



USI | URBAN STRATEGIES, INC.
Families at the Center of Results

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

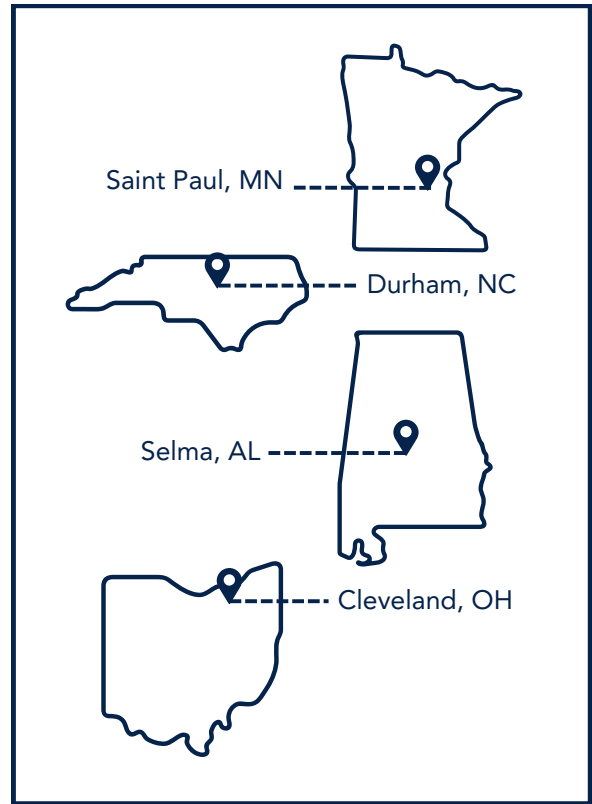
*Communities
in Action*





In 2023, USI partnered with four cities, Cleveland, Durham, Saint Paul, and Selma, to improve the lives of their people while also dismantling the systemic racism that perpetuated the disinvestment and silencing of those communities.

This is CommUnities in Action.



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▶ SYSTEMS CHANGE IS OUR WHY

Urban Strategies, Inc. (USI) is a national “Think and Do Tank” (non-profit) with over 45 years of experience leveraging housing for community and economic development. Working in 63 large, mid-size, and small communities across the country, we believe that every community facing persistent challenges is equally rich with expertise to solve those challenges.

We are an organization of color doing transformative work in communities of color. Particularly Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous communities that have largely been stripped of resources and opportunity due to years of exposure to structurally racist policies and practices. Policies and practices that create disparities in each and every social determinant of health.

Every single community has been structured to get the results they are getting. To eliminate those disparities, we cannot provide only programmatic solutions and expect the structural change needed for every community to thrive. We must work to re-structure disinvested communities to achieve the results they deserve, and to achieve that, the work must be driven by the people who live there.



Our mission at USI is that **ALL** children will be stable and thriving. To get to the ALL, we follow an approach that acknowledges the current reality while taking actions to create a better one. To us, that is the power of **CommUnities in Action**.





What do those disparities look like in real life?

Like strands in a web, each social determinant is inextricably linked to the other; a problem in one quickly leading to a problem in another. *For instance:*

Mr. Johnson does not have access to quality healthcare to manage his diabetes effectively. He doesn't feel well, so he misses work. It becomes harder to pay his rent on time, putting

his family at risk of eviction. There are no grocery stores within the community. His son attends a school that doesn't receive enough funding for books, let alone to ensure that every student is career ready when they graduate. Local employment opportunities don't pay well. To access employers that pay higher wages, Mr. Johnson relies on public transit which equates to over 2-hour commutes to get to and from work.

Community Needs and Threats

This is USI's interpretation of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it applies to Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous communities experiencing disinvestment. With real threats creating unmet needs at every level, it illustrates how one issue compounds the next.

THREATS

Unmet needs at the base levels keep people trapped in their trauma self. Functioning in fight/flight/freeze/fawn.

THREATS

Unmet survival and safety needs, family separation, underperforming schools, lack of culturally competent healing.

