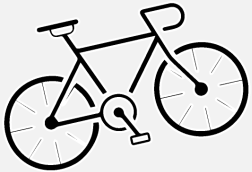# THE MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL CENTERED
NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
PLAYBOOK

PRODUCED BY:

MassINC

United Way
United Way of
Massachusetts Bay

WITH SUPPORT FROM:

MassHousing

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About MassINC
MassINC's mission is to make Massachusetts a place of civic vitality and inclusive economic opportunity by providing residents with the nonpartisan research, reporting, analysis, and civic engagement necessary to understand policy choices, inform decision-making, and hold the government accountable.

About the United Way of Massachusetts Bay
United Way exists to build more equitable communities, together. With over 85 years of local impact in eastern Massachusetts, United Way works with and for our communities to build economic prosperity and enable everyone–across races and ethnicities–to share in the knowledge, wealth and resources available. United Way believes that the key to unlocking opportunity is uniting people, and it brings together individuals, community leaders, corporate partners, legislators, and organizations to build a powerful engine of change.

United Way fuels new ideas, develops programs, and takes innovative approaches to solve some of the region's most entrenched and systemic inequities. With communities at the center of everything it does, United way unlocks avenues of prosperity that uplift those who have been marginalized, and create opportunity. United Way believes in the possibility of a vibrant, abundant, prosperous, healthy, and equitable future through the power of the united collective.

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WELCOME

This playbook is a tool for anyone who believes in their city's neighborhoods and schools and wants to help them thrive. Whether you are a mayor, school superintendent, city planner, small business owner, community organizer, parent, or student leader, the pages that follow will introduce you to the principles of school-centered neighborhood development (SCND). You'll find case studies from cities pursuing this approach in varying contexts, as well as a step-by-step guide to help you put SCND to work in your community. We also surface some ideas for key state policy changes that you and others can collectively advance to create stronger conditions for success in Massachusetts.

To generate this playbook, we spent the past year studying how a growing cluster of neighborhood, nonprofit, and public sector leaders in education, housing, and community development have collaborated to strengthen public schools and neighborhoods in tandem. This research elevates three important truths:

- Neighborhoods are vital weavers of social connection and engines of economic mobility;
- Urban public schools must play an active role positioning their neighborhoods to perform these essential functions;
- Neighborhoods have an equal responsibility to their schools. They must make it a point of pride and work together to support each school and its students.

These three takeaways are not new or unexpected. And yet, practitioners in education, urban planning, housing, and community development rarely work together to attend to them in a coordinated manner. Not only do these systems function with high levels of independence by design, but they often display a disturbing form of mutual indifference. City leaders have been frustrated by this divide for years, but many obstacles have made it hard to overcome—not the least of which is the difficulty of their immediate jobs.

As urban schools become more economically segregated and housing in "good by exclusion" suburban school districts get even harder to afford, the disconnect between education and housing becomes especially untenable. Segregated schools harm everyone in Massachusetts, but there can be no doubt that the costs disproportionately fall on students of color, the majority of whom attend high-poverty city schools. In revitalizing urban neighborhoods, the injury resulting from the lack of coordination between education and housing is especially intolerable; rising rents destabilize lower-income families, yet residential gentrification fails to mitigate any of this pain by providing more economically integrated schools.

Increasingly, seasoned leaders in education, housing, and community development see an urgent need to challenge the status quo, and find opportunities to work together differently, including through the Community School model, which Boston and Gateway Cities across the state are increasingly determined to adopt.

A window is opening to work together to build strong neighborhoods and schools synergistically through SCND. Consider this playbook a series of invitations to climb through that window. We invite you to find tangible opportunities to pursue SCND in your community, to encourage your local partners to advance these opportunities together, and to inform and inspire others by telling your story.

Along the way, you can count on us—MassINC, the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, and most certainly the diverse leaders who contributed to this playbook—to be there. Through ongoing research, information exchange, and policy development, we will do all that we can to help communities successfully employ this new strategy. Together, we can take the steps necessary to realize our vision for a Massachusetts where residents see all urban neighborhoods and schools as great places for families.

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GOALS FOR THE EVOLUTION AND IMPACT OF SCHOOL-CENTERED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN MASSACHUSETTS

VISION: IN 20 YEARS, MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS WILL SEE ALL URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS GREAT PLACES FOR FAMILIES.

BY 2025

- State education, housing, and community development leaders will come together to build support systems to help launch and sustain local SCND efforts.

- Three or more urban neighborhoods will pilot SCND, with long-term backing from their city government, school district, and civic/funding institutions.

BY 2030

- Eight or more Massachusetts cities will pursue SCND.

- SCND pilots will demonstrate marked improvements in student, school, and neighborhood outcomes.

- SCND work in MA cities will involve multi-decade plans, formal and long-term citywide support, strong governance, and sustainable budgeting frameworks.

BY 2035

- At least 10 cities in Massachusetts will have made SCND a core practice for all their school and neighborhood planning as well as housing and community development.

- Comprehensive evaluation will demonstrate conclusively that Massachusetts' SCND practices drive substantial improvement in student, school, and neighborhood outcomes.

THE PLAYBOOK IN BRIEF

School-centered neighborhood development (SCND) is an exquisitely simple concept, but moving to actual implementation raises a host of questions. This high-level overview will help readers get their bearings. Before we go down all the rabbit holes, we give you the what, where, why, how, and when.

WHAT is SCND?

SCND is a long-term strategy to build strong neighborhoods and schools in tandem. It is a two-part formula. Part 1 involves planning for the physical development of neighborhoods to promote the success of mixed-income neighborhood public schools. Part 2 involves designing, building, and operating mixed-income public schools to provide the entire neighborhood with more amenities, services, social connection, and a pipeline of civic leaders.

Fostering the growth of more economically integrated neighborhoods and schools from the bottom up, as opposed to through gentrification processes, is central to the strategy. Similarly, by creating strong local governance processes centered around the public schools, the neighborhood can powerfully establish that it operates according to inclusive local norms (i.e., that it is not up for sale to the highest bidder).

WHERE can we pursue SCND?

Gateway Cities are obvious candidates. These smaller cities are steadily seeing reinvestment, particularly in their housing stock. And they are primed to innovate, with entrepreneurial civic leaders spread throughout municipal government, public education, and nonprofit community-based organizations.

Boston is another strong contender. Most neighborhoods are seeing significant new housing development. And the city is looking for fresh approaches under Mayor Wu's leadership, both in terms of how it plans for growth with a more inclusive process at the neighborhood level and how it operates schools in partnership with the community.

While SCND furthers walkable, mixed-income neighborhoods and schools, typically in urban areas, we need many more of these places to thrive as a commonwealth. Suburbs that are working to create more inclusive and tighter-knit neighborhoods around their public schools can certainly employ these practices as well.

WHY should communities embrace SCND now?

Massachusetts needs a more holistic, longer-term approach to school improvement that will break down structural barriers to opportunity. Fundamentally, this approach must operate to counter growing levels of economic segregation across the state's public schools. While school choice is desirable and essential for many families, education policy must explicitly recognize that community connection and relationships are essential to public school performance. Educational improvement strategies should seek to foster social capital at the neighborhood level to the greatest extent possible.

In Boston and several Gateway Cities, education leaders are already moving in this direction by embracing the Community Schools model. Evidence shows that schools with this design produce superior outcomes by providing students and families with deeper learning and a range of services through strategic partnerships with neighborhood organizations.

At the same time, Massachusetts must take long overdue action to rebuild its urban schools, so that all students have access to facilities suitable for 21st century learning. Making these major capital investments in concert with SCND will pay large dividends. SCND will also help the state get more from large investments in housing.

HOW do communities build and execute an SCND strategy?

This playbook offers practical guidance to help cities fashion an SCND strategy that is responsive to local context. Tactics covered include:

- Choosing pilot sites

- Engaging community residents, parents, and civic leaders

- Identifying a strong "backbone" organization and sustainable operating funds

- Implementing the Community School model

- Creating a school-centric neighborhood plan

- Implementing the plan with an ironclad commitment to equity and inclusion

- Institutionalizing and replicating the strategy

WHEN are communities ready to implement SCND?

For SCND to have maximum and sustainable impact, we believe that ultimately neighborhoods must commit to their schools, schools must commit to their neighborhoods, and cities must formally commit to SCND for the long-haul. However, communities can gradually work to achieve these commitments. In each of the three case studies we provide, SCND practices evolved and deepened incrementally over many years. Cities across Massachusetts are already implementing many components of SCND. By incorporating more of these practices and tying them to a theory of change, they will achieve stronger results and gain the three essential commitments for long-term success.

BUILDING state and local partnerships to advance SCND

The tactics outlined in this playbook are workable today without change to state policy. However, SCND will be more impactful and expand faster with a strong state partnership. We offer eight state policy proposals:

1. Create a taskforce to examine a whole-of-government approach to SCND.

2. Provide state matching funds to SCND backbone organizations.

3. Prioritize neighborhoods that are committed to SCND for state investment in affordable and mixed-income housing.

4. Devote more state housing resources to affordable homeownership programs.

5. Redevelop public housing with a focus on building stronger mixed-income neighborhoods for children and families.

6. Allow neighborhoods with SCND plans to adopt stronger local preferences in tenant selection processes for units in affordable housing developments.

