to the displacement of more than 2,100 workers—a loss of approximately \$6 million in annual tax revenue to both the city and the county, as well as \$5 million loss of philanthropic funds. These shocks to the local economy caused community leaders to rethink approaches to community and economic development.

In 2011, the community won a \$3-million grant from U.S. HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative to fund activities in six categories: (1) Washtenaw Avenue corridor redevelopment; (2) new development and affordable housing in Ann Arbor; (3) affordable housing, transportation expansion, and programs to support financial self-sufficiency in Ypsilanti; (4) regionwide efforts to improve public health, access to arts and culture, and energy efficiency in rental housing; (5) food business and urban agriculture cultivation; and (6) community engagement. The joint city/county Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED) administers this grant to 15 different subgrantees. This grant has provided support for activities that strategically address social equity in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County.

Findings

VISION & LEADERSHIP

FINDING 1 – Sustainability language in mission statements and policies that promote social equity has institutionalized organizational commitment and encouraged consideration of social equity into everyday decision making.

Including intentionally inclusive language within a policy statement, such as “for all members of the community,” can be an effective way to establish a mind set for considering social equity in planning and decision making. Although neither Ann Arbor nor Washtenaw County has officially established plans or policies that specifically address social equity, both use language that alludes to it. Local government staff members from both communities see social equity–related missions within their own organizational missions. OCED’s mission is to “support and improve the quality of life for the community, particularly low and moderate income residents, which will contribute to the overall vitality of Washtenaw County.”⁴ Ann Arbor’s mission statement expresses the city’s commitment to providing services that “enhance the quality of life for all.”⁵ Although no specific goals were set for social equity, equity is integrated into the 16 goals of Ann Arbor’s Sustainability Framework, where reference is made to inclusive service provision and emphasis is on services for low-income, homeless, and vulnerable populations.⁶ For example, the Sustainable Energy goal is to “improve access to and increase use of renewable energy by all members of our community,” and the Human Services goal is to “provide services that meet basic human needs of impoverished and disenfranchised residents to maximize the health and well-being of the community” (emphasis added). These are just a few examples of how these two local governments have institutionalized their commitment to and consideration of social equity in planning and operations.

Social equity goals are integrated into the mission statements of other city and county departments as well. The mission statement for the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission refers to “accessibility” and “affordability” of facilities and programs.⁷ “We have incorporated social equity into every project for the past 10–12 years,” explained Washtenaw County parks and recreation director Bob Tetens, “Prior to that time, we were only investing in our parks, which were few and far between. For the last ten years, we have been trying to put the resources back into the community.”

Examples of these investments include the development of new parks and recreational opportunities across the county. Prior to 2000, there were no parks in the southwestern region. Since then, the county has added one park and nine preserved natural areas. In the eastern region, the Rolling Hills County Park and Water Park has undergone three expansions since it was built in 1990; the expansions were done to maximize accessibility to the four townships and three cities that border the park. Many of the Washtenaw County parks and recreation department’s activities are guided by the department’s Five-Year Plan, which is updated on a rolling basis. The 2010–14 plan’s goals emphasize a “well distributed park system that would provide a variety of recreational experiences” and facilities that “should provide a diversity of activities for all age groups and physical abilities.”⁸

Challenges: With no formalized plan or policy for social equity, local government leaders must continue to specifically include language that refers to social equity in future policy formation.

FINDING 2 – Visionary leadership and hiring staff with an understanding and desire to pursue social equity goals are critical making progress toward achieving those goals.

Advocates of social equity are found among local government staff, elected officials, citizen boards and commissions, nonprofit organizations, foundations, and educational institutions in Washtenaw County. As previously noted, Ann Arbor has a long history of commitment to social equity issues and a strong consciousness of social equity issues across the broader community, and all its stakeholders—local government personnel, civic organizations, and residents—play a role in increasing the city’s capacity to address them.

“Members of boards and commissions are advocates of social equity, but there are also hired staff at the city and county who are sympathetic and aware of the issues,” explained Tony Vanderworp, director of economic development at OCED. “Mary Jo, our director, definitely has it at the front of her thinking at all times.”

Mary Jo Callan came into her role as director of OCED with an interest in pursuing social equity and was critical in organizing activities to that end. Her earned credibility, solidified vision, and systematic method of achieving it resonates with other department heads and elected officials. Although economic development has traditionally focused on business attraction, Callan has been able to guide the department to a new approach that integrates it with community development.