THREATS

Unmet survival needs, Anti-Blackness narratives, primary, generational, and secondary trauma, historic and ongoing racism, family separation, and lack of opportunity.

THREATS

Anti-Blackness narratives, primary trauma, historic and ongoing racism, over policing, mass incarceration, economic deprivation, and eviction.

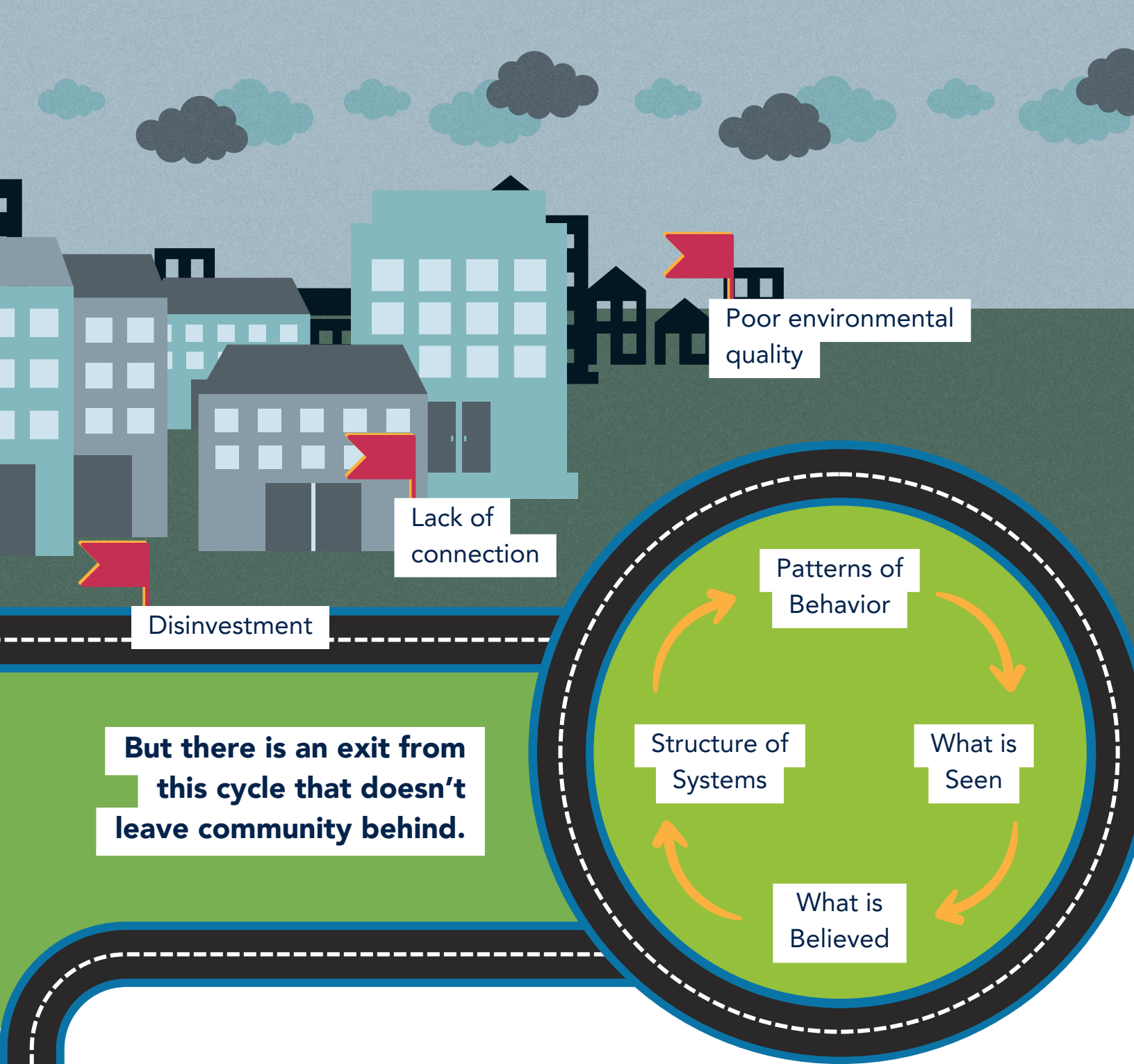


Communities are set up to get the results they are getting. Stuck in an endless cycle that perpetuates the current results.