7. Increase funding for school facility construction and adopt design and development practices that support SCND.

8. Build local capacity to integrate SCND into green building projects.

Summarizing the Three Case Studies

Many of the tactics outlined in this playbook have been distilled from lessons learned in Baltimore, Cincinnati, and a network of cities led by the national nonprofit Purpose Built Communities. Here is a quick synopsis of the case studies that begin on page 32:

Baltimore. Baltimore has experimented with the Community School model since the early 2000s. In 2012, this work accelerated when the mayor partnered with the Family League of Baltimore to create 51 new Community Schools. A year later, the Maryland State Legislature provided $1.1 billion to renovate and replace schools in 25 Baltimore neighborhoods. The authorizing legislation specifically called for school designs that support cooperative uses and lead to neighborhood revitalization. The city's planning department facilitates participatory planning and funds implementation projects within a quarter-mile radius of schools receiving facility investments. Private philanthropy complements this approach through a School-Centered Neighborhood Investment Initiative (SCNII). The Family League partners with the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC) for assistance with data collection and evaluation. While Baltimore has experienced considerable instability since these efforts began, rigorous evaluation efforts have helped disentangle the effects, demonstrating significant benefits from this relatively young initiative.

Cincinnati. The nonprofit Community Learning Center Institute in Cincinnati coined the term school-centered neighborhood development and demonstrated many tenets of the practice. Over the last two decades, the institute built the most comprehensive SCND venture in the US, with demonstrable results for student achievement and neighborhood vitality. Cincinnati's efforts grew out of a commitment to make all schools community hubs in exchange for local taxpayers providing additional resources to modernize the city's public school facilities. Local School Decision Making Committees are empowered to provide strong school site governance with support from a backbone organization. Of particular note, Cincinnati pioneered the practice of developing school-centric neighborhood plans through a community process with support from the city's planning department.

Purpose Built Communities. Purpose Built Communities is a national nonprofit that supports neighborhood-based efforts to build high-quality mixed-income housing, cradle-to-college education pathways, economically vital neighborhood commercial areas, and community wellness. Each of these local partnerships is led by a backbone organization that implements a plan developed by neighborhood residents. Purpose Built grew out of an ambitious effort to rebuild public housing in the East Lake neighborhood of Atlanta in the early 1990s. In addition to new mixed-income housing, East Lake gained a new school and a new YMCA. Concentrated poverty and violent crime in the community fell dramatically, while educational outcomes improved drastically. Purpose Built is supporting efforts to improve upon the East Lake model in 27 neighborhoods across 14 states.

We refer to these case studies repeatedly throughout the playbook, especially in Chapter 2. Readers may find it helpful to read them in full before venturing into that portion of the text.

CHAPTER 1: LIFTING UP SCHOOL-CENTERED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

This first chapter fleshes out the concept with a more nuanced definition and provides a fuller look at the research base for SCND. We also introduce the Community Schools model and describe how SCND can augment this highly effective school improvement strategy.

Defining SCND

SCND is a two-dimensional approach to strengthen neighborhoods and schools in tandem. It shifts the orientation of local residents and leaders to make for more school-centered neighborhoods and more neighborhood-centered schools:

- To promote school-centered neighborhoods, communities plan for physical development—housing, parks, playgrounds, safe routes to school, and civic spaces—to promote the success of mixed-income neighborhood public schools.

- To promote neighborhood-centered schools, communities design, build, and operate mixed-income public schools to provide more amenities, services, social connection, and a pipeline of civic leaders for the entire neighborhood.

You'll notice the emphasis on mixed-income neighborhoods and schools. At its core, SCND is about enabling economic integration in both neighborhoods and schools. Economically integrated schools provide better learning environments for students and better working environments for teachers, and they lead to markedly better outcomes for students on both academic and nonacademic measures. Similarly, mixed-income neighborhoods can provide higher quality of life and greater wellbeing for all residents.

Conversations about mixed-income schools and neighborhoods will likely provoke fear in many communities. This is because people often equate mixed-income development with gentrification. Furthermore, discussions about school integration typically center around moving students, either by busing or through changes to assignment boundaries. In sharp contrast, SCND is a long-term strategy that seeks to achieve income mixing by retaining residents as they move up the economic ladder rather than losing them to communities with "better" schools.

Gentrification is still a real concern that SCND must address. Successful efforts to create more economically integrated schools will inevitably draw newcomers. In some instances, the newcomers will predominately be families already living in the neighborhood who now choose the local public school over other options. But strong schools will likely attract more family households to a community, making the family housing stock more expensive if supply does not respond to the additional demand. Equally concerning, income mixing can produce environments where not all feel equally welcome. As this playbook will tactically describe, SCND is about mitigating these risks by acting early and often to prevent residential displacement and ensure that the community and its schools continuously strive to provide voice, opportunity, and inclusion for all.

Lastly, it is definitionally important to recognize that SCND is most suited to schools serving the earlier grades. Assignment boundaries typically anchor elementary schools in one neighborhood, where they educate younger students with more involved parents, allowing them to weave dense social networks. However, middle and high schools that draw citywide can certainly contribute meaningfully to community economic development both in their immediate neighborhood and citywide by adopting SCND strategies. Middle and high school students can also contribute to SCND efforts at neighborhood elementaries by participating in SCND planning efforts, service learning, coaching, and peer mentoring.

Research Makes a Strong Case for SCND

While SCND is a new concept without its own research base, studies on school integration, school choice, and neighborhood social infrastructure provide a strong evidence base for SCND's theory of change.

School Integration

We began by emphasizing the role of neighborhoods as vital weavers of social connection and engines of economic mobility. The level of integration in neighborhood public schools is like the dial on this machine. Turning it up increases the neighborhood's ability to bring people together and the life prospects of children raised in the community.

Research employing powerful new econometric techniques solidifies this conclusion by clarifying the channels through which economic segregation fuels inequality, the adverse consequences of attending a high-poverty school over and above living in a high-poverty neighborhood, and the losses Massachusetts will continue to incur if it maintains a focus on addressing educational inequity solely by providing high-poverty schools with additional funds. The MassINC Policy Center's 2021 report *Choosing Integration* described this research in detail, emphasizing three clear takeaways:

- **Economic segregation increases racial and ethnic inequality primarily by disproportionately exposing students of color to high-poverty schools.** The level of poverty in a school is a much stronger predictor of individual student learning than their family income or the zip code where a student lives.[1] In fact, the socioeconomic composition of the K-12 schools that a child attends is 1.75 times more important than their own family socioeconomic status for predicting educational outcomes.[2] When researchers disentangle the effects of schools from those of neighborhoods, they find school poverty is a stronger predictor of achievement gaps than neighborhood poverty.[3] With the majority of students of color in Massachusetts attending high poverty schools, this research suggests economic segregation in public schools is the driving force behind the state's wide racial and ethnic achievement gaps.[4]

- **Compared to economic integration, providing greater funding to high-poverty schools is inefficient and less effective.** The Student Opportunity Act is providing substantially more state aid to many high-poverty schools in Massachusetts, but research and experience shows this approach is difficult to sustain politically over the long term.[5] Moreover, evidence suggests increasing economic integration is a far more impactful and cost-effective strategy to close achievement gaps than providing extraordinary resources to compensate for the effects of concentrated poverty in urban schools.[6]

- **We are all losing out on the many benefits that diverse schools provide to students and society.** In contrast to schools segregated by income, which cause harm, schools that are racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse provide superior learning environments. Students gain a range of benefits from

integrated classrooms, including improvements in critical thinking, stronger leadership skills, increases in civic engagement, cultural competence, and reductions in racial bias and stereotyping. In a global, multiethnic economy, these benefits have considerable value. Polls consistently find that families of all backgrounds in Massachusetts want their children to learn in these environments, but there are increasingly fewer schools that offer the opportunity.[7]

School Choice and School Segregation

For more than two decades, education policymakers have pushed for more choice. The theory of change driving this policy is the belief that market forces will lead to improvements in school performance.[8] While academic researchers continue to debate whether more choice has improved educational outcomes in the aggregate, studies consistently find more school choice has led to increased segregation and reduced access to opportunity for those with the fewest resources.[9]

All students and families should have the opportunity to attend schools outside of their neighborhoods. But even when families have considerable choice, a large majority select the school closest to home. Recognizing that community connection and relationships are essential to public school performance, educational policy should work to foster social capital at the neighborhood level to the greatest extent possible.

Social Infrastructure and Social Interaction

In a 2022 report, MassINC reviewed the growing body of research revealing a direct connection between neighborhood "social infrastructure" and public health and community resilience. From schools and libraries to cafés, barbershops, and gyms, public and private spaces that foster neighborliness, create social connection, and bridge divides are arguably more valuable than ever given the long-term decline in civic engagement. This downward participation trend not only harms local democratic institutions but also tends to increase polarization in environments with high levels of inequality.[10]

The argument for new approaches that will build and activate social infrastructure becomes even more compelling when considering the current epidemic of problematic social media use and its influence on youth mental health. While this relatively new phenomenon is still poorly understood, evidence suggests youth who attend under resourced schools are more likely to engage in unhealthy social media behaviors. Alternatively, researchers posit that students may have more resilience to the negative effects of social media when their schools increase social connection by providing access to resources in the community.[11]

SCND Builds on the Community Schools Model

In education, Community Schools enjoy a long history, and there is a strong evidence base that they can substantially improve student learning outcomes.[12] While this model has waxed and waned over the years, it is currently receiving renewed focus in Massachusetts, as efforts to adopt the strategy are taking hold in Boston, Haverhill, Lowell, Lynn, and Salem, and a newly formed statewide coalition is working to advance its implementation across the commonwealth.

