

Local Governments, Social Equity, and Sustainable Communities

ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY GOALS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

CASE STUDY SERIES



ADVANCING SOCIAL EQUITY
in Lewiston, Maine



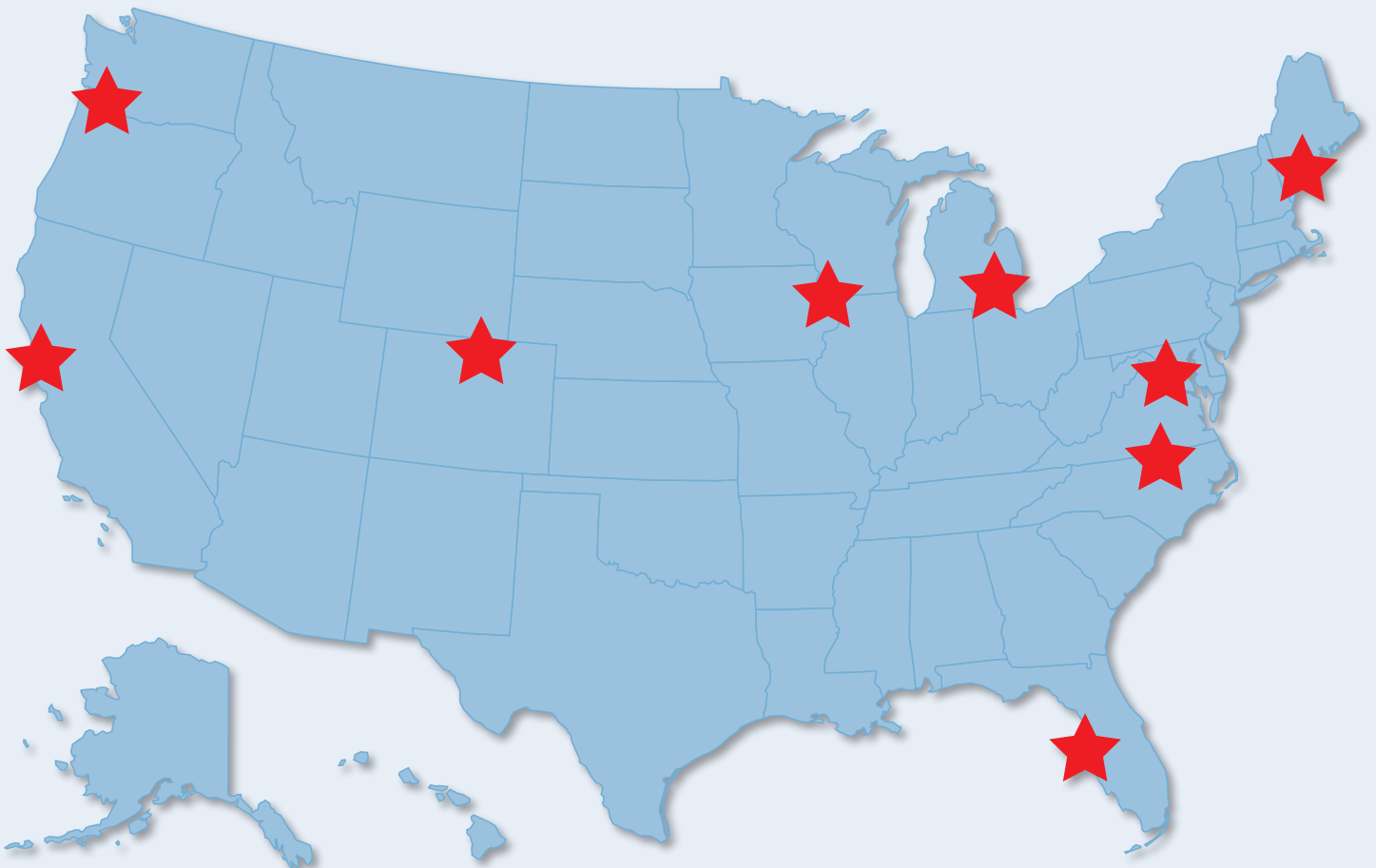
ICMA

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 Lewiston, Maine

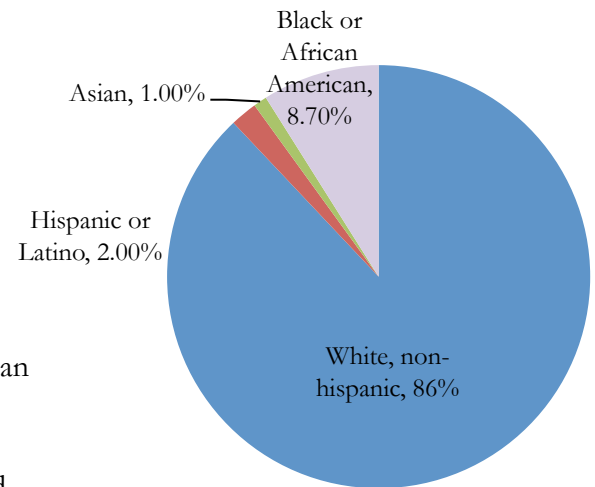
By Katherine Takai, ICMA, with special thanks to Cory Fleming, ICMA

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Community Profile

- **Form of Government:** Council-Administrator
- **County Commission:** Eight councilors and a mayor
- **Demographic Information (2012):**
 - **Total Population:** 36,460
 - **Poverty Rate:** 22.8%
- **Sustainability Plans and Strategies:** Climate Action Plan (adopted in 2009)
- **Sustainability Budget:** No budget specifically dedicated to sustainability.