Structural design keeps communities from the opportunities and investments they need to thrive.

Redlining

Systemic issues with poverty



► INTRODUCING COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

Communities in Action is a framework that brings the *unity* to community transformation. It aligns people who live, work and play there to design, deploy and fund equitable change to create a community where every person can thrive. This framework was built to advance powerful action that disrupts years of chronic disinvestment by bringing additional resources to resolve housing, infrastructure, and economic development challenges created by structural design.

► WHY COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

Chronic disinvestment has created metaphorical roundabouts in Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous communities across the country. Driven by systemic racism these roundabouts keep us stuck using limited resources providing programmatic solutions to the problems we see. While programmatic solutions are important, equally important is the generation of solutions that dismantle structural realities that created those problems in the first place. In the example of Mr. Johnson this means moving beyond only the management of his diabetes to tackling design problems that disconnect his entire community from access to quality food, healthcare, education, jobs and transportation.

As practitioners partnering directly with people living in communities impacted by the above design, USI has seen this play out on repeat for the full of our 45 years. Driven by a desire to move beyond this cycle, as system disrupters, we dared to imagine a new reality; one that puts resources and decision making where it belongs. In the hands of community.

Thus, the creation of CommUnities in Action.

And in pursuit of this transformative work to restructure, we set goals for success:



Create a collaborative body of community members, city officials, philanthropic partners, and community-based organizations in four targeted disinvested Black, Latino/a/x, and Indigenous communities willing to share decision making power equally.



Lead the collaborative in working together to acknowledge the current reality and create a powerful new vision for their community.



Build the infrastructure so data can be used to uncover the root causes of racial disparities, create strategies that eliminate those disparities, and create pathways to private and public dollars to fund the implementation, measuring results and making adjustments along the way.

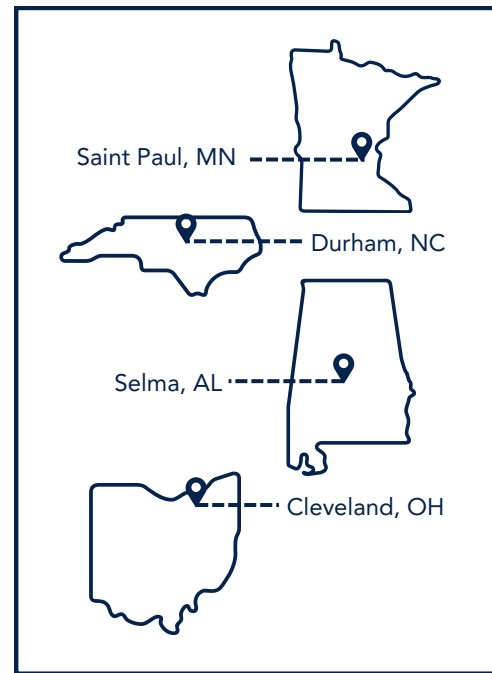


Design and hold space for members from each of the four cities to come together regularly, share what they were learning, problem solve, and develop real time solutions for challenges individually and collectively.

▶ COMMUNITIES IN ACTION IN REAL LIFE

Following the launch of CommUnites in Action, USI began their partnership with community in Cleveland, Durham, Saint Paul, and Selma. Community teams prioritized collaboration with diverse stakeholders to differentiate programmatic and systemic strategies, and then used that understanding to craft strategies that would move them closer to their community’s identified result.

The identified result for each city is the idealized outcome of the many diverse and community-led strategies that aligns to USI’s commitment that ALL families are stable and thriving.



Cleveland’s Result:
All Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a/x people in Cleveland will lead thriving lives, and work and age with dignity.

Durham’s Result:
All Black individuals in Durham are able to access the opportunity to be safe, healthy, prosperous, and engaged.

Selma’s Result:
A unified, value-centered Selma where all Black people are safe, healthy, thriving, and purpose-filled.

