

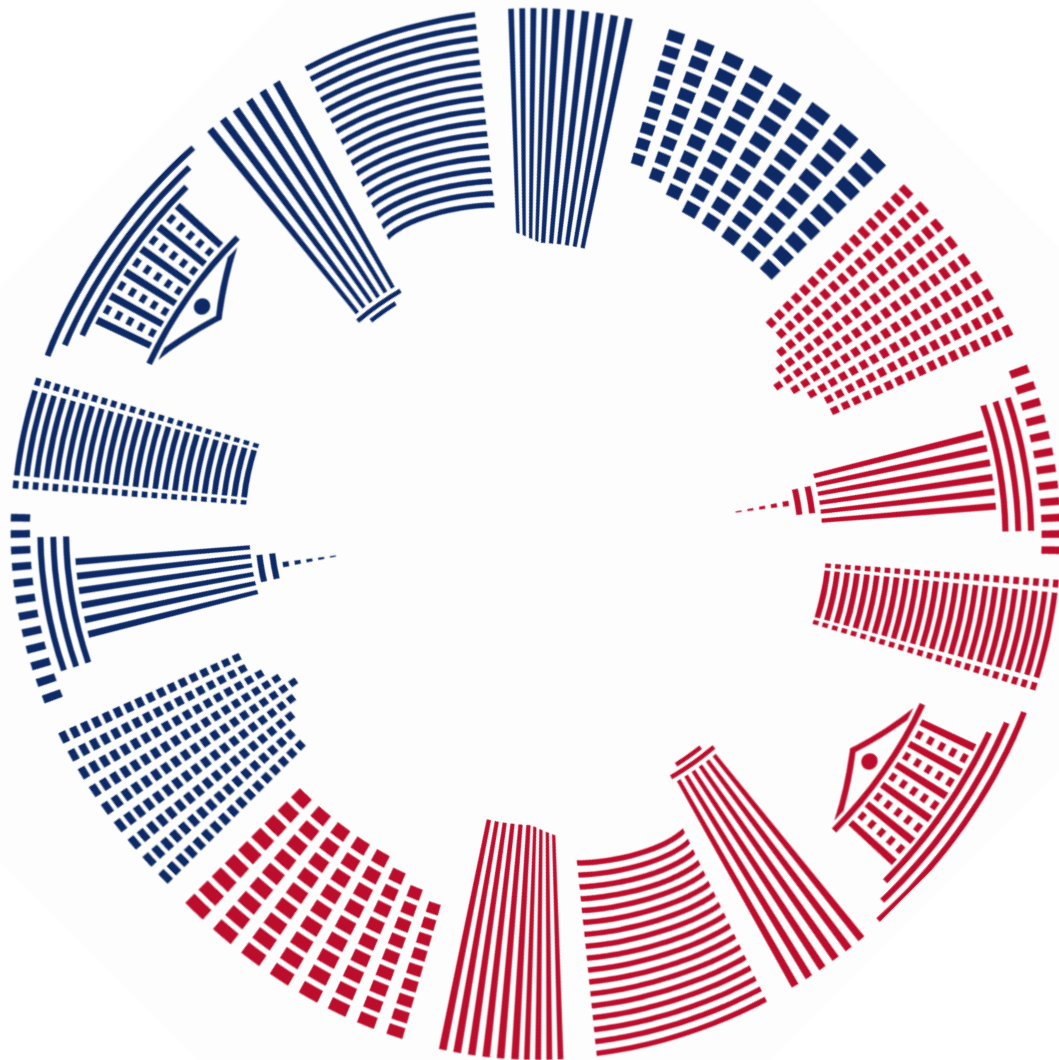
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**ACTION PAPER**

# UNLOCKING URBAN POWER



## THE NOVA CITIES INDEX

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## UNLOCKING URBAN POWER: THE NOVA CITIES INDEX

Leaders internationally have to move faster to address the mounting challenges of climate change, rising inequality, housing insecurity and health inequity. Over two years, our working group of fellows representing a diverse range of public, private and civic experiences has studied these issues, speaking with activists, community leaders, elected representatives, and business leaders in cities across Germany and the United States. Our resounding takeaway from our experiences is that there is a shared understanding of our collective challenges, but a severe lack of requisite actions to meet them. Cities release climate equity plans while allowing freeway expansions in urban cores to proceed; they name ambitious emission reduction targets while still zoning single family housing en masse near transit stops. There is an impressive and deep understanding of the challenges facing cities, but there has to be more action.