Challenges: With eventual staff turnover, new leaders who can spearhead important initiatives for achieving social equity—such as merging city and county community development operations and establishing a public-private coordinated funding partnership—will be needed. Also vital will be maintaining a commitment to establish the policies and document the experiences needed to ensure long-term sustainability.

PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING 3 – Shared services in administering city and county community development activities through one office has allowed staff to address inefficiencies in service delivery. Identifying economies of scale has resulted in cost savings and higher impact, and has provided added justification for pursuing social equity goals.

In 2004, an agreement joining the city and county departments included a plan to transition all employees to the county. The city contributed funds for this transition. Affordable housing and human services functions within the city remain within the purview of Ann Arbor city council, and the full range of countywide community and economic development work is overseen by the county board of commissioners. Since then, the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development has represented the City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, and the Washtenaw Urban County in what amounts to a partnership among the Washtenaw Board of Commissioners and the 18 cities, townships, and villages that have agreed to jointly participate in federally funded

programs. The Urban County, which comprises the 18 jurisdictions including Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County, was created through cooperative agreements to better leverage federal U.S. HUD grants, including those from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), and Neighborhood Stabilization Program.

Since this merger was a result of visionary staff leadership and support from council members, the process for implementation was top-down. It was challenging, however, to overcome differences in organizational culture and focus areas, so gaining staff buy-in was critical to success. Ultimately, consolidation presented various benefits, such as greater specialization, especially in different areas of federal grant acquisition and management.

“Previously, there were two entities with the expertise, knowledge, and infrastructure to operate programs,” explained Brett Lenart, OCED’s housing and infrastructure manager who had been on staff during the merger. “The first success was sharing that knowledge and consolidating expertise in activities such as grant writing. As the organizations began to build a knowledge infrastructure, the process of grant writing became more streamlined and efficient. Employees were able to specialize in different areas of community development, and the organization gained greater richness of expertise in areas as procurement and environmental review.”

In addition to bringing together the staff of the two departments, it was also necessary to determine how finances would be managed and distributed. Both jurisdictions contributed general funds toward human services, so at one point OCED was running three different funding processes—one for Washtenaw County, one for Ann Arbor, and one for the Urban County. To remedy this, OCED staff leveraged trust and credibility to gain approval from each governing body for a single funding process. This resulted in a single, comprehensive application process for all public funds, thereby saving time and cost for both the consolidated department and the nonprofits applying for funding.

Another benefit of merging community development efforts of municipalities within the Urban County was the increased ability to learn from each other. Prior to 2009, Ann Arbor had been its own separate U.S. HUD-funded entity (a.k.a. an “entitlement community”) and, as such, had focused on affordable housing initiatives and developed significant expertise in using federal funding for that purpose. Most of the other jurisdictions in the county, with the exception of Ypsilanti, had used their allocation primarily for promoting homeownership and infrastructure projects. When the Ann Arbor relinquished its entitlement community status to merge with the Urban County, those other jurisdictions gained greater awareness of affordable housing and other human services–related uses of HUD funding.

Joining the community development offices of the two entities has directly improved the capacity to administer the services required for increased social equity. Through a coordinated funding model, it has also led to new opportunities for streamlining administration, both across county departments and for attracting private dollars for social services. The shared services model for community development has also led to other shared services partnership agreements between Washtenaw County and City of Ann Arbor, such as those involving information technology services and other administrative functions.

Challenges: Shared services in community development have highlighted challenges in the federal grant process related to time- and resource-intensive application and reporting. Because reporting systems are unable to share information, the tasks of reporting information and reusing data create a burden on local government staff.

FINDING 4 – Public-private partnerships have proved critical in strategically funding social equity–related initiatives.

Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, the Urban County, and the primary private sector human service funders—the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation (AAACF) and the United Way of Washtenaw County—developed a single coordinated process for funding human services initiatives within the region. This Coordinated Funding Model has helped the collaborating entities

- leverage each funder’s investment in local nonprofits
- minimize duplicative work and effort for nonprofits applying for funding
- reduce overlap and eliminate redundancies between funding entities
- create shared, community-level measurement of human services outcomes
- maximize the effectiveness of funds invested in targeted critical human services.