Saint Paul’s Result:
All Black, American Indian, and Latino/a/x people in Saint Paul will have regenerative generational health, well-being, safety, wealth, and economic justice.

Year One: Collaboration in Action

Across and within the four cities, collaboration happened on a large scale. The numbers below reflect the total amount of time, sessions, and participants dedicated to making systemic change.

9

Power Mapping Sessions

20

Collaborative Sessions

70

Hours in Collaborative

165

Collaborative Participants



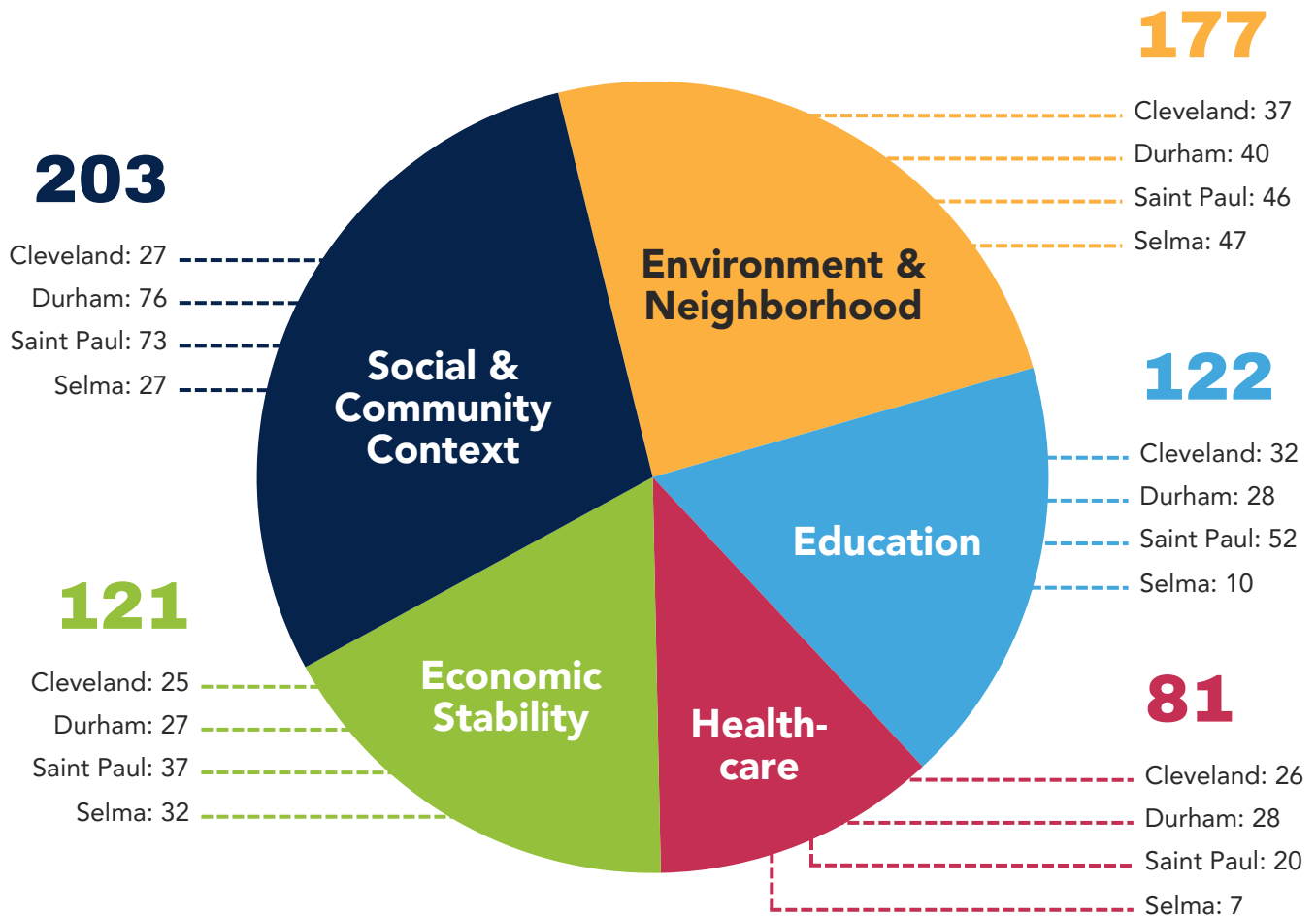
Creating the collaborative body of stakeholders

Within the planning process, each city created a disaggregated data walk to reflect conditions of well-being in each of the five social determinants of health across their city. Central to building their collaborative body was a power mapping activity to ensure they had developed diverse and inclusive collaborations with stakeholders who held both formal and informal authority.