Population by Race (2010)

- **Sustainability Plans and Strategies:** “Incorporating sustainable practices in all decision-making” is one of 10 goals listed as a priority in the city’s Strategic Plan adopted in 2010. At the time this case study was being written, Lewiston’s Comprehensive Plan was in the process of being updated with a significant degree of community input. The city’s Strategic Plan will then be updated to ensure that it is aligned with the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Major Components of Sustainability Plans:** Focus areas in the 2010 Strategic Plan that are related to sustainability include environmental responsibility, social responsibility, and economic responsibility.
- **Number of Sustainability Staff:** No staff specifically dedicated to sustainability
- **Location in Government:** Sustainability activities are led by executive-level leadership within the city, with overarching vision guided by the city administrator’s office through the city administrator and deputy city administrator.
- **Major Social Equity Activities in the Community:** Affordable housing, green and healthy homes initiative, community policing, engaging immigrants, strategic planning (for downtown development, riverfront island redevelopment, and overall city Strategic and Comprehensive Plans), providing access to food, maintaining physical environment, public transit, bike/pedestrian routing, and promoting the earned income credit and economic literacy

Findings in Brief

Partnerships

- FINDING 1 – Cultivating a rich resource network, both internal and external to local government, increases community resilience and overall capacity to meet the long-term needs of residents.
- FINDING 2 – In an environment of constrained resources, innovation is fostered when multiple stakeholders align goals and objectives, consolidate available resources, and devise solutions that leverage available capacity.

Community Engagement

- FINDING 3 – Focusing events provide both a challenge and an opportunity for communities to come together around social equity issues; community leaders must learn from the successes and failures resulting from such events.
- FINDING 4 – Initial investment of time and resources in an inclusive engagement process of planning and decisionmaking produces better long-term outcomes.

Policies and Programs

- FINDING 5– Cultivating relationships with federal and state-level policymakers enhances the capacity and resilience of social equity–related programs.
- FINDING 6 – Increasing mobility through safe, reliable foot, bike, and public transit options is critical for improving access to services and opportunities for living and working for all community residents.
- FINDING 7 – Community policing has helped Lewiston address some of the more complex issues challenging its low-income and minority residents and promote greater community cohesion.

Performance Measures

- FINDING 8 – Capacity to target social disparities has been improved by data availability and the ability to set and make progress on performance measures, particularly in addressing community health issues.

History of Sustainability and Social Equity in Lewiston, Maine

The city of Lewiston is a historic mill town on the banks of the Androscoggin River in the heart of Maine’s second-largest metropolitan area. Throughout the 1800s, mills and a canal system along the river were constructed to support a textile and shoe industry. By the 1950s, these mills employed approximately 10,000 workers (70% of the total workforce in Lewiston). Much of the associated development in Lewiston resulted from the mills, including significant tenement housing for workers and businesses in the downtown area. After World War I, competition from the South caused a decline in these two largest industries. Many businesses closed and thousands of jobs were lost, leading to abandonment in the downtown area. By 1995, approximately 6 million square feet of downtown mill space needed to be repurposed. This loss of much of the manufacturing base, compounded by urban sprawl, high property taxes, and an aging municipal infrastructure resulted in a significant population decline since 1970. Population decreased by 15.1% from its peak of 41,779 in 1970 to 35,465 in 2011. At 22.8% of individuals living in poverty in 2008, Lewiston’s poverty rate is higher than the average for the State of Maine at 13.3%.

Category	2008		2000	
	Lewiston	Maine	Lewiston	Maine
Median household income	\$37,885	\$46,807	\$29,191	\$37,240
Per capita income	\$19,949	\$25,264	\$17,905	\$19,533
Families below poverty level	17.7%	8.4%	10.0%	7.8%
Individuals below poverty level	24.2%	12.6%	15.5%	10.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey and 2000 Census

The city is now engaged in redeveloping its historic assets, including downtown residential and commercial areas, and in moving away from an industry-only economy so as to redefine itself and meet resident needs in a sustainable way. Between 2000 and 2008, nearly 1,300 jobs were created, primarily in health care and education services. Higher education establishments are in the area, including Bates College, a private, liberal arts school; the University of Southern Maine Lewiston–Auburn, whose campus was established in 1989; and a branch of Kaplan University, established in 2003. The most promising job opportunities for low- to moderate-income people are predicted to be in health care, financial activities, transportation and distribution, and retail and trade. The redevelopment process has had its challenges, and city officials have taken a variety of approaches to make the community more livable for all its residents, with primary focus on the following areas:

- Affordable housing
- Food security
- Community policing
- Serving the immigrant population
- Downtown development

- Transportation
- Environment
- Inclusive strategic and comprehensive planning.