The lack of action that we have observed is devastating because cities are exactly the actors that can make real, inclusive progress. To support urban leaders, our group assessed the actions necessary to respond to urban challenges and foster inclusive urban progress (considering shared challenges on both sides of the Atlantic).<sup>1</sup> We devised a baseline criteria as guidance to determine whether the progressive visions espoused by many influential urban thinkers have been put into practice. At their best, cities are the life force of our civilization, bustling with an energy that unlocks the highest form of human collaboration and flourishing. The brightness of their potential is a 'supernova' (a powerful and luminous stellar explosion) for society, thus, we are excited to introduce the NOVA Cities Index<sup>2</sup>: a blueprint for inNOVative cities.

The authors wrote this paper in the context of New Urban Progress Fellowship, a transatlantic dialogue on the future of cities. These fellows represent a diverse range of public, private and civic experiences.

<sup>1</sup> This research was looking exclusively at cities in OECD countries and the recommendations are most relevant for cities in countries with comparable economic conditions.

## THE NOVA CITIES CRITERIA

1. **Housing Affordability** – In a Nova City, 80% of population is not rent burdened.<sup>3</sup>
2. **Land Use & Transportation** – A Nova City is compact, dense and committed to multimodal transportation. In a Nova City, there is a mix of uses and no single family zoning within .5 miles (or 1km) of heavy transit infrastructure; 75% of jobs are accessible with alternative forms of transportation.
3. **Inclusive Innovation & Workforce Development** – A Nova City invests in the success of its citizens, attracts talent, and fosters local entrepreneurs / economic development.
4. **Open Data** - A Nova City prioritizes transparency and commits to creating a single central open data portal for its city and making 100% of its data available to the extent that the publication of this data does not impinge on individuals' right to privacy, create grave security concerns, or conflict with legal requirements.
5. **Digital Equality** – A Nova City provides digital infrastructure to at least 75% of its population and is working towards 100% within 5 years.

*“At their best, cities are the life force of our civilization, bustling with an energy that unlocks the highest form of human collaboration and flourishing”*

Every city has a unique character and history, with different barriers to implementing solutions. That is why we designed a range of Nova metrics for cities, each on their own journey:

1. If a city has all 5, they are a **Supernova** City
2. If a city has at least 4, they are a **Nova** City
3. If a city has at least 3, they are a **Star** City

<sup>2</sup> Note that this is a preliminary proposal and we have not yet formally established this index.

<sup>3</sup> Understood as paying less than 30% of income towards housing costs: US Federal Rent Burden Guidelines

## MAKING CITIES RESILIENT THROUGH INCLUSION

*"Being a Nova City should not be thought of as a binary state that a city either is or isn't, but a framework and goal to be strived for with the corresponding actions."*

We developed the criteria in the midst of three particularly salient recent events, which together illustrate the severe challenges that cities face today: the global climate emergency, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects of the war in Ukraine on European cities. (1) The climate emergency has challenged cities to be both responsive as well as proactive in their approach to addressing this once in a generation crisis. The increase in severity and frequency of climate events has constrained failing infrastructure, challenged access to water and natural resources, and further stressed an inefficient energy grid. As cities continue to respond to the climate emergency, they must also think proactively to address energy consumption and conversion. (2) COVID-19's sudden arrival had stark but varying impacts on cities, generating numerous unique and unexpected challenges.

For example, San Francisco experienced a steep decline in tech workers and office vacancy, while Austin added over 22,000 workers in 2020. (3) Separate but concurrently, the ongoing conflict in Ukraine has meant mass displacement of millions coupled with destroyed infrastructure. This has created the challenge of supporting this inbound population in European destination cities while the war strains access to critical building materials and generates other shortages.

Although these crises will be solved or take their course, their challenges will almost surely continue to manifest in other forms. When selecting the criteria, we were responding to the variety and severity of these and many other challenges requiring cities to develop resiliency. As a result, each pillar of the NOVA Cities Index is a component of that resiliency, with the goal of fostering inclusive growth and innovation in the face of the ever-escalating challenges.