During these sessions, cities identified potential partners to include in power mapping sessions in alignment to the five social determinants of health.

697


Potential Partners Identified




▶ CREATING STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE


As sites moved from planning to implementation, they adopted workgroups (in housing, infrastructure, and economic development pillars), prioritized action, developed logic models, built partnerships, implemented strategies, created and strengthened lines of communication with local government, prioritized and sought funding opportunities aligned with their goals.


Cleveland

 **18** collaborative hours to complete action plans


 **13** average collaborative participants


Durham

 **20** collaborative hours to complete action plans


 **23** average collaborative participants


Saint Paul

 **18** collaborative hours to complete action plans

 **26** average collaborative participants

Selma

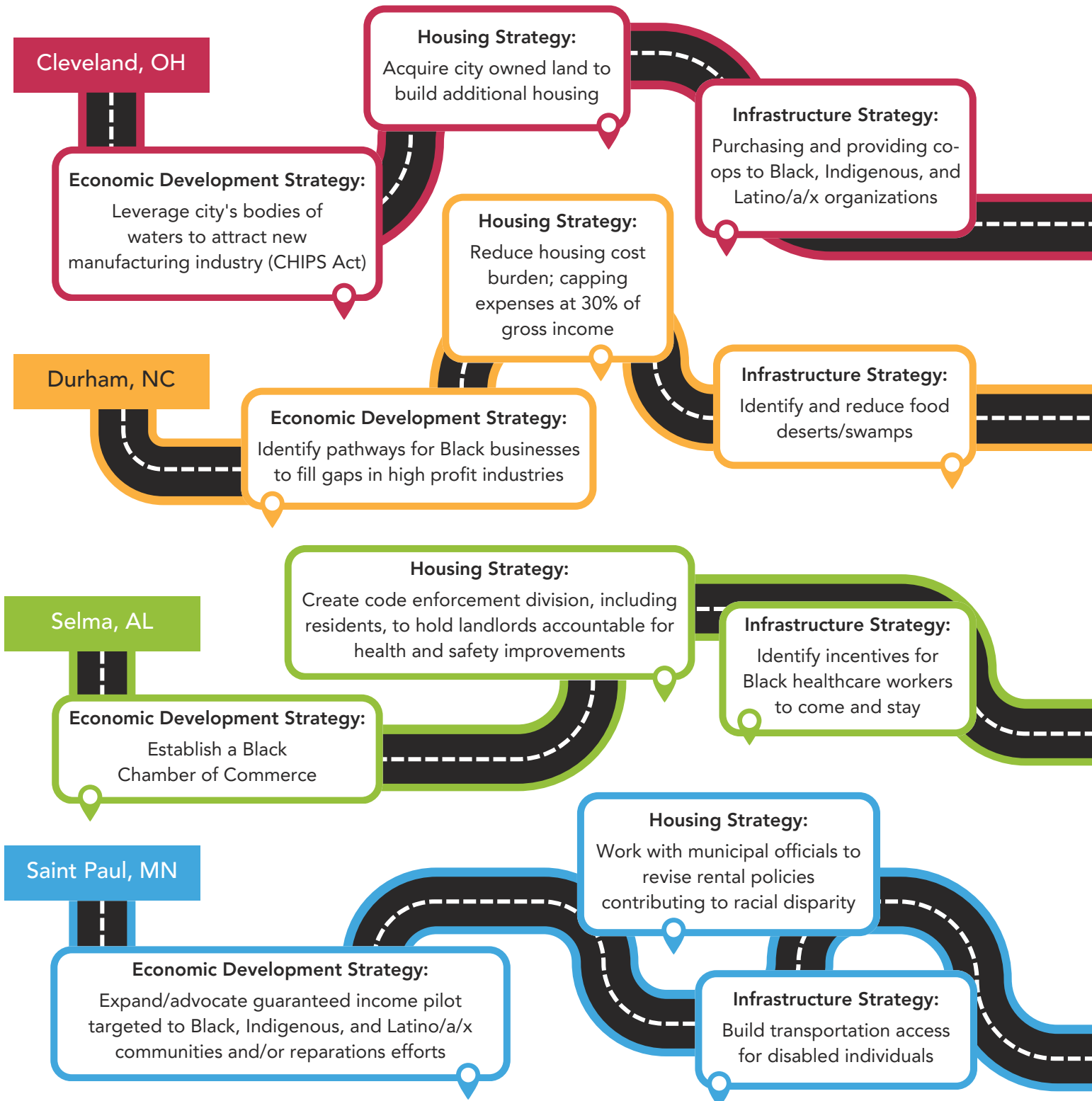
 **14** collaborative hours to complete action plans