Some of these focus areas arose because of a significant demographic shift in the city over the past decade. The impact of the declining economy and the emerging presence of a large immigrant population, known as “New Mainers,” since 2001 has been the impetus for new models of service delivery and expanded consideration of social equity. Prior to 2001, when the first and unexpectedly large wave of “secondary migrants” (refugees who relocate from their community of initial resettlement to another community) from Somalia arrived, the city was 95.7% Caucasian. Estimates as recently as 2013 suggest that more than 4,000 Somalis currently reside in Lewiston, representing over 10% of the total population. The intersection of immigrant and low-income residents within the population has introduced further challenges to meeting resident needs, particularly on issues such as food security, affordable housing, public health, and public safety.

Findings

PARTNERSHIPS

FINDING 1 – Cultivating a rich resource network, both internal and external to local government, increases community resilience and overall capacity to meet the long-term needs of residents.

Developing a rich network that includes multiple city departments, social service providers, educators, and community organizations has been critical to meeting resident needs. Lewiston’s Social Services Department was the initial entry point for new residents, and it spearheaded a process for settling the large influx of immigrants into the city. When the first wave of approximately 1,200 Somalian refugees arrived unexpectedly in Lewiston between February of 2001 and May 2003, multiple issues arose.¹ Three of the most salient challenges were

1. *No existing process for refugee and immigrant social services in Lewiston.* The neighboring, larger city of Portland was the only nearby area with immigration and refugee services.
2. *No existing process for services for immigrant refugees moving into Lewiston from their initial resettlement communities within the United State (secondary migrants).* Nationally, social service programs for immigrants were developed for primary migrants, meaning those immigrants arriving from their country of origin to the location where they were originally placed within the United States. Of immigrants coming to Lewiston, over 90% are secondary migrants. There had never been a resettlement program set up to meet the unique needs of secondary migrants at this scale.
3. *Conflict related to social, cultural, and political issues that arose with the arrival of a large, non-English-speaking minority in a homogenous, primarily white (95%) community.* The Somalian group’s status as

refugees introduced unique and challenging issues for city officials to consider for the successful integration of these residents into the community (Nadeau, 2003).

The speed and number of Somali arrivals was a shock to the Lewiston social service system, which the city did not feel it had the capacity to handle. Lewiston's Department of Social Services had become the initial point of contact for new immigrants. The city established a patchwork of services necessary to successfully integrate these new residents. Dozens of service providers approached the city offering translation and other services for the new immigrant population; however, without previous experience in evaluating service quality, there was no way to know the quality of potential providers. Even state agencies did not have established processes in place for compliance with such federal policies as the Civil Rights Act or standards set for translation and interpretation services.

Primary players in the network that ultimately emerged to meet the needs of new immigrants included the various city departments; Catholic Charities, a nonprofit with immigrant/refugee expertise; the Lewiston School Department; and the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. Catholic Charities is the only immigrant/refugee resettlement agency in Maine that serves primary and secondary migrants from all over the world, including Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq. With its headquarters in neighboring Portland, Catholic Charities worked in partnership with Lewiston to establish an office in the city hall and has assumed a case management support program originally created as a partnership with the City of Portland in 2002 (Nadeau, 2003).

"In Lewiston, we collaborate with everyone that's out there," explained Sue Charron, director of Social Services in Lewiston. "If you're good at this, you take on this piece, and I'm going to take on this piece. We tried, at first, to take on everything, but it just wasn't working. We had to reach out to other organizations. We had to educate everyone. It was a process."

Because of its relationship with the school district, the city could alert the schools about new non-English-speaking students who would be entering the system. The Lewiston School Department established the English Language Learner (ELL) program to serve students and their families by helping them obtain language and academic skills needed to graduate from high school college-ready. Prior to 2001, fewer than half of 1% of students were part of the ELL program; that percentage has risen to 23%. Over 85% of students in the program are of Somalian descent, but the immigrant population has become more diverse in the past few years.² In the 2012–2013 school year, the ELL program served students from over 20 different language backgrounds.

"This takes a lot of partnerships; no one entity can do it all," said City Administrator Ed Barrett. "Effective partnerships take time. You need to form common goals and a common language."