From the 1960s to the 2000s, first-generation Community School efforts generally took a "full-service" approach. Schools formed partnerships with community organizations and local agencies to provide a hub for wraparound services. The school building stayed open later and opened up earlier to provide auxiliary space to give students and families access to out-of-school time programming, clothing, nutrition, primary and behavioral health, and vision and dental care. Attending to these basic needs benefited students and improved learning outcomes. However, bringing a web of social service providers into schools did not revitalize neighborhoods or create more housing supply and it did not lead to more integrated learning environments.
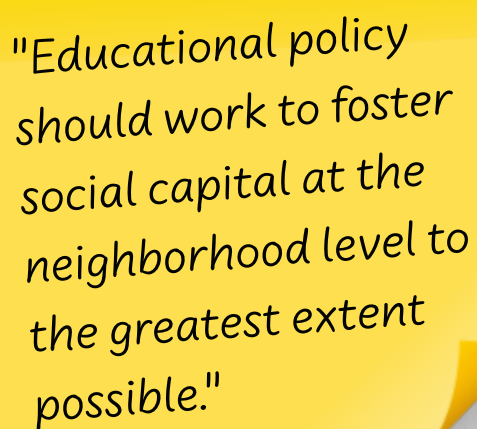
However, the first-generation Community School model did have a significant community development impact by empowering residents in school site governance. Giving parents and community members more say in school decision-making built trust, buy-in, accountability, and neighborhood social and political capital. As the Baltimore and Cincinnati case studies will illustrate, cities that did well at the governance component of the Community School strategy created a self-sustaining culture of local engagement. With more resident voice, some of these schools got more involved in housing, community development, and neighborhood planning. The Community Schools movement now points to Baltimore and Cincinnati as exemplars of how this leadership development and community governance strategy can improve neighborhoods along with student learning outcomes.[14]

The SCND lens can complement the Community School strategy in three critical ways:

First, a focus on housing and neighborhood development complements the child development and family support focus of Community Schools by addressing core economic and structural challenges in families' lives in ways that are entirely external to the school.

Second, whereas the Community School model often puts schools, families, and the school district in the driver's seat, SCND calls for even more widely distributed leadership. Structuring the work as the shared responsibility of municipal agencies—in addition to the school district and all of the Community School nonprofit partners—will lead to greater impact on out-of-school factors such as housing supply while growing the number of stakeholders with a vested interest in sustaining the overall approach.

Third, the Community School movement has done very little thinking about income mixing or the practices necessary to achieve positive outcomes for neighborhoods and schools through integration. Housing and community development leaders have this experience, and have learned from past efforts. If we can formulate and advance SCND policies drawing on their expertise, it will provide a significant contribution to the Community School model.

"Educational policy should work to foster social capital at the neighborhood level to the greatest extent possible."

The Time is Right for SCND

There's a strong case to be made that this moment offers unique possibilities for SCND in both education and housing and community development.

Openings in Education

Multiple education reform movements are grappling with their theory of change. Charter schools, high stakes standardized testing, and a cascade of school and district turnaround ventures have struggled in recent years. Increasingly, the field seeks to drive innovation by looking beyond the classroom and attempting to meet the needs of students more holistically. Recent efforts to create a Children's Cabinet in Salem with leadership and assistance from former Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville exemplify the view that cross-sector collaboration in school reform is necessary to ensure student success.[15] Implicit in this approach is an understanding that the Massachusetts education reform model's testing and accountability focus—which led the commonwealth to years of recognition for improved student performance and proudly became the template for the federal No Child Left Behind law—is not, on its own, strong enough to achieve equity in educational outcomes. Something more comprehensive and systemic is needed.

Without question, Massachusetts' three-decade push to hold all schools to the same high standards for student performance has achieved bold forward progress. But neither education policymakers nor society at large can ignore high concentrations of poverty and their profoundly negative effect on student learning. As a recent report from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Racial Advisory Council acknowledges, high levels of poverty in urban neighborhoods and schools seriously jeopardize long-term education outcomes and lifelong wellbeing, fueling racial and ethnic achievement gaps.[16]

With funding from the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), schools have modest new resources to further Community School partnerships. They are also likely to see significant new funding for school facilities in the coming years. Such increased funding is overdue. The commonwealth's commitment to school construction is woefully inadequate: at its current pace, Massachusetts is decades from being able to replace the dozens of pre-World War II school buildings in which students learn and educators work. The commonwealth's support for urban districts in their efforts to provide 21st century learning environments has gaping holes: hundreds of buildings fail to meet minimum public health standards for temperature and air quality. Large scale funding additions for new school buildings and school upgrades are not a substitute for more integrated urban neighborhoods and schools, but coupled with vision, will, and cross-sector collaboration, an ample infusion of such funds would offer a promising starting point.

Openings in Housing and Community Development

Massachusetts is fortunate to be the home of a large array of highly accomplished housing and community development organizations and leaders, widely respected throughout the country for their innovation and lasting contributions in expanding access to affordable housing, addressing equity issues, crafting public-private collaborations, and leveraging long term improvements in the quality of life in neighborhoods and cities across the Commonwealth.

Our exceptionally strong housing and community development sectors are starting to see a value proposition for more intentional partnership with educators. Affordable housing leaders have long understood that stable housing is key to student success, but with finite resources, inflexible funding requirements in the housing sector, and a dearth of working partnerships with complex school bureaucracies, they have not succeeded in addressing this need or meaningfully partnering with school systems.

However, new resources flowing into housing change the equation. With leadership from the Healey-Driscoll administration and the Legislature, Massachusetts will significantly increase annual expenditure on housing production in the coming years. This additional state funding will allow Massachusetts to build more housing of all types, including more funding for market-rate and mixed-income projects to support the growth of economically integrated neighborhoods.

The federal Inflation Reduction Act also provides significant funding so that states can green their communities and decarbonize buildings. Combined with other resource streams, neighborhoods will have more powerful tools to revitalize existing buildings and modernize infrastructure to support new development.

The legislature also recently extended and expanded the Community Investment Tax Credit to $15 million annually, providing an opportunity for the state's network of high-performing community development corporations to attract more private funding for innovative, integrated approaches like SCND.

CHAPTER 2: PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR STRATEGY

With a firmer grasp of the SCND concept and the rationale behind it, we turn now to implementation. We will begin with the threshold question of how we know when a community is ready to commit to this work, and then get deep into the actual tactics.

Three Essential Commitments and the Readiness Threshold

SCND requires fundamental systems change to support new ways of organizing educational improvement and neighborhood development with a long-term focus. More specifically:

1. *A neighborhood must commit to its school:* The people responsible for a neighborhood—residents, civic leaders, community-based organizations, and city agencies—make a long-term commitment to support the success of the school through sustained, concrete action. They resolve to work together in this manner in full recognition that a neighborhood's long-term health is dependent on the success of its local public school.

2. *A school must commit to its neighborhood:* A school commits to helping its neighbors thrive, whether or not they have children presently attending the school. School leaders co-design school buildings with neighborhood leaders; make school resources, facilities, and spaces available for a wide range of community uses; and co-lead active collaborations with neighborhood groups to strengthen community assets and develop future civic leaders. The school community acts on its belief that the health and well-being of its neighborhood is essential to the success of the school and its current and future students.

3. *The city and its leading public and private institutions must formally commit to SCND for the long-haul:* As you'll learn from the case studies, the success of SCND work depends on the full, long-term engagement and commitment of multiple institutions in the public and private sectors. Leadership from individuals—mayors, superintendents, principals, housing developers, and leaders of community development corporations—is welcome and necessary, but not sufficient. To succeed, SCND requires lasting institutional buy-in from school committees, civic leadership groups, business groups, colleges and universities, and community and private foundations.

It is unreasonable to expect communities to secure all these commitments before they proceed with any of the actual work. In most cases, it will take considerable time to achieve these commitments through incremental progress. In all three case studies, SCND practices evolved and deepened over a decade or more. Cities across Massachusetts are already implementing many components of SCND. By incorporating more of these practices and tying them to a theory of change, communities will eventually secure the three essential commitments for long-term success.

This Innovation Has a History: Pioneering SCND Efforts in Massachusetts

With extremely innovative housing and education leaders—including one of the strongest community development corporation (CDC) sectors in the country—Massachusetts has many examples of efforts that embody the principles of SCND. Some of this work has been decades in the making. while other initiatives are just getting off the ground. Regardless, there is much we can learn from the experience to date in these communities and much that we can build on to help them bring SCND to fruition, as detailed in these four vignettes.

Boston's **Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)** is a longstanding example of community-led revitalization that includes a focus on both housing and education. In the 1980s, the City of Boston gave the nonprofit DSNI the power of eminent domain to assemble the large number of vacant plots scarring the neighborhood. DSNI then built new homes on over 30 acres of vacant land. To preserve affordability, it created a community land trust to hold these properties. It also helped the city convert vacant land into bike paths, a community center, playgrounds, and community gardens. With various community and funding partners, DSNI has brought more job training and youth development opportunities to the neighborhood. And it has supported the development of early childhood systems through the Dudley Children Thrive Initiative. In 2012, DSNI partnered with the nonprofit Boston Plan for Excellence (BPE) to develop the Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School. It also played an active role organizing the community around redevelopment of the Dearborn school. BPE manages both schools, creating a strong PreK-12 pathway for neighborhood residents.

Since its founding, DSNI has sought development without displacement. Its land trust provides a bulwark against the strong gentrification forces in the area. But its neighborhood schools remain extremely high-poverty. These efforts exemplify the need to look harder at how we support the growth of mixed-income urban neighborhoods and economically integrated public schools in areas undergoing revitalization.

In the 2000s, Lawrence CommunityWorks (LCW) partnered with Groundwork Lawrence (GWL) to lead the *Reviviendo Gateway Initiative (RGI)*, a nationally-recognized public-private-nonprofit partnership for urban revitalization. Working with a multigenerational group of residents, property owners, government officials, artists, nonprofit organizations, and businesspeople, RGI helped spark more than $120 million worth of investment in the City of Lawrence in 5 years.

An inclusive steering committee of stakeholders mounted a deep community engagement process and developed a comprehensive plan to integrate an area composed of a historic but low-income neighborhood, half of the downtown, and a former mill area into a complete neighborhood. After passing zoning changes to allow for dense residential and mixed-use development, the steering committee pursued mill conversions, neighborhood infill development, infrastructure improvements, and asset building strategies.