“For the city of Ann Arbor, social equity is an essential value that is translated and implemented through operations within our police department and land use policies that emphasize affordable housing and are enacted through budgetary decisions by the city council. One of the most important examples is the funding that the city council provides through the general fund for human services that have continued despite decline in property values,” said Ann Arbor’s city manager, Steve Powers.

The conversation about streamlining human services grant making began during the late 1990s, when the United Way and AAACF discovered that they were funding the same organizations. A natural response to this discovery was to coordinate with the public sector to provide funding for human services. In 2010, representatives from OCED (including those from the county, city, and the Urban County executive committee), the AAACF, and the United Way came together to map their services, understand what the other parties were doing, and identify where their work overlapped. They decided to put together a team of volunteers from those organizations, who would spend three to four months devising a more effective way for the organizations to work together. During this period, the team met weekly to identify redundancies and develop a streamlined process for granting funds.

Regardless of its financial contribution to the investment pool, each organization has had an equal stake in decision making and responsibility. Depending on its organizational expertise, each staffing organization took on a leadership role for part of the model: the United Way managed planning and coordination, OCED managed program operations, and the AAACF managed capacity building. The “bottom-up” concept was used to collect data from the agencies doing the work to determine the effectiveness of investment and identify areas of greatest need.

Developing and implementing the Coordinated Funding Model came with significant challenges. Each organization had its own institutions and processes, all of which needed to be negotiated to set up a unified system. The process put stress on staff to implement, evaluate, and adapt as needed.

In 2013, an independent consultant, TCC Group out of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, conducted an evaluation of the model's first two years, 2010–2012, wherein \$8.2 million was awarded to 40 nonprofit organizations in the region. The evaluation found the model to be effective in (1) strengthening the region's nonprofit sector, specifically in evaluation capacity and ability to measure meaningful outcomes, and (2) increasing the effectiveness of area's grant makers through improved relationships with funders and collaborative ability.⁹ "The bottom-up model has allowed us to have more meaningful, thoughtful conversations with agencies and donors," said Cheryl Elliot, CEO of the AAACF.

Challenges: In the coming years, collaborators on this initiative need to be looking more closely at specific measurable outcomes for each of the six priority areas – aging, housing & homelessness, hunger relief, safety net health, school-aged youth, and early childhood – and at community-level outcomes to understand what impact the funds have had. To ensure growth and sustainability of the model, the partners also need to bring in more funders by marketing the model as a smart investment vehicle. In fact, this has already begun as the RNR Foundation joined the model in 2014 as a sixth funder.

POLICIES & PROGRAMS

FINDING 5 – A comprehensive approach to community development addresses both social and economic issues to provide all individuals in the community, including low-income and minority populations, with equal opportunity to obtain a job and achieve self-sufficiency.

Prior to 2008, stakeholders involved in economic development had focused primarily on more traditional business attraction and retention programs and on fostering new industries. The departure of a large employer during that time caused a major shock to the local economy. Additionally, many of the jobs that could be created in the community by cultivating such sectors as information technology and publishing would not gainfully employ a majority of the county's unemployed residents.

In looking for an approach to more sustainable economic development and more effective community development, county leadership recognized the opportunity offered by integrating efforts. In 2011, the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners approved the consolidation of the three departments—Community Development, Economic Development & Energy, and Employment Training and Community Services—to establish OCED. The three departments had many common goals and overlapping and duplicative services and function. Staff opted to assess core business functions, core competencies and weaknesses, and potential opportunities to improve services. The specific benefits were increased organizational sustainability and improved service delivery. Moreover, because the three merged departments had faced expiring American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds, as well as anticipated cuts in local and other state and federal funding,

their merger offered significant cost savings and resulted in structural reductions of more than \$1.2 million.¹⁰

The new department focuses on the needs of citizens, especially those with low to moderate incomes. Its activities are organized into four functional areas: housing and community infrastructure, economic and workforce development, human services, and finance and operations. The Local Economic Development Framework, an initiative undertaken by OCED at the request of the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners “to ensure that workforce and economic development resources are strategically placed to provide the greatest benefit to residents and businesses,” references existing local economic research and plans to identify areas of opportunity.¹¹ As OCED specifically acknowledges that “equity, inclusion, and economic growth are not mutually exclusive trade-offs, but are in fact mutually dependent and supportive concepts to be advanced by the community, and by government at every level,” the framework sets goals to achieve this type of inclusive economic growth. It emphasizes a “bottom-up” approach and sets measurable goals and outcomes, maps out partnerships, identifies and categorizes programs and projects, and provides an overview of the budget that would be required for these activities. Programs and projects are administered by partners receiving funding from OCED through Act 88 property tax revenue or revolving loan funds, general funds, and other grants.