The school and the city have built on the momentum created by working together to successfully place students from immigrant families. Since then, the connection has presented new opportunities, including coordinating the use of school and municipal facilities managed by the parks and recreation department and engaging youth from immigrant families into community activities such as the Lewiston-Auburn Youth Council. Communication with the Lewiston Police Department's Community Resource Team also has helped by identifying, reporting, and addressing issues that arise to ensure that recreational facilities and schools are safe and accessible.

“A lot of new programming was created for the whole community,” said Deputy Administrator Phil Nadeau. “Every time we do work to better address a culturally diversified community, that goes across all kinds of groups, whether you’re talking about race, ethnicity, or gender. You become more sensitized to what’s going on around you to recognize differences where they exist and what you need to do to be able to coexist.”

FINDING 2 – In an environment of constrained resources, innovation is fostered when multiple stakeholders align goals and objectives, consolidate available resources, and devise solutions that leverage available capacity.

Despite being the second-largest community in Maine, Lewiston has the least amount of wealth compared to the top 10 largest cities in the state. In an environment of constrained resources, Lewiston has leveraged partnerships with social service providers, funders, and other stakeholders to effectively deliver services and achieve success in various areas, such as public health, economic development, and case management.

“We understand that we can’t just throw money at a problem,” explained Nadeau. “Out of that necessity, a lot of work is invested in getting as many people and organizations to address whatever issues we are trying to address. Not only with the immigrant population but with anything we are confronted with.”

The city’s Social Services Department’s objective is to transition individuals off of reliance on public assistance, place them back into the workforce, and help them achieve self-reliance as quickly as possible. To accomplish this, the department operates a General Assistance program that provides payment assistance for rent, food, and other necessities in the form of vouchers. Some of this funding comes from the state’s Community Services Block Grant, which requires the city to provide social services for area residents whose income falls below the poverty line. These vouchers are provided to ensure that residents have access to food, but the program is intended to provide temporary support.

“Food vouchers are about all that the city can do on its own,” said Social Services Director Sue Charron.

As a result, community networks are critical for facilitating self-sufficiency. Local healthcare provider St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center has been an important partner in providing access to food through the development of its Nutrition Center, which functions as an emergency food pantry that serves over 375 families per week. It has also implemented nutritional services to help families be more self-reliant. Combining resources and aligning efforts have allowed the organizations to meet shared goals and deliver effective health services. Both Lewiston and St. Mary’s have made it a practice to go where people are and make it easy and convenient for them to access needed services. The city provided space downtown in Kennedy Park for St. Mary’s to establish a farmer’s market, as well as space in the library for cooking and nutrition classes. It also provided lots for St. Mary’s Lots to Gardens (LtG) program and updated a few of its zoning ordinances to enable the establishment of community gardens. In 2013, 115 families were supported by the 12 community gardens.

Furthermore, the development of this food system in Lewiston has produced economic benefits. St. Mary's has estimated that the population in Lewiston spends approximately \$50 million annually on food, so it aims to recapture 10% of those funds to keep them recirculating in the community by working with area schools, farms, and community gardens.

"We've built authentic relationships with this community, and we're striving for local solutions for local people," said Kirsten Walter of St. Mary's Nutrition Center. "The test at the end of the day is the feedback we receive from those we work with."

Challenges: The challenge of meeting residents' needs will increase as Lewiston becomes increasingly diverse. Meeting residents' language needs has simply become a cost of doing business. The immigrant population has become more diverse in the past few years, now accommodating immigrant groups from Iran, Iraq, Congo, Sudan, and other countries facing political strife. After setting up the process for one immigrant group and language, Lewiston is now empowered to meet additional language needs. Moving forward, costs to provide services to non-English speakers are increasing; so the city will need to find the most cost-effective ways to deliver services.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FINDING 3 –Focusing events provide both a challenge and an opportunity for communities to come together around social equity issues; community leaders must learn from the successes and failures resulting from such events.

The large-scale, rapid entry of Somalian refugees into Lewiston is one example of a high-profile event that introduced significant challenges and attracted the attention of residents and external participants with the ultimate goal of positive change. Another such catalytic event took place in May 2004, when residents fought back against a transformative plan for the city called the Heritage Initiative. Prior to 2004, Lewiston had successfully enacted a number of redevelopment plans. The Heritage Initiative was presented as a downtown revitalization project that would leverage Community Development Block Grant funds to construct a boulevard to improve downtown circulation and to reduce population densities by creating new development and housing. The project would relocate 25% of the project area's population and eliminate low-income housing for 850 people; however, those who would be affected were not offered an opportunity to provide input prior to the plan's release.¹ In response, concerned downtown residents and community members formed a grassroots organization called "The Visible Community" to counter negative perceptions of downtown residents and stop the plan from going forward. The group remains in existence today to ensure that residents' voices are heard in Lewiston's city planning decisions. Individually, many of its members continue to be proactively involved in other ways by participating on committees, running for city council, and creating the Neighborhood Housing League (NHL), a grassroots community organization that empowers residents to get involved in advocating for fair, safe, and affordable housing downtown.