Demographically, Lawrence is the youngest city in Massachusetts, and the RGI coalition recognized that it must prioritize this rising generation. In addition to LCW and GWL, stakeholders included leaders of local public, private, and charter schools, the YWCA, the Lawrence Public Library, and others. LCW built its Movement City youth center in the heart of the neighborhood, while GWL developed five miles of community paths and green spaces anchored by local schools and waterways.

The group collectively offered an array of youth programs and over time deepened its engagement with Lawrence Public Schools (LPS). Efforts were made to empower parents as school leaders, providing them with job training and professional advancement opportunities to increase family economic security as well as offering housing counseling and financial services to help them build wealth.

With thousands of new rental units in the mill district, the next phase of neighborhood stabilization would benefit greatly from new housing tools to support smaller scale redevelopment for mixed-income and affordable homeownership. It will also create excellent opportunities for SCND collaboration when LPS transitions from state receivership to a governance model that supports Community Schools and school site governance over the long term.

In 2008, a diverse group of business, education, and civic leaders produced the *Educational Corridor Vision Plan* for the Mason Square Neighborhood of Springfield. The plan sought to organize the expansion of several institutions in the area, including American International College, the MLK, Jr. Community Center, the MA Career Development Institute, the New Leadership Charter School, and Springfield College. The plan also identified numerous properties in the area available for redevelopment, including those currently on the market, under city ownership, or subject to foreclosure. The preferred land use option advanced by the plan included a linear pedestrian/bike trail on a former rail corridor to connect the new charter school and the college campuses; an "education green" to create a focal meeting place for the community and accommodate the needs of multiple schools; a new building for the MLK, Jr. Community Center, with shared parking and outdoor space; and priority areas for streetscape enhancements.

Over the past 15 years, some components of the plan came to fruition, but considerable work remains. While the New Leadership Charter School no longer exists, the neighborhood's DeBerry Elementary was recently rebuilt, providing a state-of-the-art facility. The neighborhood is also a designated Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) district, and the City of Springfield and MassHousing's Neighborhood Hub program are working hard to turn the many vacant parcels in the area into affordable homes for first-time buyers. The City of New Bedford is working to rebuild the DeValles School in the city's *Goulart Square neighborhood*. The new school facility will be located on a former Goodyear tire factory site adjacent to the current school. The old school building will provide a ripe opportunity for conversion to housing. In anticipation of the new school, the city has already rehabilitated Ashley Park. With input from the school community, this formerly underutilized open space at the heart of the neighborhood now has attractive walking pathways, encouraging children and families to traverse through the park on their way to school. The park also houses a community center and is surrounded by a vibrant local business district complete with bakeries and convenience stores that parents and children regularly patronize.

Through the Neighborhood Hub program, New Bedford is actively working to create more opportunities for housing and homeownership in the area. New Bedford's school superintendent and housing and community development director are strong partners and collaborators with a shared interest in making Goulart Square and Devalles Elementary a leading example of SCND.

Core SCND Tactics

Strong SCND practice begins with recognizing the many assets in every school community and neighborhood, as well as the wisdom that local leaders can draw from past efforts. Places with no prior Community Schools experience may nevertheless have a long history of partnerships with external organizations. Many neighborhoods without a high-capacity CDC will still have worked through changes to parks, playgrounds, streets, housing stock, and transportation infrastructure.

This section describes core tactics to help cities, schools, and neighborhoods build on their assets and experiences to grow a comprehensive SCND strategy. These concepts draw heavily on the Baltimore, Cincinnati, and Purpose Built Community case studies, as well as the ideas and expertise of our working group members. This is by no means a complete recipe for success, but rather a guide to help organize your thinking and spark additional ideas.

1. Identifying Pilot Sites

For school districts and cities looking to bring SCND practices to their community, it will help to focus on neighborhoods and schools that are well-positioned for success. Many scenarios offer encouraging prospects for initial or increased SCND action:

New schools. Neighborhoods where new schools have recently been constructed present obvious options. They signal opportunity, both for neighborhood revitalization and for new school-community partnerships. Neighborhoods where new school facilities are in the planning stage present an even better choice. The planning process for a new school design can empower the community to see the facility as their own: a local asset to care for and steward. Ideally, site selection for a new school will focus on ensuring safe walking routes for students and maximizing the opportunities for synergy with other community assets. City planners and the school department can also design these facilities in a manner that fully embraces SCND, establishing clear goals with respect to how the school provides social infrastructure for the larger neighborhood.

Community Schools and community school leaders. Another prime opportunity is a public school already operating as a Community School. With community-oriented leadership and governance in place, such schools are one step ahead; their educators, parents, and supporters will likely welcome efforts to expand partnerships to include housing and community development leaders. Neighborhoods also make strong candidates when they have a school where the principal operates according to Community School tenets, even when there is no formal initiative currently in place.

Neighborhood development and revitalization activities. Cities can also choose pilot sites based on neighborhood factors. Neighborhoods where there is significant new infill development, public housing redevelopment, or scattered site revitalization activity underway hold particular promise.[17] So do renewal efforts led by local CDCs, whose expertise in housing planning and practice can add strategic power to a project. Similarly, the many urban neighborhoods receiving planning and technical assistance from MassDevelopment's Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) or MassHousing's Neighborhood Hub program are primed to make good use of a SCND strategy.[18]

Independent of these targeted opportunities, it will be important to consider community identity. In some places, the neighborhood will have strong boundaries that conform relatively well with the school assignment zone; in others, the neighborhood is not clearly defined or does not match the school catchment area. SCND presents an opportunity to build healthy neighborhood identities, but it may prove to be advantageous to choose communities that already see themselves as cohesive neighborhoods with local public schools at their core.

Most new SCND ventures will start in a single school and neighborhood. However, if two or three neighborhoods in your city are eager to get started and have access to sufficient resources, launching this work in multiple places is certainly an option. Such an approach would create an immediate local community of practice and potentially accelerate the pace of change. But for many cities, there will be advantages to starting in one location and accessing peer learning through interaction with other cities that are also early SCND adopters.

2. Engaging Community Residents, Parents, and Civic Leaders

People are experts about the places they live, and students, teachers, and parents are deeply involved in the day-to-day operations of a school. A constant flow of dialogue and a strong set of relationships between project planners and those who live and learn in the community is the lifeblood of SCND. In so many urban communities, plans for schools and neighborhoods have been developed—and frequently imposed—by others, people who neither live in the neighborhood nor work in, attend, or send children to the school. Understanding the context in each community and neighborhood and building relationships of mutual respect is the essence of the SCND ethos.

Some SCND work begins within a school community, with a team that includes the principal, staff, and an external ally or two testing the waters. If the school community reaches consensus on proceeding with the strategy, then efforts can be made to reach out to the school's other current and potential partners, as well as civic leaders in the neighborhood.

With strong school-first approaches, the school community will be actively supported by the superintendent and key staff from municipal planning and community development agencies, as well as by local community foundations. This demonstrates broad, high-level support from those in a position to help the work succeed.

It can be difficult for schools to initiate this kind of systemic change, especially those facing considerable day-to-day challenges. Some communities might begin by developing ideas within local neighborhood organizations and making sure school leaders, teachers, and families are welcome at those tables. This neighborhood-driven approach can demonstrate to school leaders the potential to deepen support for the school and increase the resources available to its students and educators by engaging in SCND.

Whether beginning with the neighborhood or the school, the process should include focus groups and surveys with key stakeholders to ensure that organizers understand the community's needs and aspirations. To the greatest extent possible, these efforts should involve youth in order to gain their unique perspective and empower them as leaders of vital community work. Once the data has been collected, it is vital to share findings and preliminary ideas with key stakeholders and constituent groups. As our case studies demonstrate, SCND efforts are most successful when leaders take considerable time to understand the community and to establish reciprocity and trust.

3. Identifying a Strong Backbone Organization and Sustainable Operating Funds

In both education and community development, efforts that involve cross-sector collaboration typically rely on a backbone organization to develop a shared agenda and provide day-to-day project management.[19] The Purpose

Built Communities model strives to make the backbone organization a lead implementer, overcoming a fault in collaborative impact models where many groups convene around a table but no single group takes responsibility for execution.[20]

For SCND, it is often helpful to situate this coordinating function outside of the school district to create a neutral table within the constellation of groups. Existing community-based nonprofits that have expertise in resident organizing and leadership development can often serve as strong backbone organizations for SCND initiatives. In Baltimore, one of the most successful Community Schools relies on a CDC to serve as the lead agency.

Fortunately, situating the backbone function outside of the school department does not mean the schools will lose control. A key ingredient in the Community Schools model is the "Community School coordinator" role. This full-time leader functions as an executive, managing community partnerships and supporting inclusive school governance practices.

While philanthropy can play an important role in getting this work off the ground, the neighborhood must find recurring revenue to cover staffing and the backbone agency's overhead costs. The school district may be able to use federal Title I or SOA funds to help cover a portion of these expenses. And over time, administrative fees on grants and/or contracts for services brokered by the backbone agency can become a stable source of revenue for staffing and other overhead expenses.

Communities can also employ creative financing approaches. For example, SCND efforts might receive modest financial support from businesses and/or Business Improvement Districts (BID) in the area.[21] In places with significant new residential development, some of the new taxable value could be set aside to support SCND efforts with District Improvement Financing (DIF). Communities could also negotiate for a portion of the developer fee or ask affordable housing developers to contribute some of the resident services fees collected by properties in the neighborhood.[22] CDCs can leverage Community Investment Tax Credits (CITC) to raise private funds. The municipality can also provide federal Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).