 **26** average collaborative participants



Building the roadmap of strategies

Below are roadmaps of each city, outlining one of the many strategies per pillar, in pursuit of their identified result.



Additional strategies identified by these communities to put into action, by pillar:

Housing:

- Work with municipal officials to implement high-density zoning laws
- Incentivize affordable housing construction
- Establish Community Benefits Agreements with local businesses
- Make culturally sensitive homeownership programs
- Evaluate effectiveness of existing home repair and weatherization programs
- Create local neighborhood initiatives to apply pressure on landlords

Economic Development:

- Capitalize on rich history to create immersive learning experiences to attract academics
- Structure workshops for Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a/x business owners
- Prepare residents for advanced manufacturing and trade jobs
- Develop culturally informed policies for wealth building
- Improve access to financial capital
- Tie city or county tax credits to minimum MBE procurement goals

Infrastructure:

- Improve internet and computer access
- Develop network of culturally sensitive harm reduction programs
- Enhance and develop mental health learning and intervention opportunities for students
- Align with local partners to build a city-wide community engagement process
- Provide capacity-building grants and technical assistance to scale local efforts
- Map the impact and outcomes of participating organizations to demonstrate systemic change resulting from targeted investments by the coalition
- Ensure resource distribution goes to support local teachers and hiring new teachers
- Creation of more third spaces and green spaces

Cleveland's Result:

All Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a/x people in Cleveland will lead thriving lives, and work and age with dignity.

Durham's Result:

All Black individuals in Durham are able to access the opportunity to be safe, healthy, prosperous, and engaged.

Selma's Result:

A unified, value-centered Selma where all Black people are safe, healthy, thriving, and purpose-filled.

Saint Paul's Result:

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**ALL FAMILIES
ARE STABLE
AND THRIVING**

YEAR ONE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1

Led community members, city officials, philanthropic partners and community-based organizations in the **creation of a collaborative** in each of the four cities (Cleveland, Durham, Saint Paul, and Selma) who developed norms for **ensuring that each person was seen, heard, and had input on the decisions being made.**

2

Led **70 combined hours of community collaborative sessions** with an average of 22 participants across all cities reflecting the shared commitment that emerged as we progressed.

The Collaborative: a diverse group of people, groups, or organizations with equal influence committed to increasing the lived conditions of Black, Indigenous, and Latino/a/x communities through sustainable systems change by way of the Results Count® process.

3

Directly supported collaboratives in **securing an additional \$4,750,000 in direct resources** as well as connection to multiple federal technical assistance opportunities to build their skills and open future resources to advance their work.