¹ *The People's Downtown Master Plan: A Project of the Visible Community*. Spring 2008.
<http://www.lewistonmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/802>

“In the end, the Heritage Initiative was a win for the city because it taught people that you have to communicate from the front end of a plan, not send something out and then fight out to the end,” said Jeff Baril, a longtime resident and code enforcement officer with the Lewiston Police Department’s Community Resource Team. “The lines of communication opened greatly after that compared to before. We’re doing great stuff in the neighborhood. It takes time and money to get things going, but it’s going to be a better place in the end because everyone had control over what the changes were.”

In May 2013, three arson fires in abandoned buildings downtown destroyed nine apartment buildings, leaving more than 180 homeless. A group of citizens, including the Visible Community, the NHL, and Community Concepts, Inc., the local Community Action Program agency, immediately mobilized to assist with cleanup and initiate the “Lewiston Unites” effort to address concerns arising from the fires. Lewiston’s ability to organize people and resources quickly enabled a rapid response and recovery and built community cohesion that hopefully will be maintained when the city is faced with similar crises in the future. The fires also directed attention to potential hazards associated with poor-quality housing, such as lead poisoning, pests, poor air quality, and mold. Most of those affected by these conditions and the fires are low-income and minority individuals living downtown. Stakeholders addressing community health and affordable housing have increased efforts to address these issues through a collaborative, holistic approach to improving housing conditions, alleviating hazards, and making housing more energy efficient.

Despite missteps made along the way, lessons learned from focusing events have contributed to more inclusive engagement and better outcomes for both the city and its citizens. Identifying and addressing issues that are highly visible has contributed to greater community cohesion and a higher level of participation, particularly from low-income and minority residents. The Heritage Initiative refreshed the relationship between the city and its residents and transformed the way planning is done by emphasizing inclusive engagement. This catalyzed future community involvement and has allowed the city to improve its ability to identify and address issues, especially downtown.

While many citizens in Lewiston were initially engaged by focusing events such as the Heritage Initiative, which sparked the formation of the Visible Community group, new methods will be needed to maintain that high level of community engagement if and when the effect of the focusing event wears off.

FINDING 4 – Initial investment of time and resources in inclusive engagement in planning and decisionmaking produces better long-term outcomes.

Since the Heritage Initiative, the importance of engaging citizens in planning decisions that will affect them has been emphasized and put to practical use in Lewiston.

Despite its proximity to hospitals and the riverfront, the Lewiston’s downtown area has struggled to recover from decline and abandonment. It has been challenged by income disparities, a high concentration of low-income and minority populations, and aging housing stock. Since various stakeholders have historically neglected elements of the downtown, recent efforts have focused on revitalizing the area into a sustainable, walkable community. This has led to development of the

People's Downtown Master Plan, which engaged over 200 stakeholders, including a large number of new immigrants and refugees, and to the completion of a visioning process leading to community action.

"People are profoundly affected by the space they live in," said Ed Barrett, city administrator. "If they care, they will take ownership in the process."

Other plans in Lewiston have also emphasized incorporating community input. Among those that have attracted significant neighborhood input and large audiences are

- The Riverfront Island Master Plan. Completed in the spring of 2012, this plan seeks to revitalize an area of the city with great potential into a downtown centerpiece, a riverfront island. The three public meetings were well attended, and a user-friendly project website (www.riverfrontislandmasterplan.com) provided an opportunity for citizens to find information about the plan's development and offer comments.
- Comprehensive Plan Revision. The city has taken a new approach to the traditional public input process for its most recent Comprehensive Plan. Rather than holding multiple public meetings over a long period of time, city planners opted to try a five-day "Planapalooza" to obtain public input and encourage participation. In addition to three large-scale community meetings, a series of smaller meetings were held focusing on such issues as housing, transportation, community facilities, economic development, and arts and culture. A temporary office was set up downtown where residents could drop in at any time to provide feedback or share concerns. To increase accessibility, written materials were translated and disseminated throughout the Somali community (primarily through businesses), and residents were encouraged to participate via social media. More than 80 people attended the large-scale meetings, and hundreds participated in some element of the outreach and participation process.

Obtaining community buy-in and input and keeping citizens informed about planning decisions has become a required practice in Lewiston. "If we sense a development will be controversial, we will tell an applicant that they have to have a neighborhood meeting," explained city planner Dave Hediger. "It helps to educate people and let them know what is going on. This helps to increase acceptance, trust, and buy-in."

Performance is measured primarily through the number of citizens participating at community meetings and online. Lewiston planners have found that greater public participation has resulted in higher quality projects and better community plans, primarily as a result of the inclusion of broader perspectives and ideas and increased buy-in. These outcomes are critical to revitalizing the downtown and ensuring that downtown residents have the same basic opportunities and access to resources and city services as other residents. Current efforts seek to provide access to safe streets, adequate housing, and other basic necessities required for downtown residents to live healthy, functional lives. Aside from providing input during the planning process, citizen engagement continues to grow through greater participation on commissions and boards.

POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

FINDING 5 – Cultivating relationships with federal and state-level policymakers enhances the capacity and resilience of social equity–related programs.

Having established processes to effectively serve the city’s immigrant population, Lewiston’s public and private social service providers have shifted their attention toward ensuring sustainability of efforts through policymaking. Engaging the State of Maine and the federal government by advocating for policies to support the work being done in the Somali immigrant community has secured resources and attracted broader attention to the issue. Advocating for policy changes at the state and federal levels has helped Lewiston garner necessary funding for its own programs and for other communities looking to increase their capacity to serve refugee and/or immigrant populations. Resources have been secured for both school ELL programs and intensive job preparation and training for immigrants (Gartland, 2012).

“We continue to advocate in front of the legislature at the federal and state level to get funding for refugees,” reported Deputy Administrator Nadeau. “It isn’t just about local creativity. You cannot minimize the importance of being visible for state and congressional leaders. It’s a lot of time and work, but if you do not do that, you’re doing yourself a disservice.”

Not only has sharing their story and cultivating their networks benefited the city, but it has also contributed to the field of social service delivery to immigrant populations. Elevating the issue to a state and national level has sparked conversation about whether there are better ways to address it. This also allows more communities and their residents to benefit from Lewiston’s experience as a model for a comprehensive approach to social services for an immigrant population. Larger cities, such as neighboring Portland, have adopted policies and programs that were successful in Lewiston.

While the ability to rely on support from federal and state assistance is diminishing in Lewiston and other communities, federal policies and programs will remain significant in delivering social services to those local residents who need them most. Leadership in local government, education, and community organizations has been effective at maintaining connections to legislators at the federal and state levels; however, it will be necessary to sustain and grow those relationships.

FINDING 6– Increasing mobility through safe, reliable foot, bike, and public transit options is critical for improving access to services and opportunities for living and working for all community residents.

Either by choice or by circumstance, a significant percentage of Lewiston’s population does not own a motor vehicle. As a result, transportation policy and planning have shifted significantly from the traditional focus on street and roadways to a more comprehensive view of how to move people. To fulfill the vision of “a community in which all residents and visitors, regardless of their age, ability, or financial resources, can safely and efficient use the public of right-of-way to meet their transportation needs regardless of their preferred mode of travel,”³ the city has developed new transportation policies and programs. Citylink public transit services offer more pedestrian, bicycle,

and public transportation options, and plans and policies that facilitate safe streets for bikers and pedestrians are being developed and implemented.

Public transit is an essential social service in a rural city with a significant low-income and elderly population. The citylink bus system is operated by the Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee (LATC), an organization created through an interlocal agreement between Lewiston and the neighboring city of Auburn. Eighteen percent of the Lewiston-Auburn population and over 50% of the downtown population do not own a car. Public bus transportation has had to adjust to recent changes in Lewiston's population. For example, as more senior housing is provided downtown, reliable transportation must be available from downtown to regional hospitals, medical clinics, grocery stores, and other facilities. The service operates during normal business hours during the workweek and on Saturdays, and ridership continues to rise. Despite cutbacks in local government budgets, additional funds have been directed to bus service. Routes are regularly evaluated to ensure that they meet demand and respond to public input on where service is most needed. New routes have been added recently, and hours have been expanded.

A heightened emphasis on a walkable downtown and on increasing mobility for the significant percentage of residents without access to motor vehicles prompted the need for a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan. The Lewiston-Auburn Bike Ped Committee was formed in 2012 to advise on and review transportation policy and programs, and it is an active participant in the Androscoggin Transportation Resource Committee's (the local metropolitan planning organization) 2013 update of the regional bike and pedestrian plan. The plan represents the enhanced emphasis on multimodal movements in the urban area and the best way to transport people from one location to another. The Bike Ped Committee, which has brought better public participation into the planning process and focused considerable attention on the types of facilities and improvements needed in both the urban core and rural areas, will remain key to implementing the plan.

"The last 50 years have shown us what doesn't work, so we must rethink our approaches," said Councilor Craig Saddlemire.

Both city staff and the council have supported efforts to update transportation policy to meet current needs. In April 2013, the cities of Lewiston and Auburn adopted identical Complete Streets policies that call for the public rights-of-way to be reconfigured to ensure that all forms of transportation are served. The intent is to design and/or improve streets and sidewalks to meet the needs of residents of all abilities by requiring that consideration be given to all users and modes of travel from the start of planning and design work. All transportation-related improvement projects are reviewed by the Bike Ped Committee to ensure that the requirements of the policy have been met. Additional bike lanes are now planned for many arterial and collector streets, and local streets serving the downtown neighborhood are being reconstructed to reduce travel lane width, improve sidewalks, and add pedestrian amenities. The city now looks at the public rights-of-way from building to building rather than from curb to curb.