4. Implementing the Community Schools Model

The Community School model is central to the success of SCND. It engages and empowers residents and families to help develop a vision for their local school, and it positions them to play a central role in bringing this vision to life. The Community School model also offers an organizing framework for mutually beneficial partnerships that will maximize the use of local resources for stronger schools and neighborhoods (see box on p. 27).

Community Schools research makes clear that the principal is a key change agent.[23] They must believe fully in the concept and have the disposition necessary to partner collaboratively. Neighborhoods must work with schools and districts to ensure that they have this key leadership figure in place early in the development of the SCND strategy. An increasing number of training programs exist to help prepare principals to engage in this work. Alternatively, districts and neighborhoods can recruit principals with prior experience in Community School settings. Former Community School coordinators have been found to make particularly strong executive leaders for these schools.

An effective Community School also harnesses teacher leadership. Teachers are natural problem-solvers and have firsthand knowledge of the needs of their students. Urban schools typically employ a number of educators who grew up in the community and remain deeply committed to it. This gives them the ability to help shape a broader vision for the future of the neighborhood that fully respects its past and present. Teachers' unions have long advocated for schools to address non-academic barriers to learning and support the social and emotional development of students, including through partnership. As long as initiatives provide appropriate compensation to teachers who

assume leadership roles in building these partnerships, administrators working to engage teachers in Community Schools work will likely get a warm response from labor representatives.[24]

Implemented effectively, the Community School model empowers residents and civic leaders in decision-making through formal and active school site governing bodies. This collaborative approach to governance[25] ensures that a Community School's vision and strategic goals align with the neighborhood's needs and aspirations. Shared leadership provides channels for critical feedback, instills a mutual sense of co-ownership, and motivates community members who serve in this leadership capacity to do all that they can to advance the school's priority initiatives.

As prior MassINC research describes, Massachusetts has a long and varied history of school site governance. Communities that devote the time and energy to make it work have had considerable success. The basic formula is relatively straightforward: schools need principals who embrace distributed leadership; they must have a budget to allocate resources to strategic priorities; and they need capacity to train and support community members who serve in leadership roles. A strong SCND approach will help ensure that Community Schools have all three of these prerequisites for success.

5. Creating a School-Centric Neighborhood Plan

Working collaboratively with city planning departments, SCND efforts should produce comprehensive neighborhood plans that make the neighborhood school(s) the central focal point(s). As described in the Cincinnati case study on page 32, the 2019 Lower Price Hill Resurgency Plan created by the Community Learning Center Institute exemplifies this practice.

In addition to the public school, these plans must consider early education facilities, out-of-school programs, and other critical infrastructure to support families with young children. These assets can help families get off to a strong start, including by establishing social connections with other parents of young children. School-centric neighborhood planning is especially vital in this context because the private market for early education and care is extremely fragile; efforts by neighborhood elementary schools to expand access to pre-K education can have a positive or negative financial impact on private childcare providers, depending on how they are structured.

By accommodating future development with sensitivity to the capacity of neighborhood schools, these plans can prioritize strategies to build more housing for families with children. Plans can also work to increase homeownership among school users, so that these households are more stable members of the school community and invested in its success. Plans should also put forward housing models and programs that stabilize current families with children who are renting, so that there is less churn in school enrollment.[26]

In addition to the education-housing connection, neighborhood plans must address transportation. The ability to comfortably walk and bike to school is a major advantage for urban education. Preserving this competitive strength means intentionally building and zealously protecting safe routes to school. Bold plans for linear parks, protected bike lanes, and bus rapid transit will create transformative mobility corridors that generate especially large returns by giving youth greater access to opportunity. The community must also encourage adults to take these same paths, both to ensure an adequate number of eyeballs on the street for safety and to provide parents with opportunities for casual interaction and social connection.

With the clean energy transition a major priority for state and federal agencies, these plans can position neighborhoods to tap into new funding sources to make the residential building stock and school facilities greener and more affordable to operate. Savings from energy efficiency investments that reduce costs could even create a revenue source to further Community School efforts. Similarly, there may be creative opportunities to generate revenue through community solar or other district-level energy generation projects.

The plan must also thoughtfully enhance social infrastructure in the neighborhood. Whether located in the school or at partner organizations, ensuring that the neighborhood has adequate spaces for sports, the arts, and other leisure activities is essential to providing youth with positive outlets. By bringing people together, these spaces also strengthen adult, youth, and intergenerational social networks.[27] The plan should seek to increase utilization of these spaces and/or create new spaces to meet changing preferences. Nurturing privately-owned third spaces (i.e. bakeries, coffee shops, corner stores) that provide opportunities for interaction should be another key component of the plan. These informal contacts are critical for strengthening bonds and exchanging vital information about community, school, and family needs.

"*Informal contacts in third spaces like coffee shops and corner stores are critical for strengthening bonds and exchanging vital information about community, school, and family needs.*"

Above all, the plan must anticipate neighborhood change. To the extent that SCND works as intended, more incumbent residents will stay in the area as they experience upward economic mobility. A successful SCND effort will also make the neighborhood more desirable, attracting newcomers. Neighborhoods must have a clear understanding of their family-sized housing stock, the utilization of these units (i.e. how many of these homes are occupied by households without children), and changes to this supply as the income and age structure of the population shift.

Many smaller cities lack funds and staff capacity to prepare detailed plans for each neighborhood. However, given the novelty of this strategy, cities pursuing SCND will likely find both public and private partners eager to help communities produce school-centered neighborhood development plans. As they consider consultants and the planning process, communities should be sure to incorporate opportunities to elevate youth voice by following the Y-PLAN model developed by UC Berkeley's Center for Cities and Schools **(see box p. 27)**.

6. Operationalizing the Plan with an Ironclad Commitment to Equity and Inclusion

Each SCND tactic should advance equity and inclusion, but this focus must become even more intentional and strategic as communities move fully into implementation mode. Areas in which to focus on ingraining equity and inclusion will look different for each community depending on the local strategy and context. As they develop implementation plans, initiatives should each conduct their own scan and set priorities accordingly. Here are three examples for leaders to consider:

- **Compensation for residents filling key roles:** Providing appropriate compensation is vital to creating inclusion from the outset. From parent involvement on school governing boards to the coaching of youth sports teams, a strong SCND strategy will rely heavily on resident participation in roles that are typically filled by volunteers. Compensating residents for these services in mixed-income settings is essential. Otherwise, there will be less participation among low-income residents who lack the means to donate their limited time. While initiatives are likely to have very modest resources at the outset, it is critical that they begin the

work with inclusive and equitable resident participation.

- **Evaluation protocols that will reveal variation between groups.** The Purpose Built Communities case study emphasizes the importance of strong and transparent accountability metrics. It also reveals the consequences when evaluation protocols fail to detect disparate outcomes for different groups in time to respond accordingly. Evaluating neighborhood change is especially difficult because the sample sizes are small and there are many variables at play. This makes it critical to devise an evaluation strategy with the power to reveal the initiative's influence on different groups within the community.

- **Marketing the initiative in a manner that honors and protects the community**. Initiatives will want to market their efforts in order to get outside attention from philanthropic partners, housing developers, and other outside investors. However, leaders must think carefully about how they tell the story and project a message that honors the aspirations and contributions of all groups within the community. Caution is also warranted to prevent property speculation. Efforts that receive too much publicity may draw outside investors who do not have the best interest of the neighborhood in mind.

7. Institutionalizing and Replicating the Strategy

SCND will succeed only if it becomes rooted in the culture and ethos of a neighborhood in a manner that is difficult to extract. The best way to ensure a lasting commitment to this approach is for the largest and most powerful city institutions to make formal, long-term commitments to it. To transcend and survive inevitable changes in district, school, and city leadership, municipal governments can create structures and institutional commitments to ensure that Community School and SCND efforts continue without interruption. Cincinnati achieved this with regulations requiring all schools to adopt the Community Schools approach using any one of several non-district partner agencies designated to serve as a backbone organization. This requirement has survived for more than two decades, spanning four mayors and five school superintendents. Baltimore has taken similar steps to inoculate against a reduction in focus and seriousness in the face of leadership change.

Institutionalizing the strategy as a long-term commitment at the city level positions the community to spread the practice from neighborhood to neighborhood. Expansion should create more operational efficiency for backbone agencies. United Ways, local community foundations, and other community-based organizations will be able to gain economies of scale by supporting SCND efforts in multiple neighborhoods. As SCND activity grows throughout the city, there will also be more opportunities for neighborhoods and school leaders to exchange best practices and provide peer support. You can imagine how new learning networks might form among school site governing board members, neighborhood association presidents, and youth sports league leaders.

Making SCND ubiquitous can also contribute to positive "place branding." This is particularly important in cities that lack defined neighborhoods or where some neighborhood identities currently carry a stigma. Extensive research demonstrates why and how place brands have powerful influences on adolescent development, as well as neighborhood satisfaction, civic engagement, and economic revitalization.[28]

The Community Schools Forward Framework

A joint venture of the Brookings Institution, the National Center for Community Schools, the Coalition for Community Schools, and the Learning Policy Institute, the Community Schools Forward Framework articulates key practices that make this strategy effective.[29] Schools that fully embrace all six of these practices will be in a strong position to operate with the neighborhood-centric orientation that SCND requires.

1. *Powerful student and family engagement.* Families and students actively participate in the school community and are key partners in decision-making, shaping the school's environment, priorities, and partnerships. Families' lived experiences and wisdom inform approaches to student success. As a result, schools become hubs that provide opportunities for adults as well as young people.

2. *Collaborative leadership and shared power and voice.* Families, students, teachers, principals, and community partners co-create a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility as they make decisions together. These decisions are made through both formal structures, such as site-based leadership teams and regularly administered surveys, and informal engagement, such as coffee meetings, hallway conversations, and community gatherings.