“While all funding has been on the service side, the idea is that all of these things together, combined with planning and development, lead to a sustainable economy, which gives people jobs and the ability to lift themselves,” said Stephen Wade, project manager for the HUD Sustainable Communities Community Challenge Planning Grant at OCED.

Challenges: The broadened approach to economic development requires the development of strategies beyond bringing large companies into the community. “It’s less exciting and newsworthy to create two or three jobs at a time,” explained Mary Jo Callan, “but fostering access to capital and support for small businesses is a critical strategy in creating a resilient local economy.”

FINDING 6 – An array of transportation options offers equal access to jobs and community services as well as connectivity between different geographic areas of the community.

Discussions among administrative and elected officials about enhancing the quality of life in Washtenaw County have resulted in a growing understanding that “we are only as good as our weakest link.” Thus, the disparity between conditions in the eastern part of the county and the city of Ann Arbor has been the impetus to connect the urban cores of Ann Arbor and eastern Ypsilanti through the high-traffic Washtenaw Corridor.

At the county level, the Ann Arbor Regional Success Strategy, which contains a vision and strategies for the city based on a community assessment from 2009, highlights the need to connect these two economic centers in order to achieve sustained economic growth. “ReImagine Washtenaw,” part of the HUD Sustainable Communities Community Challenge Planning Grant, is a redevelopment project designed to transform the corridor by adding housing choices, walkable shopping options, efficient transit services, public spaces, bike paths, and access to jobs, education, cultural venues, employment centers, and other critical amenities and services. This initiative, which represents a

shift toward smart growth as it places development pressure on Washtenaw Avenue, is led by OCED; its key partners are the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, the townships of Ypsilanti and Pittsfield, Washtenaw County, and the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (AAATA), the not-for-profit unit of government that operates the local public transit system for the greater Ann Arbor–Ypsilanti area.¹²

“Good transit connections, particularly in low-income areas, help reduce the overall cost of living so that you are more able to afford a place to live, get to a good job, and provide for your children,” explained Sarah Pressprich of AAATA.

AAATA used findings from the Ann Arbor Regional Success Strategy to kick off the planning process for a countywide transit plan based on input gathered from over a hundred community meetings. However, support for such a plan could not be obtained from all jurisdictions in part because of the City of Ann Arbor’s historical ownership and challenges associated with involving all the necessary decision-makers and funders. Eventually, the plan was scaled back to include communities that had worked with AAATA in the past and were more likely to gain the necessary support. AAATA is now in the process of building a governance structure and increasing the funding necessary to meet the expressed needs of residents. Some options being considered include building Bus Rapid Transit capabilities on Washtenaw Avenue and increasing services in the Ypsilanti area. The project also hopes to make Ann Arbor more affordable. The Center for Neighborhood Technology’s Housing and Transportation Affordability Index, which measures the affordability of housing based on location, is one tool the community has been using to assess impact. Data from this tool was influential in guiding policy decisions.

The next step of the plan will be to increase its targeted focus on specific transit needs through outreach and conversations with the community. Organizations such as the Center for Independent Living have been instrumental in soliciting input from vulnerable groups, including seniors and individuals with disabilities. In addition to programs for seniors (such as free or reduced fares on fixed route buses) that it offers independently, AAATA engages private partners to provide a low-cost shared-ride taxi service and scheduled group shopping trips.

Challenges: As AAATA moves forward in developing and implementing a plan to meet multimodal transportation needs, targeted outreach to identify and negotiate the specific needs of diverse stakeholders—especially those from low-income and vulnerable populations—will remain a challenge.

FINDING 7 – Regional collaboration has facilitated meaningful conversations about strategically meeting the affordable housing needs of low income residents.

Providing quality affordable housing has historically been a focal point of Ann Arbor’s and Washtenaw County’s community development programs and now is a component of Washtenaw County’s 2011 HUD Sustainable Communities Community Planning Challenge grant project. “In the context of affordable housing, social equity means providing housing that people can afford in safe neighborhoods with good schools, just like anyone who can afford market rate housing,” said

Jennifer Hall, executive director of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission (AAHC) and one of the county's major partners.