4

Supported the lead organization of each collaborative in developing working groups successfully moving them **from planning into aligned action.**

5

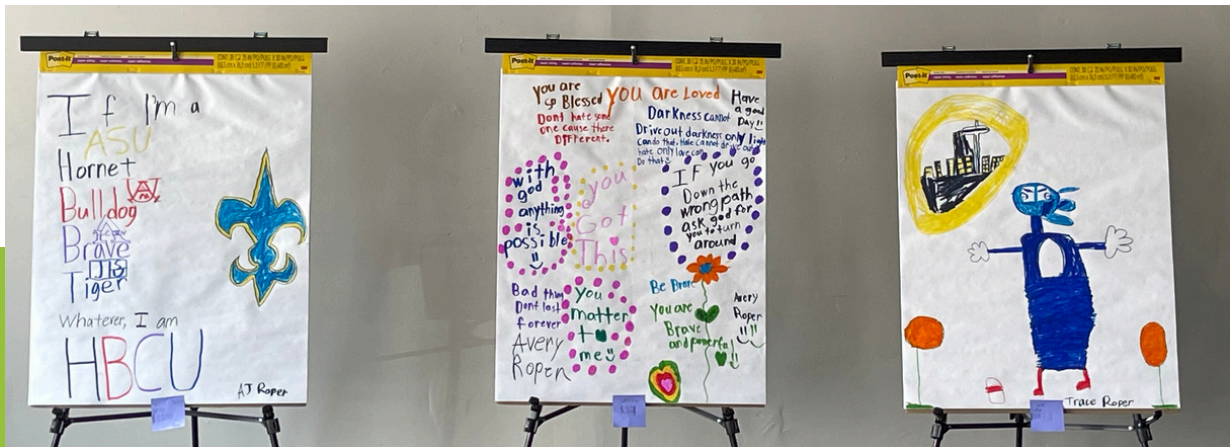
Led each collaborative in the **creation of a shared vision for their community** as well as the development of a roadmap to get to that vision with each addressing racial disparities in housing, infrastructure and economic development.

6

Built trusting relationships within and across cities that allowed leaders to be vulnerable as people, have difficult conversations, say what otherwise may have gone unsaid, and support each other in a manner that **honored the magnitude of what they were trying to achieve together.**

7

Addressed challenges with collaboratives in real time to ensure that they continued to work in service to their shared vision.



This photo is from a collaborative session held in Selma, where three community youth assisted in setting up the session. The youth centered their experience and perspective by creating art to decorate the session with. This art was displayed the entire Collaborative session.

▶ COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Through this data-driven, people centered work, we collaborate with the following institutions to ensure ALL children and families will be STABLE and THRIVING.

Cleveland

Cleveland Freedom Dreams Coalition
Third Space
United Black Fund
LISC
Enterprise
City of Cleveland
NAACP
Cleveland Votes
Cleveland Owns
The Young Latino Network
Policy Bridge
Policy Matters
George Gund Foundation
St. Lukes Foundation
NE Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
Urban Institute

Durham

Durham Housing Authority
National Institute of Minority
Economic Development
City of Durham
Aisymmetry
Center for Child and Family Health
Durham County Social Services
Dress for Success Triangle
Durham Children's Initiative

Durham Public School
Durham Real Estate and
Management Services
Durham Tech
Durham Workforce Development Board
Kramden Institute
Laurel Street Residential
North Carolina Central University
Department of Nursing
Department of Social Work
PORCH-Durham
StepUP Durham
Duke University
Duke Family Medicine &
Community Health

Saint Paul

Merrick Community Services
City of Saint Paul
McKnight Foundation
Saint Paul and Minnesota Foundation
Urban Institute

Selma

Foot Soldiers Park
City of Selma
Southern Poverty Law Center
Youth Advisory Board
Urban Institute

Set up your community for equitable results



Community driven process relying on the expertise of people in place



Additional dollars to fund strategies and support sustainability



Disrupting structural systems that produce inequities



Removal of silos across stakeholder groups



Powerfully aligned community coalition tackling housing, infrastructure, and economic development challenges



Communities in Action can create the systems and structures that work for everyone. It is possible. This expertise lives in every community. This is how as a collective, we can achieve stable and thriving for **ALL**.



Are you ready to pursue stable and thriving for your community? Are you ready to participate as a Community in Action?

Please reach out to us:

Kristie.Stutler@usi-inc.org



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