3. *Expanded enriched learning opportunities.* Before- and after-school, weekend, and summer programs provide expanded time, expanded staffing, and expanded opportunities for learning and engagement. These include academic instruction, enrichment and extracurricular activities, and individualized support. Students have opportunities to explore their passions, dive deeper into the application of academic content, and strengthen their knowledge and skills.

4. *Rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction.* Teaching and learning in the school infuse high-level content and skills with real-world learning opportunities. The curriculum is deeply connected to the local community and students' identities, cultures, and experiences, providing opportunities for students to engage in meaningful inquiry-based learning and problem-solving.

5. *Culture of belonging, safety, and care.* The school climate is welcoming and fosters trust among students, families, partners, and staff. Each person in the school community is valued for their rich diversity of experiences and is encouraged to share their views, knowledge, and culture. The school becomes a place grounded in healthy relationships, in which members feel safe and comfortable navigating conflicts and taking risks. Students feel connected to and are active participants in the school community.

6. *Integrated systems of support.* To promote healthy learning and development, a dedicated team composed primarily of school staff and community partners intentionally and systematically coordinates services, supports, and opportunities that foster individual and collective well-being, using an assets-based approach to nurture the strengths and address the needs of students and families.

Why We Need School-Centered Neighborhood Development Plans

Few Gateway Cities conduct planning at the neighborhood level; the costs and scale of local city government render that improbable in all but the most committed cities. While neighborhood plans are somewhat more common in Boston, recent Boston examples contain only a passing reference to schools and their respective needs. This lack of focus on schools reflects a fundamentally broken approach to urban planning and development.

Cities in Massachusetts are eager to build more housing. When they work to accommodate projects within dense urban neighborhoods, parking and traffic are generally the foremost concerns; abutters often attempt to stop development by citing these problems. But such an auto-oriented focus is extremely narrow.

In an era where the primary product of cities is human capital, development should privilege schools and their users. Furthermore, given that school district budgets generally represent 50 percent or more of municipal expenditure, it is fiscally imprudent to not consider how housing and other investments will impact school utilization and performance and vice versa.

In many Massachusetts cities, school districts face significant declines in school enrollment and an increase in the number of buildings that are underutilized. Cities now face pressure to close and consolidate schools, stripping neighborhoods of a valued asset and a critical piece of social infrastructure. Cities can partially address this pattern by building housing that is attractive to families with children in order to grow the school's population. But large challenges remain, and determining the fate of older buildings with a significantly smaller generation of school-age children in Massachusetts will require thoughtful neighborhood, city, and statewide planning.

Y-PLAN Demonstrates the Power of Intergeneration Participatory Planning

UC Berkeley's Center for Cities and Schools developed the Y-PLAN model (Youth – Plan, Learn, Act Now) to introduce students to city planning and give them tools to tackle real-world challenges in their communities. The program operates specifically to break down the silos between city planning and K-12 schooling. It is rooted in the belief that elementary and secondary school students offer unique insights and important visions for the future. But engagement processes typically overlook students, especially the youngest children. With more than two decades of experience in cities throughout the US, Y-PLAN shows how engaging across the entire age spectrum can deepen civic discourse and build civic capacity.

Y-PLAN offers educators professional development and curriculum frameworks. These materials help teachers and their partners structure projects to give students experiential learning that is relevant and aligned to state standards for critical thinking, group collaboration, and public communication skills. While most Y-PLAN projects take place in K-12 classrooms during the school day, some local planning efforts implement the model through after-school programs and local community-based organizations[30]

CHAPTER 3: MEASURING SUCCESS

Often people think evaluation comes at the end of a project, but to accurately assess change, you must develop evaluation protocols at the very outset. Presenting robust evaluation practices at the beginning of the initiative will also help draw partners. (The Purpose Built Communities case study emphasizes the importance of transparent accountability metrics to attract interest from outside investors.) Evaluation protocols that provide a strong early detection system are crucial to ensuring the work steadily advances equity and inclusion, as emphasized in the previous section.

Evaluating neighborhood change is especially difficult. The sample size is generally small and many variables are at play. A university research partner or third-party evaluator can help disentangle these forces and distill the results of your work. (In Baltimore, a partnership with an education research consortium allowed Community Schools to show positive results during a challenging period for the city).

While an evaluation partner can help communities utilize the appropriate techniques to isolate SCND's unique contribution to change in the local neighborhood or school, it will be up to the initiative to decide which outcomes it will target and which outputs it will produce to achieve those goals. To illustrate, the table below offers measures for a hypothetical SCND effort as it moves from emerging (testing the waters) to maturing (established, but still building) to transforming (creating stronger neighborhoods and schools for the long term).

Measures	Emerging	Stage Maturing	Transforming
School			
Output Metrics	adoption of community school model # of formal community partnerships	# of students participating in planning and neighborhood-oriented service learning projects - adoption of citywide school governance policies to sustain SCND practices	# of neighborhood system-level plans with school integration (e.g., early literacy, youth sports, clean energy and climate)
Outcome Metrics	> engagement measures on VOCAL school climate survey	> MCAS student growth percentiles < student churn < teacher churn	> student enrollment > integration in school enrollment >inclusive school climate scores for all subgroups on VOCAL survey
Neighborhood			
Output Metrics	# of community events with school participation/leadership	- adoption of school-centric neighborhood plan # of neighborhood improvement projects completed with school participation/leadership	# of mixed-income housing units produced # of affordable homeownership units produced # of open-space and infrastructure projects completed with linkages to school
Outcome Metrics	# of references to neighborhood's SCND strategy in publications with statewide or national audience	# of mixed-income rental units planned/permitted; # of affordable homeownership units planned/permitted < resident churn > voter turnout	> share of families with school-age children in neighborhood > share of families with school-age children utilizing the neighborhood public school > mixed-income neighborhood

CHAPTER 4: PARTNERING WITH THE STATE TO ADVANCE SCND

The tactics outlined in this playbook are workable today without change to state policy. However, SCND will be more impactful and expand faster with a strong state partnership. As communities embrace SCND, advancing these eight state policy proposals will be especially beneficial to the field:

1. *Create a taskforce to examine a whole-of-government approach to SCND.* As noted at the outset, a near-term goal is gathering state education, housing, and community development leaders to build support systems to help launch and sustain local SCND efforts. To accomplish this objective, the Healey-Driscoll administration could assemble a taskforce similar to the Early Education and Childcare Taskforce and the Commission on Unlocking Housing Production recently convened by executive orders. Elevating SCND will help build on the administration's leadership on both early childhood and housing issues by ensuring that state government is working more holistically to build the strongest neighborhoods possible for children and families.

2. *Provide state matching funds to SCND backbone organizations.* Launching or strengthening backbone organizations will require additional funds. Early on, these efforts will require resources to hire talented coordinators and compensate teacher leaders, parents, and resident volunteers. Some communities will have the philanthropic resources to provide this start-up capital. For neighborhoods with strong CDCs, the Community Investment Tax Credit might offer another viable resource to draw private investment. However, for many neighborhoods, early-stage funding will be difficult to raise, especially in efforts to pilot multiple neighborhoods within a single city at the same time. Modest state matching funds could give organizations running room to take on new or increased backbone organization duties with adequate resources, accelerating the expansion of this practice.

   Advocates for SCND can point to the success of states that have unlocked significant funding to grow and sustain strong Community School movements, which rely heavily on backbone organizations. New York has provided state funding for Community Schools for over a decade and currently spends about $250 million annually to support these efforts. In 2022, Maryland gave $117 million to 300 schools to support Community Schools under its Concentration of Poverty entitlement grant program. Most recently, California allocated $4.1 billion for planning, implementation, and coordination grants through the California Community Schools Partnership Program.[31]

3. *Prioritize neighborhoods that are committed to SCND for state investment in affordable and mixed-income housing.* Massachusetts will dramatically increase its investments in housing in the coming years. But even these new dollars will pale in comparison to the commonwealth's many housing needs. Giving state priority to communities that have made a demonstrable commitment to inclusive growth through SCND is one way to ensure that our limited housing dollars have as much positive impact as possible, both for the residents of new housing and for the schools and neighborhoods where these developments are located.

Massachusetts already offers incentives to further affordable housing construction through the distribution of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), by far the largest resource stream available for this purpose. The state scores applications for these funds according to criteria described in the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP). From transit access to green building, the current plan awards some additional points to proposals that address multiple worthy goals. However, these bonus points are not sufficient to provide much incentive given the many, and in some cases competing, priorities included in the QAP.

Research suggests QAPs in other states have had a meaningful impact on advancing school integration.[32] However, Massachusetts' plan does not give developers nearly enough incentive to partner with neighborhoods and school districts on complex SCND efforts. Currently, projects that are part of a community revitalization strategy receive just 6 extra points out of a total of 182 available points. Only slightly more points (8) are awarded to projects located in communities with strong public school systems.[33]

For housing policy to reduce school segregation, the state must give substantially more consideration to housing development that leads to greater school integration. In addition to affordable housing funds, the state should give neighborhoods that have committed to SCND higher priority for limited infrastructure and site readiness investments. With a school-centered neighborhood plan, these communities are doing their part to advance inclusive growth. By derisking the development process and making it more efficient, SCND will generate more housing production for each dollar of state subsidy, and developments constructed with state subsidy will have more positive impact.