According to U.S. Census American Community Survey 2008–2012 data, the per capita income was \$32,406 in Ann Arbor and only \$20,828 in Ypsilanti.¹³ Because most of the amenities and jobs are located in Ann Arbor in the western part of the county, while most of the affordable housing is located in the eastern part, representatives from affordable housing agencies in the area expressed a need to increase affordable housing opportunities in Ann Arbor. Partners include the AAHC and Avalon Housing, which seek to provide desirable housing and supportive services for low-income individuals both permanently and temporarily. AAHC is responsible for 355 public housing units spread over 18 sites, or about 50 percent of the city's affordable housing stock, as well as for 1,300 Section 8 vouchers.¹⁴ Over 50 percent of housing in Ann Arbor is rental because of the presence of University of Michigan. Both the city and the county promote energy efficiency in rental housing to lower costs for tenants, especially those with low to moderate incomes. The county's weatherization program provides energy-savings repairs, such as insulation of attics, walls, and crawl spaces; air sealing work; and repair and replacement of inefficient furnaces, water heaters, and refrigerators for individuals and families living at 200 percent of the federal poverty level or 60 percent of state median income (whichever is higher for the previous three months).¹⁵

Past and current efforts to provide affordable housing in Ann Arbor include zoning for planned unit developments (PUDs), a residential bonus to increase opportunities for housing downtown, incentives for building affordable housing units, and annual HUD funding investments in retention and expansion of affordable housing units. A new pilot program planned for FY 2013/2014, the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD), seeks to address public housing funding cuts by converting public housing units to long-term Section 8 project-based vouchers. Affordable housing leaders are also excited receiving additional HUD funding through the Continuum of Care program, which will contribute about \$300,000 to rapid rehousing and 10 new units of permanent supportive housing in the county.¹⁶ “We are moving away from shelters and services for the homeless that are not necessarily attached to a more comprehensive solution,” said Hall. “This will be a huge shift, and we are happy that HUD is prioritizing it.”

Challenges: Despite expressed support for these initiatives, many programs and plans have fallen short in meeting affordable housing needs. In Michigan, there is no legislation to enable inclusionary zoning that would require new development to meet a standard of affordability. Other challenges include a lack of communication between decisionmakers and affordable housing advocates and community-based organizations; a lack of funding for building affordable housing where it is needed—in higher-income areas—and for maintaining affordable housing units, especially for lower-income residents; and continued cuts in federal funds that have been used to develop affordable housing.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FINDING 8 –Data-driven decision making, especially in financial investment, is essential to maximizing impact and effectively allocating resources; however, identifying effective performance measures remains a challenge.

While a multitude of indicators exist and more are being collected, community development leaders working to achieve greater social equity in Washtenaw County find identification of relevant performance measures to be an ongoing challenge. As the ability to obtain a living wage job has been central to achieving equity in the county, jobs-related data, including unemployment rates, numbers of jobs created, and numbers of jobs retained, have been most widely studied. A large amount of data is collected and reported on for grant requirements, including HUD grant programs. OCED collects and reports out data on 41 different performance measures for the county budget. For many other departments, the data used to make decisions related to social equity are collected through citizen participation or surveys. For example, the parks and recreation department uses attendance as its main indicator of success: county parks attract nearly a million visitors per year.

Stakeholders addressing social equity in local government are striving to identify more effective performance measures, most recently through a framework called Community Impact Investing. In 2013, the Washtenaw Board of Commissioners adopted a resolution to identify appropriate metrics—both for short-term measurable outcomes and for long-term impacts—tied to budget priorities in the following areas: (1) ensuring a community safety net through health and human services inclusive of public safety, (2) increasing economic opportunity and workforce development, (3) ensuring mobility and civic infrastructure for county residents, (4) reducing environmental impact, and (5) realizing internal labor force sustainability and effectiveness.¹⁷ Whether services in these areas are provided internally or through external partnerships, the impact of dollars invested will be monitored and reported on regularly using relevant performance data. This strategic endeavor maximizes the positive results on community and economic development investments at the lowest possible cost, allowing OCED to deliver services to all residents more effectively and sustainably.

Challenges: As with strategic planning, the identification, tracking, monitoring, and reporting of metrics require—and compete with direct service work for—time and resources. Local government staff are already burdened by having to complete these tasks to comply with funding for federal and state grants. “There are a lot of data out there, but they only provide a slice of the picture,” explained Andrea Plevak, human services manager at OCED. “They don’t tell you how they connect. If systems don’t talk to each other and data are not shareable, then they’re not that helpful. It is more important to be able to integrate data at a local level and focus on what is most important.”