Other actions to increase mobility for low-income and downtown residents include integrating transportation assets already in place, such as the East Coast Greenway. A portion of the greenway

is planned to come into downtown Lewiston. The city is in the process of constructing a \$1 million, 6,600-foot multimodal trail along the Androscoggin River that will eventually connect to the greenway and provide access to downtown for that portion of the city's low-income population that lives in a subsidized housing complex about 1.5 miles from the city's center. This trail will connect the greenway into an improved sidewalk system in downtown.

FINDING 7 – Community policing has helped Lewiston address some of the more complex issues challenging its low-income and minority residents and promote community cohesion.

Community policing provides a way for law enforcement to build a relationship with the citizens of Lewiston, facilitating greater capacity to improve public safety and quality of life. The Lewiston Police Department's Community Resource Team (CRT) was created in 2010 by Chief Michael Bussiere to address quality-of-life issues in partnership with community action groups, neighborhood crime watches, volunteers in police service, immigrant and refugee groups, and other community-oriented organizations. The CRT's first two full-time patrol officer positions were funded by an American Recovery and Reinvestment grant through the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). This effort has three objectives:

1. Identifying problems of concern to the community
2. Developing a strong relationship between the refugee/immigrant community and Lewiston Police Department
3. Identifying and developing solutions to chronic issues contributing to urban blight.

Unlike other patrol officers, the CRT is not tied to the road and required to respond to 911 calls. Its focus is on addressing citizen complaints and concerns, connecting citizens to resources, and conducting intense investigations into the more complex issues facing the city. The team also directly responds to requests by the city administrator to solve problems that would not traditionally be addressed by police.

The CRT is composed of one officer located at city hall as a liaison to Code Enforcement and two patrol officers and a sergeant at the Community Resource Office, which is strategically located downtown in a census tract with the highest poverty rate in New England: nearly 60% of all families living there have incomes below the poverty level.⁴ The Community Resource Office was specifically designed to be accessible and welcoming to citizens, especially those who may be apprehensive about interacting with the police because of social or cultural factors. Many members of the downtown immigrant community, such as refugees from Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya, have experienced intensely negative interactions with police in their home countries. Similarly, many low-income groups tend to have only negative interactions with police. The CRT bridges the gap to build trust and diminishes the fears and misconceptions these groups may have.

“The police station has a personal feel,” explained Sargent Robert Ullrich, a 17-year veteran of the Lewiston Police Department who supervises the CRT. “You’re not talking to a secretary. You’re talking directly to an officer.”

Officers are assigned to community groups, primarily in low-income housing projects, where they take kids on outings to provide interactive opportunities and hold meetings to reach out to and educate citizens about the role of the police department. Once a month, when Catholic Charities has an initial meeting with new immigrants, the CRT attends to go over such basic information as how to make 911 calls. This is often the first contact the newcomers have with Lewiston police. The team facilitates the immigrants’ integration into the community, explaining many of the local customs and laws and encouraging their participation in projects to help them understand those laws and customs.

“A big measurement of success for me is to see that we are building trust with the immigrant population here—that first generation migrating here from Kenya and Somalia who have a true fear of law enforcement,” said Sargent Ullrich. “We let them know that our role in the community is to help them.”

CRT officers also work with youth, primarily those from low-income families. In addition to Lewiston Housing and Catholic Charities, they partner with schools and a number of organizations that assist at-risk populations, such as Tree Street Youth and the Trinity Jubilee Center. They have developed an extensive network of organizations to assist citizens who come to them in need of food, clothes, or shelter. The CRT office also uses crime statistic from the Lewiston crime analyst to identify and address problem areas.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

FINDING 8 – Capacity to target social disparities has been improved by data availability and the ability to set and make progress on performance measures, particularly in addressing community health issues.

The ability to track data, set performance measures, and monitor progress has allowed Lewiston and its partners to address a range of issues, particularly in the area of public health. This ability is important for many low-income and minority communities in Lewiston. Lewiston and neighboring Auburn qualify as “medically underserved,” which means that they have too few primary care providers, high infant mortality and poverty rates, and/or high elderly populations.⁵ In the absence of a local public health department, the Lewiston-Auburn Public Health Committee (LAPHC) was established through an interlocal agreement approved by both city councils in 2008.⁶ The LAPHC is composed of officials from the two cities, the county, and representatives from nonprofits, educational institutions, and local health providers. Its goal is to promote healthy communities through a well-coordinated system. The LAPHC has established the necessary networks to address health issues, primarily through its partnership with Healthy Androscoggin, a grassroots organization that works directly with the community to address health issues of importance to the whole county. Healthy Androscoggin provides funding, administrative work, and outreach for educational

programming on public health issues, and it often partners with the City of Lewiston to pursue grants for various initiatives.