4. *Devote more state housing resources to affordable homeownership programs.* Community development leaders have long sought additional housing support for affordable homeownership programs to stabilize neighborhoods and help low- and moderate-income families build wealth.[34] The case for directing more state dollars to this area becomes even stronger when school improvement is a priority. Research shows that affordable owner-occupied housing has positive impacts on school performance, while rental housing typically has little to no measurable impact on nearby schools.[35]

   This finding is not unexpected: homeownership increases housing stability, educational attainment, health and wellbeing, civic engagement, and financial security.[36] Despite these many benefits, the Commonwealth made few investments in affordable homeownership over the past decade. The handful of homeownership units developed for long-term affordability in Massachusetts have been disproportionately located in suburbs.[37]

   While the state has recently begun to promote homeownership through MassHousing's Commonwealth Builder program and the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), these funding streams remain limited. As a commonwealth, we are far behind in developing a stable inventory of affordable properties that can help those without generational wealth access homeownership.[38] NSP is a particularly valuable homeownership tool when seen through a school improvement lens: it allows cities to rehab blighted housing, removing asbestos, lead paint, mold, and other environmental contaminants that contribute directly to adverse educational outcomes. While the state spends hundreds of millions annually to grow and maintain its affordable housing stock, only about $7 million goes to this critical program each year.

5. *Redevelop public housing with a focus on building stronger mixed-income neighborhoods for children and families.* Underinvestment in both state and federal public housing developments has created a serious drag on many urban neighborhoods in Massachusetts, furthering residential disinvestment and school segregation. In partnership with large high-capacity

affordable housing developers, public-private efforts are underway to rebuild these public housing projects as mixed-income developments.

In addition to anticipated federal and private resources, these complex projects require considerable state funding. The commonwealth has committed to doing its part. The 2024 housing bond bill includes a $100 million authorization to support mixed-income public housing redevelopment. As it deploys the funds, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities can give housing authorities especially strong incentives to pursue redevelopment projects in collaboration with local school districts, so that new buildings provide as much educational uplift as possible.

Over the past two decades, developers across the country have experimented with school-centered approaches to public housing redevelopment through the US Housing and Urban Development's HOPE VI and Choice Neighborhood programs. While producing many benefits, these efforts were not always successful in preventing displacement or establishing lasting ties between schools and housing developments. The Purpose Built Communities network is steadily gaining experience coordinating large scale public housing redevelopment with efforts to improve neighborhood conditions for children and families. Massachusetts can learn from these efforts to increase return on its sizeable investment in public housing.[39]

6. *Allow neighborhoods with SCND plans to adopt stronger local preferences in tenant selection processes for units in affordable housing developments.* When selling affordable homes or leasing apartments in affordable housing developments, residents with children in the local public school should receive preference in communities with a strong SCND plan. Otherwise, these units are more likely to go to newcomers or those without children in the public school. This increases the risk of displacement and undermines stability in school enrollment and continuity in the lives of resident families. It could also weaken a school's incentive to support dense infill development, a key strategy for sustainably enlarging and economically diversifying a neighborhood's population while preventing displacement.

While fair housing law generally allows for resident preferences, in Massachusetts the preference is only allowable for properties that are new to the market, and it is limited to 70 percent of units. Areas that are actively working to build mixed-income communities must give preference to more local area residents to ensure that they are not displaced by the success of their own neighborhood improvement efforts.

7. *Increase funding for school facility construction and adopt design and development practices that support SCND.* The lack of sufficient funding to keep up with public school facility modernization in Massachusetts is well documented, and the consequences for school segregation and racial equity are coming into clearer focus. We are also learning that the adoption of a one-size-fits-all approach to school building—a well-intended attempt to level the playing field and lower design costs—is proving to be cost-ineffective in the long-run.

The common design requirements of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), coupled with the practice of not reimbursing communities for land acquisition and site readiness, is pushing cities to build new schools on their edges rather than in their neighborhoods. These locations increase transportation costs and reduce the social infrastructure and social connection that these facilities can provide. Moreover, MSBA funding does not cover any of the costs for childcare, healthcare, and other spaces for supplemental services within school buildings, which means cities lose out on the operating efficiencies and stronger outcomes that co-location enables.

The MassINC Policy Center is working with the Worcester Regional Research Bureau on an in-depth study

of school facility construction challenges and potential solutions. SCND pilots will help expose these issues and create opportunities for long-term value for taxpayers by thinking more holistically about the role new school buildings can play in urban neighborhoods.

8. *Build local capacity to integrate SCND into green building projects.* From networked geothermal to community solar, the transition to clean energy to heat and cool buildings will require a range of coordinated community-scale interventions. These infrastructure investment flows will create myriad opportunities for SCND, but realizing their full potential will require focused effort to ensure that cities are not overwhelmed by administrative and regulatory complexity.

In the 2000s, Massachusetts pioneered efforts to manage a multiagency response to redevelop brownfield sites, relieving localities of administrative burdens and accelerating impact and benefit across the commonwealth. Emergent clean energy efforts, such as a project integrating an affordable housing development into a networked geothermal system on an adjacent school site, will present even greater administrative and regulatory challenges. Massachusetts urgently needs a coordination, technical assistance, and capacity-building model that enables many such projects to be undertaken simultaneously in urban neighborhoods across the state.

The state must also work to ensure that the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center has sufficient resources to bolster nonprofit intermediaries so that they can offer direct support to municipalities. Groups such as Emerald Cities, the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC), and UndauntedK12 can ensure that cities have the knowledge and capacity to take advantage of considerable resources to decarbonize buildings, coming online shortly through the Inflation Reduction Act and other new state and federal funding streams.

CASE STUDY 1

COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS DRIVE SCHOOL-CENTERED NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN CINCINNATI

Over the past two decades, Cincinnati built the country's most comprehensive SCND venture by expanding the Community School model to have an explicit focus on neighborhood improvement.[40] In fact, Cincinnati leaders coined the term school-centered neighborhood development. They talk about their achievements in terms of both impressive gains in student performance, as well as significant investment flowing to neighborhoods. Most notably, they show how school-centric neighborhood plans are developed with deep resident engagement, allowing incumbent residents to drive revitalization and benefit directly from it.

These efforts trace back to a 1997 Ohio Supreme Court ruling, which found the poor physical condition of Cincinnati's public schools to be unconstitutional. The court's remedy required the city to produce a master plan to renovate or rebuild its schools. To implement the plan, voters needed to approve bonds, but in 1999 they rejected such a measure out of a profound mistrust of the school system's capacity to use the resources well.

To establish trust with residents, Cincinnati Public Schools partnered with the Children's Defense Fund to advance a new vision of public schools as neighborhood hubs. Each neighborhood developed a vision for its school as the center of their community over a three-year planning process. Local School Decision Making Committees (LSDMCs) gave families and community members more say in a wide range of decisions, including budgeting and principal hiring. LSDMCs were also tasked with choosing a backbone organization to coordinate between the school and its community partners.

In a unique move that has been essential to sustainability and success, Cincinnati's school board codified this model in 2001. With the LSDMCs and the backbone organization partnership model, each school became a neighborhood anchor institution, with co-located services responsive to the vision and needs of students and residents. In 2003, Cincinnati voters responded to this fresh approach with a vote of confidence, approving a $480 million bond to renovate or replace aging school buildings.

Over time, multiple schools in Cincinnati built on this Community School model and began to launch housing-focused work that would eventually become known as school-centered neighborhood development. The evolution occurred as school leaders recognized that improving conditions in neighborhoods suffering from disinvestment was vital to improving the lives of students and families and boosting school performance.

As an example of success, leaders point to Lower Price Hill. In 2010, the renovation of the neighborhood's Oyler School added a high school and space for co-located partners, including health services and an early learning center. Building on the momentum, the Community Learning Center Institute (CLCI, the school's backbone organization) led an extensive neighborhood engagement process to create the Lower Price Hill Resurgency Plan. Approved by the city as the official plan to guide development in the area in 2019, the strategy outlines the need for high-quality housing and affordable homeownership opportunities for Oyler School families and graduates.

More than 40 percent of homes in Lower Price Hill were vacant after the foreclosure crisis, and many families struggled to find stable housing. Working with Habitat for Humanity and other partners, they have drawn over $130 million in investment to the neighborhood, radically reducing displacement and increasing neighborhood stability.[41] Before the Oyler School was rebuilt, 85 percent of eighth graders did not make it past the 10th grade. Today, 93 percent of Oyler students finish high school and three-quarters enroll immediately in college.

CLCI is now the national leader in the nascent SCND movement. In addition to serving as the backbone organization for Oyler and for schools in five more Cincinnati neighborhoods, CLCI works with cities throughout the country to replicate the model.

CASE STUDY 2

BALTIMORE SPURS NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION WITH NEW COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Over more than a decade, Baltimore has aligned school construction with a strengthened Community School model to revitalize neighborhoods and improve outcomes for students, families, and residents.[42]

Like many cities, Community School efforts in Baltimore picked up steam in the early 2000s. The Baltimore Coalition for Community Schools led delegations to visit Community Schools around the country, and soon 46 were established in Baltimore. For the first decade, the effort received few resources and modest attention. This began to change in 2012, when the mayor partnered with the Family League of Baltimore (a nonprofit that braids public and private dollars to support out-of-school and other child and family services) to create 51 Family League Community Schools.

A year later, in a culmination of years of effort, the Maryland State Legislature provided $1.1 billion to renovate and replace schools in 25 Baltimore neighborhoods. The authorizing legislation specifically called for cooperative uses of new buildings and school partnerships leading to economic development and neighborhood revitalization. The hope was that sizeable investments in facilities would further the school district's efforts to build Community Schools and connect with the city's neighborhood planning and community development efforts.

The city implemented this approach through Investing in Neighborhoods and Schools to Promote Improvement, Revitalization, and Excellence (INSPIRE). Led by the city's planning department, INSPIRE has facilitated participatory planning and funded implementation projects within a quarter-mile radius of 21 schools receiving facility investments. These projects include improvements to parks, streetscapes, sidewalk repair and other safe route to school measures. Private philanthropy has complemented this approach with a School-Centered Neighborhood Investment Initiative (SCNII).