List of Study Participants

The author of this report conducted interviews with 18 individuals familiar with social equity-related issues in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County, Michigan. The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

- Mary Jo Callan, director, Washtenaw County OCED
- Cheryl Elliott, president & CEO, Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
- Neel Hajra, COO and vice president of community investment, Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
- Jennifer Hall, executive director, Ann Arbor Housing Commission
- Shamar Herron, workforce development manager, Washtenaw County OCED
- Debbie Jackson, director of community investment, United Way of Washtenaw County
- Brett Lenart, housing and infrastructure manager, Washtenaw County OCED
- Carol McCabe, executive director, Avalon Housing
- Verna McDaniel, county administrator, Washtenaw County
- Matthew Naud, environmental coordinator, City of Ann Arbor
- Andrea Plevak, human services manager, Washtenaw County OCED
- Steve Powers, city administrator, City of Ann Arbor
- Sarah Pressprich, business analyst, Office of the CEO at Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority
- Wendy Rampson, planning manager, City of Ann Arbor
- Robert (Bob) Tetens, director, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation
- Tony VanDerworp, economic development officer, Washtenaw County OCED
- Nathan Voght, economic development specialist, Washtenaw County OCED
- Stephen Wade, management analyst–Community Challenge Planning Grant, Washtenaw County OCED

Endnotes

¹ Self-sufficiency is defined as the ability to meet basic needs without public assistance.

² City of Ann Arbor, “Human Rights Commission,” <http://www.a2gov.org/government/Pages/HumanRightsCommission.aspx>.

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⁴ Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development (OCED), “Business Plan” (2011), 1, <http://annarborchronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Community-and-Economic-Development-Business-Plan-Final-Draft.pdf>.

⁵ City of Ann Arbor home page. Accessed by Katherine Takai on April 18, 2014. <http://www.a2gov.org/government/pages/Home.aspx>.

⁶ City of Ann Arbor Sustainability Framework, adopted by the Ann Arbor City Council on February 19, 2013, <http://www.a2gov.org/sustainability/Pages/SustainabilityFramework.aspx>.

⁷Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, *A Resolution Creating Three Full-Time Positions within the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Department*, September 18, 2013, http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/boc/agenda/wm/year_2013/2013-09-04wm/WCPARC%20Stewardship%20Program%202013%20resolution.pdf

⁸ Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission, *Parks and Recreation Master Plan 2010–2014*, 95, http://www.ewashtenaw.org/government/departments/parks_recreation/parksplan/2010-2014/master-plan/goals-4.pdf.

⁹ TCC Group, *Coordinated Funding: Lessons from a Place-Based Grantmaking Collaborative* (Philadelphia, Pa., 2013), http://www.tccgrp.com/pdfs/Ann_Arbor_Coordinated_Funders-Report.pdf.

¹⁰ Director Mary Jo Callan of the former OCD, Interim Director Patricia Denig of Employment Training & Community Services, and Director Anthony VanDerworp of Economic Development and Energy to County Administrator Verna McDaniel, July 6, 2011, General Subject Correspondence.

¹¹ Washtenaw County, Office of Community and Economic Development, *A Framework for Economic and Workforce Development in Washtenaw County* (2013).

¹² Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (TheRide), “About Us,” <http://www.theride.org/AboutUs>.

¹³ U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP03; generated by Katherine Takai; using American FactFinder; <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; (18 March 2012).

¹⁴ Center for Neighborhood Technology, *Ann Arbor Mini Scan*, October 26, 2010. Internal document.

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¹⁶ Katrease Stafford, “Washtenaw County Homelessness Programs Receive \$4M in HUD Funding,” *Ann Arbor News*, May 4, 2013, <http://www.annarbor.com/news/ypsilanti/washtenaw-county-homelessness-programs-receive-4m-in-hud-funds/>.

¹⁷ Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners, “A Resolution Adopting Community Outcomes to Guide Washtenaw County’s Investment in the Community and Establishing the Framework for Developing a Budget That Reflects These Priorities,” <http://annarborchronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/A-RESOLUTION-ADOPTING-COMMUNITY-OUTCOMES-TO-GUIDE-WASHTENAW-COUNTY.pdf>.

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