Data availability has been critical to obtaining funding to address health issues in Lewiston-Auburn. Lewiston is currently working on a number of public health issues, one of the largest being lead poisoning abatement. Since much of the city's downtown housing stock was built long ago when the mills were operating at their peak, housing age and quality are the root causes of lead poisoning. The rate of childhood lead poisoning in the Lewiston-Auburn area is almost three times the state average.⁷ To design and implement cost-effective strategies to improve the health of the population, quality data are needed. In 2012, the primary partners in health care in Lewiston and greater Androscoggin County—St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Central Maine Medical Center, Healthy Androscoggin, and other community health agencies—collaborated to conduct a local needs assessment and issue the *Community Health Needs Assessment Report*.⁸ Data for the assessment were primarily obtained using the OneMaine Health Assessment published in 2011; additional information on vulnerable populations was more difficult to obtain. The data were tracked through hospital partners, the Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, and the Maine Office of Geographic Information Systems.

Performance measures have made it possible to leverage partnerships between stakeholders more effectively. Before the LAPHC was formed, the city's two largest health service providers lacked a forum for communication and collaborative goal-setting and achievement. Setting an initial collaborative goal of immunizing 90% of all hospital employees and volunteers against the flu (from a low of 62%) provided an impetus for adopting policies and engaging in efforts to reduce the effects of flu on all Lewiston residents. The universal flu vaccination program required shots for anyone who had contact with patients and masks for those who did not get shots. The two hospitals now team up annually to provide low-cost public flu shot clinics at various locations throughout the city.

List of Study Participants

The author conducted interviews with 24 individuals familiar with social equity-related activities in Lewiston, Maine. The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

- Ed Barrett, Lewiston city administrator
- Phil Nadeau, Lewiston deputy city administrator
- Sue Charron, director, Lewiston Social Services
- Kirsten Walter, director, Nutrition Center at St. Mary's Health System
- David Jones, director, Department of Public Works
- Steve Murch, city arborist, Lewiston Department of Public Works
- Rob Stalford, solid waste superintendent, Lewiston Department of Public Works
- Richard Burnham, city engineer, Lewiston Department of Public Works
- Craig Saddlemire, Lewiston city councilor (Ward 5)

- Marsha Bennett, transit coordinator, Lewiston-Auburn Transit Committee, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
- Joan Walton, regional transportation planner, Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
- Jayne Jochem, grants coordinator, Lewiston Economic and Community Development Department
- Lincoln Jeffers, director, Lewiston Economic and Community Development Department
- Joan Churchill, director of development, Community Concepts, Inc.
- Robert Ullrich, sergeant, Lewiston Police Department Community Resource Office
- Michael Bussiere, chief of police, Lewiston Police Department
- Maggie Chisholm, director, Department of Recreation
- Sue Martin, chief academic officer, Lewiston School Department
- Qamar Bashir, case manager, Catholic Charities Maine
- Adilah Muhammad, Downtown Neighborhood Action Committee
- Melissa Dunn, resident coordinator, Neighborhood Housing League
- Jeff Baril, CODE ENFORCEMENT LIAISON/OFFICER, Lewiston Planning and Code Enforcement Department and Police Department Community Resource Office
- David Hediger, deputy director/city planner, Lewiston Planning and Code Enforcement Department
- Steve Johndro, executive director, Healthy Androscoggin

Endnotes

¹ The root of the Somalian immigration to the United States is in the Somali civil war, which began in 1991. Immigrants in Lewiston were primarily “secondary migrants,” who were relocating from their initial point-of-entry city in the United States to another city with better opportunity for employment, affordable housing, education, health care, and refugee services. For more information, see http://www.africamigration.com/Issue%205/Articles/PDF/Kimberly-Huisman_Why-Maine.pdf.

² Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services. Promising Practices Program. <http://www.brycs.org/promisingpractices/promising-practices-program.cfm?docnum=0103>

³ City of Lewiston. *Complete Street Policy*. Adopted 4/16/2013. <http://me-lewiston.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/3285>

⁴ 2007–2011 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_11_5YR_DP03&prodType=table

⁵ <http://www.cmmc.org/assets/Document-1-CHNA-final-6.14.pdf>

⁶ City of Lewiston and City of Auburn Lewiston-Auburn Public Health Committee Interlocal Agreement. <http://www.healthyandroscoggin.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Health-Interlocal-2012.pdf>

⁷ Maine Department of Health and Human Services. *Report: Progress in Achieving Universal Blood Lead Screening in Designated High-Risk Areas of Childhood Lead Poisoning*. February 22, 2012.

⁸ Central Maine Medical Center. *Community Health Needs Assessment Report*. <http://www.cmmc.org/assets/Document-1-CHNA-final-6.14.pdf>

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Nadeau, Phil. “The New Mainers: State and Local Agencies Form Partnerships to Help Somali Immigrants.” *National Civic Review* 96 (2): 55–57.

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