The principles behind the NOVA Cities Index are founded on a core premise of inclusion which, coupled with innovation in technologies, approaches, systems and organizations, will grow and evolve into an inclusive city. Being a Nova City should not be thought of as a binary state that a city either is or isn't, but a framework and goal to be strived for with the corresponding actions. A city does not necessarily have to achieve every policy goal; instead, we see this transformation

The New Urban Progress Fellowship travelled to Berlin, Leipzig, Wuppertal, Chicago, Denver, and Austin

as a long-term process where progress is likely to be uneven across policy fields. A Nova City is a dynamic status that, once reached, requires active maintenance and constant improvement.

An important distinction in thinking about the implementation of these principles is that a city is always two things simultaneously: the city as an **actor**, and the city as a **host**. The city as an actor refers to the leadership and executive functions of the city, i.e. policymakers in a position to determine what technologies, approaches, systems and organization are put to use in a progressive city. The city as a host refers to the city as a “home” where the many components of the collective interact, collaborate, coalesce, contradict and coexist. The outcomes of the city as an actor determine the nature of the city as a host; the two are distinct concepts that are nevertheless deeply intertwined. As the city as an actor or citizens within the city as a host innovate, it directly impacts how the city in its entirety is experienced.

With resilience and inclusion as the foundation of our index, we understand climate solutions as central to each criteria and are a critical principle for a Nova City. The ongoing challenges related to the climate emergency require energy and sustainability to be accessible and a central priority of every strategy. Affordable housing must also be sustainable, small businesses and entrepreneurs must invest in technology that helps combat climate change, the land use and transportation decisions must incentivize green modes of transit and mobility.

## HOW INNOVATION CAN CATALYZE ACTION

The kind of progress and improvement that unlocks inclusive growth benefitting all of a city’s inhabitants is rooted in embracing a multi-pronged understanding of innovation. Specifically, an understanding of innovation of technology, methods, approaches, and systems is needed.

Technology: The application of technology and related tools is an essential part of how cities continuously modernize and improve. It is a key component of meeting the Nova City goals. Technology, in particular digital technology, can help cities reach more citizens and better address their needs

(or address previously unmet needs for the first time). Cities need to be innovative in their use of these tools and not just view technology itself as the answer, but rather see it as a potential way to better engage citizens, collect data, inform decision-makers and ultimately solve city-level challenges.

*“Critical to this is also a strong democratic system allowing equitable participation in the systems of feedback, and accountability from the city as an actor to the population”*

Approach in implementing innovation: Whether they acknowledge it or not, cities will tend to have habits and a status quo-approach to governing and self organizing. Disrupting this status quo requires being self aware and intentional with regards to the steps being taken and constantly re-evaluating the efficacy of these approaches. This also means having elasticity in approaches and seeing experimentation that results in failure as a possibility rather than a deterrent. This doesn't mean cities need to exist in a state of constant churn; merely that there need to be structures in place that encourage and foresee regular self-adjustment.

Systems and organizations: The systems within a city are ultimately formed out of the combination of the technologies, human interactions and organizations acting simultaneously. By embracing innovation in technology and approach, the organizational system itself will be more innovative and inclined towards progress. Cities need organizational structures that can flexibly adapt to new tools, instruments, and methods. They must be able to integrate input from multiple stakeholders: city governments, the scientific community, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and local residents.

Critical to this is also a strong democratic system allowing equitable participation in the systems of feedback, and accountability from the city as an actor to the population.

## LABORATORIES OF PROGRESS AND GROWING NETWORKS

Just as the U.S. states were designed to be “laboratories of democracy”, cities across the globe function today as “laboratories of progress”. Cities are changemakers for innovation and inclusiveness, as they are often the first to be confronted with a given challenge, or are more intensively affected by the impacts. They also are places where diverse younger populations, highly skilled workers, and international companies tend to concentrate and consequently they lead in start-ups



and entrepreneurs, financial resources, and political power. Cities provide room for experimentation and space for dialogue, exchange and interaction between diverse actors. This leads to an incentive among cities to adapt to these challenges, because adapting ultimately becomes an existential question for each city. The concentration of wealth, power and innovation in cities also allows them to respond flexibly to disruptive situations in ways that directly address or even defy federal-level policymaking. This was seen in the refugee crisis in Germany, which saw individual cities largely independently shaping their response and support networks for refugees, or US cities' decisions to implement the Paris agreement independently from the Trump administration.