While it is still relatively early in the change process, challenges have emerged. The combined Community School/school-building initiative has struggled in neighborhoods that are losing population at high rates. These communities often lack high-capacity local nonprofits, and school leadership turnover has been difficult to overcome. In one of these areas, the closure and consolidation of schools meant that the remaining school was no longer seen by many as a neighborhood school; community trust was lost and now must be painstakingly rebuilt.

However, other areas of the city are seeing results. Neighborhoods with less intense disinvestment have generally been gaining both immigrants and middle-income white residents. Community Schools offer an opening to help integrate these mixed populations and nurture cross-cultural relationships. In one neighborhood that is seeing particularly promising results, a local high-capacity CDC serves as the backbone organization.

Working with a CDC gives the Community School coordinator access to a sophisticated team to help with parent organizing and resident engagement. The CDC is also entrepreneurial about connecting the new school facility to efforts to draw housing investment and improve the neighborhood's commercial area. To prevent displacement, the CDC is working aggressively to connect incumbent families with financial advising, homeownership counseling, and financial assistance. The CDC is also savvy about encouraging those who engage in the schools as parent leaders to apply these skills and relationships to form and remain engaged in neighborhood associations, so that they will have ongoing levers of power when their children age out of the school system.

In some communities, these investments have been well-received by long-time residents who have never seen this kind of resource come to their neighborhood. Efforts to improve school-community relationships have been aided by the community-serving spaces in new schools, which allows schools to bring residents into the building for various services throughout the day without creating difficult-to-manage student security issues. However, challenges remain. Some residents believe these gleaming new buildings are not for them, and they see the investment as a sign that the city wants to spur gentrification in their neighborhoods.

Baltimore's success is linked to policy changes that have put the city in a position to sustain these efforts. In 2016, the Baltimore School Board adopted regulations and a citywide steering committee to oversee Community Schools. The effort is also aided by Maryland's 2008 Fair Student Funding Model that gives principals more autonomy over budgets.

Evaluation has also been important to sustaining the effort. The Family League partners with the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (BERC), which lends assistance with data collection, evaluation, and storytelling. BERC helped implementers recognize that systemic change was a long-term process and that they would need high-quality data to detect early signs of progress. To enable rigorous evaluation, they work with schools to adopt Efforts to Outcomes, a secure database designed to help multiple partners track program participation across sectors. These data, combined with the concentration of commitments made by large institutional stakeholders, have allowed schools to demonstrate results and maintain momentum through the considerable instability in Baltimore in the aftermath of the 2015 riots following the death of Freddie Gray and the pandemic.

CASE STUDY 3

PURPOSE BUILT COMMUNITIES BUILDS MIXED-INCOME NEIGHBORHOODS

Purpose Built Communities is a national nonprofit that supports neighborhood-based efforts to build high-quality mixed-income housing, cradle-to-college education pathways, economically vital neighborhood commercial areas, and community wellness. Led by a strong national backbone organization implementing a plan produced by the community, this comprehensive approach includes all the components that we have laid out for SCND and more. For the past 15 years, Purpose Built has been inventing and implementing its practice in cities across the country. These efforts offer rich lessons for Massachusetts communities.

Purpose Built grew out of a transformative redevelopment initiative in the East Lake neighborhood of Atlanta. In the early 1990s, East Lake was home to one of the nation's most violent public housing developments. Motivated in part by the 1996 Olympic games, the city wanted to improve conditions in the neighborhood. With heavy lobbying from President Jimmy Carter, the Atlanta Housing Authority received $34 million from HUD to rebuild the East Lake Meadows Public Housing project as a mixed-income community. This was one of the first attempts to convert public housing to a mixed-income development.

Tom Cousins, a large regional developer, got involved in the effort out of a desire to give back to the community. He purchased a shuttered golf club in the neighborhood and set out to restore the property. The impressive new course would have high membership fees and would eventually become a stop for the PGA tour. All the profits from the course went to a new East Lake Community Foundation that Cousins established.

Cousins also raised an additional $20 million for the housing project, and after no traditional private-sector developers responded to the housing authority's RFP, he got the East Lake Foundation to manage the redevelopment and become a de facto backbone organization. The foundation also raised $18 million to build the Charles R. Drew Charter School and helped bring a YMCA branch and a new grocery store to the neighborhood. All together, the foundation's efforts have drawn more than $600 million in investment to East Lake.

In many ways, the transformation has been remarkable. An Urban Institute evaluation comparing East Lake to similar neighborhoods found the share of residents holding bachelor's degrees has increased by 22 percent, while the share of households living below the federal poverty level has fallen 19 percent. Average annual household income grew by roughly $35,000, and average home values increased by approximately $175,000. Violent crime is down by 95 percent.[43]

The Drew School's performance has been equally impressive. It is Atlanta's highest performing high school, the city's second-highest performing middle school, and its sixth-highest performing elementary. Drew students have also had notable athletic success. It was the first Atlanta school to win the state championship in boys' golf and girls' tennis.

However, not all residents have benefited from revitalization. The neighborhood's Black population fell 24 percent, while the white population increased 20 percent. This inequity was largely driven by the public housing redevelopment. As was common in the HOPE VI era, the new development contained fewer units than the buildings it replaced. And while there was considerable effort to relocate residents back to the new buildings when they were complete, estimates suggest that only 25 percent of public housing residents returned to the new mixed-income development.

Lessons have been learned: mixed-income public housing redevelopment generally calls for one-to-one replacement of units today. Other aspects of the East Lake model involved unique circumstances, including extraordinary levels of philanthropic and public funding, a former President's advocacy, and exceptional entrepreneurship. But Cousins believed the core concept of building high-quality mixed-income housing, strong schools, and other assets that make for a healthy neighborhood provide a formula for success in neighborhoods that have been subject to decades of disinvestment. In particular, Cousins found that having a clearly defined plan with reliable metrics to measure progress was critical to draw private sector partners to struggling neighborhoods. Together with investors Warren Buffet and Julian Robertson, he cofounded Purpose Built Communities in 2009 to help neighborhoods with similar vision and long-term discipline to adopt this approach.[44]

Now operating in 27 neighborhoods across 14 states, Purpose Built network members share their expertise in holistic community revitalization. They are supported by the Purpose Built team, which includes subject-matter experts in real estate development, local government support, transformative education strategies, and resident engagement. The network has also established strong relationships with leaders who can provide technical, legal, and financial assistance to the field.

In Syracuse, Purpose Built is working with the East Adams neighborhood. The community was sawn in half by Interstate 81 in the 1950s. With the state of New York now removing the elevated highway, the community has a vision for a diverse, mixed-income neighborhood with excellent schools and health and wellness programs. The city, the Syracuse Housing Authority, and the Allyn Foundation formed a new nonprofit called Blueprint 15 to lead the effort. A core component of the project is converting the state's oldest public housing project into a new neighborhood. Taking advantage of space opened up by removal of the roadway, the new $800 million development will replace public housing units one-to-one to address concerns about displacement, and it will add new affordable and market-rate units. Blueprint 15 is also working with the YMCA to construct a new Children Rising Center, which will include space for early learning, recreation, and health and wellness.

Purpose Built's newest member is the Cherry Hill neighborhood of Baltimore. Joining the network was a five-year effort. Residents wrote the Purpose Built Communities model into the 2020 Cherry Hill Transformation Plan, which was adopted by the Baltimore City Planning Commission. In 2021, they formed Cherry Hill Strong as a new nonprofit to serve as a backbone organization for the effort. Purpose Built recently approved Cherry Hill Strong's application for membership. In May, Maryland Governor Wes Moore attended the event that marked the neighborhood's introduction to the network. The governor has pledged to provide state support with resources from the ENOUGH Act, a new initiative to reduce the number of neighborhoods with concentrated poverty in Maryland.

NOTES

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CHECKOUT SHEET

Ready to start a conversation about SCND in your community?
Here is a partial list of partners you can engage:

☑ *The early literacy community.* Most cities have strong early literacy coalitions that have thought at length about how the community supports its youngest residents and prepares them to enter public schools ready to learn. The neighborhood can partner with these groups to ensure that it is doing all it can to accommodate the development of these critical early learning systems.

☑ *The arts community.* Through creative placemaking, artists have become especially adept at working with neighborhoods to tell their stories, celebrate their cultures, and develop brands as unique and thriving communities. Arts and cultural organizations often partner well with schools. Arts organizations can play a key role helping neighborhoods and schools gain quick wins for positive momentum.

☑ *The youth development and sports communities.* In many urban neighborhoods, youth development resources can be found in boys and girls clubs, Y's, and other nonprofit agencies; they often have experience partnering with schools. In smaller cities, sports leagues tend to be underdeveloped. To the extent that opportunities to play organized sports exist, access is highly unequal. SCND initiatives can work with leaders in youth development and sports to rally the community to overcome these challenges at the neighborhood level.

☑ *The mobility community.* Many cities have groups working to improve walking, biking, and bus networks. If your community does not have a local group, there are numerous statewide organizations that can lend a hand to help ensure that your neighborhood plan has a strong vision for family-friendly mobility and a solid strategy to implement it.

☑ *Business associations.* Efforts to grow local small businesses through business improvement districts or other formal entities create potential partners as you work to create third spaces and other social infrastructure that support youth and family connection and build community on Main Street.

☑ *Creative affordable housing developers.* Many private and nonprofit affordable housing developers, including but not limited to CDCs, have talented teams with the skills to negotiate with state and federal agencies to combine multiple funding sources in ways that break new ground and create strong synergies. An organized community with a strong vision for SCND will attract interest from leaders in the field.

☑ *Public housing authorities.* In many urban neighborhoods, the public housing authority is a major landowner that provides housing to a large number of students. If the school and neighborhood have a bold housing vision, you will likely find a willing partner to help you execute it.

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