As the world grows more connected it is fascinating how cities in starkly different countries can still learn from one another. In our research we found a myriad of solutions in German cities that can support the United States, and vice versa. Expanding and strengthening these networks will only lead to more sustainable solutions, more collaboration on today's challenges, and most importantly - more creative and efficient courses of action.

## THE NOVA CITY CRITERIA

**1. Housing Affordability** – In a Nova City, 80% of population is not rent burdened.<sup>4</sup>

Housing is the key source of stability for every citizen in a Nova City, and housing costs likely comprise one of, if not the, largest household expense. If a household has to spend too much of their total income on housing, it takes away from their ability to provide for their families, access and pay for healthcare, be part of society ("Teilhabe" in German, or participation), and support other needs. The threshold for being considered 'rent burdened' is commonly understood to be 30% of one's gross household income.<sup>5</sup> Ideally no residents would be rent burdened, but for a city to be a flourishing Nova City, at least 80% of the population should not be.

<sup>4</sup> Understood as not paying more than 30% of income towards housing costs

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/assessing-the-severity-of-rent-burden-on-low-income-families-20171222.htm>

*“Land Use & Transportation- A Nova City is compact, dense and committed to multimodal transportation.”*

*In a Nova City, there is a mix of uses and no single family zoning within .5 miles (or 1km) of heavy transit infrastructure; 75% of jobs are accessible with alternative forms of transportation.”*

To reduce the extent to which the population is rent burdened, housing supply must be abundant, stability must be provided for, and subsidies need to be offered where relevant.<sup>6</sup> Supply can be encouraged with land use policies that encourage density, like a floor area bonus or ADU allowance (a zoning update implemented in both Denver and Austin). In Berlin, we met the head of the housing committee who outlined how the creation of Public Development Companies has been another vehicle to directly invest in and manage the creation of additional housing for a diversity of incomes.

Stability needs to be encouraged with rent stabilization programs, rent control where politically and economically viable, and eviction protection programs. In Vienna the government holds housing in the public domain, protected from market mechanisms that drive unaffordability. The publicly owned development companies in Berlin (and throughout Germany) achieve this by permanently stabilizing the rent levels for housing within their portfolios.

Subsidy will be necessary for those residents and housing projects that are most in need, this should be a blend of directly subsidized housing (Section 8 home ownership and/or rental support in the US), capital subsidy to support home builders (LIHTC programs and direct German funding for the Public Development Corporations), and funding for supportive services for vulnerable resident populations. As described further in the land use section, it is important that this affordability is geographically dispersed, and that there is a diversity of incomes throughout the city.

**2. Land Use, Urban Design & Transportation Infrastructure** – A Nova City is compact and dense. In a Nova City there is a mix of uses and no single family zoning within 0.5 miles or 1km of heavy transit infrastructure. While this is a more dramatic shift for US cities (relative to European peers), there is no version of sustainable individual carbon footprints and sustainable mobility infrastructure that does not require embracing density.

<sup>6</sup>Expertly broken out as the three S's - Supply, Stability and Subsidy - in 'The Affordable City' by Shane Phillips.



To make cities innovative and inclusive, mixed-use development is crucial. By supporting integrated urban development and transit-oriented development, access to all daily needs for all citizens should be enabled. Mixed-use (40% of floor space should be allocated for economic use)<sup>7</sup>, density and zoning (no single family zoning within 0.5 miles (1 km) near central transit stations and in central parts of cities (downtown, neighborhood center) are key indicators.

This includes the idea of a 15-Minute City, where citizens have access within 15 minutes to jobs, parks, social infrastructure, food, health services, quality public education and that provides different housing options for all. A Nova City is committed to multimodal transportation, and has 75% of jobs accessible with alternative forms of transportation and a bike network that covers at least 25% of all public roads, and at all newly built roads.

Density is crucial to gain a population-potential that is large enough to enable the demand for private and also for public services of a certain quality. Mixed-use development needs a careful urban design - one that gives respect to different needs of all citizens and allows different designs of housing types. A mix of uses is not only essential for innovation and inclusion, it is a key driver to build a "happy city"<sup>8</sup> - short distances, green spaces, a high-quality urban design, personal interaction, vibrant neighborhoods and safety are important criteria for more happiness in cities.

Public safety is another critical element of an inclusive city. Building and designing cities for all citizens fosters social and economic progress. By involving planning, urban development, policy and all different stakeholders responsible for safety, Nova Cities have to design cities that allow all citizens an equal access to all daily needs and a safe environment. All public places should be free of weapons.

<sup>7</sup> UN-Habitat (2014): A new strategy of sustainable neighborhood Planning: Five principles. (<https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/A%20New%20Strategy%20of%20Sustainable%20Neighbourhood%20Planning%20Five%20principles.pdf>)

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy\\_City](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_City)

Innovative Cities also included areas for renewable energy within their jurisdictions. German states have to provide at least 2% of their land for wind energy to implement the German energy transition.<sup>9</sup> This could be seen as a model for others to handle climate change in urban and rural areas.

**3. Inclusive Innovation & Workforce Development** – A Nova City invests in the growth of all its citizens while attracting talent, fostering local entrepreneurs and economic development.

The nature of "work" is changing. Technological innovation is redefining what work is, how we do it and where we do it. For cities, that means not only adapting to the rapidly changing work landscape but also anticipating, and building, for it.

*"Inclusive Innovation & Workforce Development – A Nova City invests in the success of its citizens, attracts talent, and fosters local entrepreneurs / economic development"*

City officials know this. In the US, there are more than 10,000 economic development organizations that collectively employ more than 250,000 people. Yet, these agencies too often focus on outdated ways of doing things such as futile attempts to attract the headquarters of large international companies. Also, while many economic and workforce development efforts, rightly, focus on helping the unemployed and underemployed, more resources should be devoted to "upskilling" local workforces into higher-skilled, higher-paying, future-proof professions.

In our numerous discussions on growth in Austin, we spent little time discussing the economic influences of the University of Texas at Austin, the state's flagship public research university which was established there in 1883. Yet research suggests that the number of universities corresponds with future GDP growth. However, education is also changing. Cities can't go back in time and relocate a land grant institution of higher education or retroactively create the next Harvard. Instead, they should proactively find, create, and partner with more nimble, cost-effective, resilient educational options.

<sup>9</sup> Gesetz zur Erhöhung und Beschleunigung des Ausbaus von Windenergieanlagen an Land (sog. Wind-an-Land-Gesetz) (<https://www.bmwsb.bund.de/SharedDocs/gesetzgebungsverfahren/Webs/BMWSB/DE/ExterneLinks/wind-an-land-gesetz.html>)

Much of Silicon Valley's innovation success has wrested on the notion that the area has a distinct, technologically-focused workforce development advantage. Nestled between the campuses of the University of California, Berkeley to the north and Stanford University to the south, the region has long been assumed to have superior talent in computer science, among other areas. Since the birth of tech giants like Facebook and Google, an idea began to spread that the area's advantage in scaling technology companies was most apparent once an organization needed more than 100 software engineers, with many people arguing that doing that elsewhere was significantly more difficult, if not impossible.

New York City, for example, sought to solve that sort of problem with the creation of the NYC Tech Talent Pipeline, a program launched in 2014 that aimed to prepare New Yorkers for high-earning, often tech-oriented jobs.

Nova Cities will simultaneously tackle the following:

1. Social-service focused programs for the most professionally vulnerable;
2. Long term investments in public education and a diversity of higher education options including trade schools and four year universities;
3. Responsive, tactical programs on upskilling local workforces; and,
4. Partnerships with local employers to efficiently match labor supply and demand.

Entrepreneurship plays an essential role as a driver of innovation. It also holds potential for strengthening social inclusion by offering another option for earning income. A Nova City therefore needs to ensure that all people, regardless of their personal characteristics and background, have an opportunity to start and run their own businesses. This seems to be not always the case.

According to statistics, very few venture-backed companies have a female founder and only 1 % of venture-backed companies have an African American founder.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See Case Foundation, based on CB Insights and Pitchbook: <https://casefoundation.org/program/inclusive-entrepreneurship/> (last retrieved June 30, 2022).

While a couple of organizations are active in promoting inclusive entrepreneurship<sup>11</sup>, there seems to be no commonly used metric to measure how inclusive entrepreneurship in a city actually is. In our working group's opinion, a Nova City should ensure that the share of traditionally underrepresented groups (women, people of color) in a city's population is more or less represented in the number of small business owners and company founders.

**4. Open Data** - A Nova City prioritizes transparency and commits to creating a single central open data portal for its city and making 100% of its data available to the extent that the publication of this data does not impinge on individuals' right to privacy, create grave security concerns, or conflict with legal requirements.

Data is the key to making sense of our cities and helping us transform them into Nova Cities that foster inclusive growth and innovation. Through data we can understand what the status quo of a city is and what needs might be emerging from that status quo (for example, data can tell us how many rental units a city has available in total, how many of those units are designated for low-income individuals, and how many individuals are on waiting lists to receive a subsidized unit or housing voucher, thus revealing gaps in the provision of affordable housing).

Data also enables us to evaluate the efficacy of policy measures meant to address these gaps and challenges (for example, if a given measure actually did increase the available housing stock, or if instead the housing market shrank or shifted in response to measures), giving cities the opportunity to know what works (and what doesn't), rather than leaving decisionmakers to rely on gut feelings and assumptions. In short: data allows us to better understand our cities and act more effectively to address problems and challenges facing our cities.

City government officials aren't the only ones who can benefit from easy access to high-quality data, however. A wealth of city actors are in a position to use and benefit from government data: grassroots initiatives, local busines-

<sup>11</sup> See for instance <https://facesoffounders.org/the-state-of-inclusive-entrepreneurship-by-the-numbers-be422b8845ed> (last retrieved June 20, 2022).

ses, academics and researchers, citizens – just to name a few. These actors can use the data to conduct analyses that provide valuable insights into the functioning of the city, or to build innovative products and solutions that can generate economic value for a city and/or improve residents' quality of life, for example. See for example the resident/citizens project "Gieß den Kiez" ("Water Your Neighborhood") from the CityLAB Berlin, which uses open government data from the city of Berlin on its trees to provide citizens with a platform for coordinating efforts to keep city trees watered during the increasingly hot, dry summers climate change has brought to Berlin.

To ensure this kind of innovation and value generation is possible, Nova Cities should make their data available to the public as open data – that is, government data that is made available free of charge for all to use without restrictions. Specifically, a Nova City should provide an open data portal that catalogs its available datasets in an organized, structured way (for example, using structured metadata that includes relevant search keywords) to ensure would-be data users can easily find the datasets that are relevant for their needs. Additionally, a Nova City should have a law or similarly binding policy in place that requires all city offices to make all of their publishable data (i.e., data that does not contain personally identifying information or which has other restrictions attached to it, like security concerns or trade secrets) available as open data.

**5. Digital Equality** – A Nova City provides fast digital infrastructure to at least 75% of its population and is working towards 100% within 5 years.

Access to digital infrastructure such as high-speed (at least 200Mbps) broadband internet is a prerequisite for a lot of technological innovation. For a city to qualify as a Nova City, it must therefore ensure that its residents have access to fast and reliable internet.

The Covid-19 pandemic, during which stay-at-home-orders, quarantines, closures and other restrictions forced people to work remotely, to attend virtual classrooms and to socialize online, has shown that there is a digital divide at many places<sup>12</sup>.

*"Digital Equality – A Nova City provides digital infrastructure to at least 75% of its population and is working towards 100% within 5 years."*

Many students and workers did not have the devices or the internet connection to fully participate in online activities. While the digital divide is mostly larger in rural areas than in urban and suburban areas<sup>13</sup>, it is nevertheless an issue that cities need to address in order to be inclusive.<sup>14</sup> In order to qualify as a Nova City, a city must ensure connectivity for everyone.

Many cities have already taken action to close the gap.<sup>15</sup> For instance, Chicago, which our group visited during the study trip, is seeking to eradicate the city's digital divide by establishing a new cross-sector community-driven council, the Chicago Digital Equity Council. Many cities also provide free Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces such as libraries, as was the case in Austin's library that we had the chance to visit.

While there are different approaches to measure the digital divide, one of the leading indicators is the number of new people covered with broadband connectivity. Focusing on this element seems to us to be the most universally applicable key metric. Some cities in the U.S. have developed innovative approaches to map the digital divide, for instance by using sensors on garbage trucks to measure how many households have paid-for Internet services.<sup>16</sup> These examples could inspire cities on the other side of the Atlantic to measure their digital divide in similar ways.

In our opinion, a city in which 25 percent of the population do not have access to high-speed internet at their home cannot qualify as a Nova City. A Nova City should work towards providing high-speed broadband internet to every resident within 5 years.

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<sup>12</sup> According to a study carried out last year by Pew Research, about four-in-ten adults with lower incomes do not have home broadband services (43%): <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/06/22/digital-divide-persists-even-as-americans-with-lower-incomes-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/> (last retrieved May 18, 2022).

<sup>13</sup> See <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/19/some-digital-divides-persist-between-rural-urban-and-suburban-america/> (last retrieved May 18, 2022).

<sup>14</sup> On the lack of reliable and available internet access in cities see David Rosen: "Cities Struggle to End the Digital Divide" in The Progressive Magazine: <https://progressive.org/latest/urban-digital-divide-rosen-210916/> (last retrieved June 6, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> For some examples see <https://www.nlc.org/resource/digital-equity-playbook-how-city-leaders-can-bridge-the-digital-divide> (last retrieved June 6, 2022)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.itu.int/hub/2021/02/gps-and-garbage-trucks-mapping-digital-divides-in-u-s-cities/> (last retrieved: May 18, 2022).





## ADDITIONAL STEPS: CODIFYING PROGRESSIVE IDEALS

We understand that in choosing distinct criteria, we leave out some elements of the incredibly complex challenge that is urban development and municipal governance. Because of that we also wanted to spend a moment discussing some of the other key actions Nova Cities can take to bolster urban and democratic resiliency.

All of the goals and metrics of a Nova City need to be encoded with regulatory structures and policies that operationalize these values. Ordinances, resolutions, and inclusive bylaws should be reflected in organizational reform, program development, and initiatives that reinforce progressive ideals. A notable example of this can be the “All Alexandria: Committing to Race and Social Equity” or the Alexandria “Energy and Climate Change Action Plan”.

Self improvement does not happen naturally, so it is critical that it be institutionalized. Therefore, cities should commit to empowering the offices responsible for pursuing progressive goals with the data and information necessary to gauge if its commitment to the principles of progressivism are being met. They should actively gather and analyze data to track how effectively the city is meeting its goals with respect to inclusivity and related development (for example, housing equity, access to public transit, safety, energy use etc.). These activities can be formalized into a structured system of social monitoring, as demonstrated by German cities<sup>17</sup>.

Cities are not alone, they should embrace partnerships and actively grow networks with other cities within and outside of their national boundaries. An initiative to create a “Cascadia Innovation Corridor” in the mega-region connection Portland/Oregon, Seattle/Washington and Vancouver/British Columbia can be seen as one example for a cooperation between cities. The proposal includes the creation of new “hub cities” that would accommodate population growth<sup>18</sup>. This vision might be applicable to a peer mega-region formed by the cities Amsterdam, Brussels, Munich and Paris<sup>19</sup>.



## IN DEFENSE OF THE INDEX

We know there are a plethora of indexes available to gauge progress, and that there is a tremendous amount of debate that could be had (and that we have internally had!) around the chosen criteria. We believe though that the NOVA Cities Index, developed over two years of transatlantic dialogue, debate, and travels, offers convincing and inspiring guidance for action. If a city is not meeting the criteria, we hope that motivated public servants and urban leaders are inspired to advocate action.

Furthermore, we hope this index continues to inspire dialogue between our fellowship and our wider network of leaders committed to urban progress. This dialogue should not just be about the goals we have laid out here in our index, but also the best actions each city can take within their specific context to achieve results that we feel are universal for human flourishing and contentment.



<sup>17</sup> For example: Monitoring Soziale Stadtentwicklung Berlin [https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/basisdaten\\_stadtentwicklung/monitoring/index.shtml](https://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/planen/basisdaten_stadtentwicklung/monitoring/index.shtml)

<sup>18</sup> Report “Cascadia Vision 2050: How the Cascadia Innovation Corridor can serve as a global model for sustainable growth”.

<sup>19</sup> Report “Cascadia Vision 2050: How the Cascadia Innovation Corridor can serve as a global model for sustainable growth”, p. 7.

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Ian is passionate about the intersection of policy and investment in the context of urban environments. Born and raised in LA, Ian currently works at MSquared, an impact fund focused on the development of sustainable mixed income housing nationally. Prior he was Director of public private partnerships and special projects at the NYC Housing Authority. He managed the implementation of the NYCHA 2.0 strategy, closing on the financing for over \$1.5 billion of repairs for 10,000 residents and structuring the procurement for the rehabilitation of over 30,000 housing units. Before that, he worked at the NYC Economic Development Corporation where he negotiated, led, and managed initiatives delivering ~2,000 jobs, \$680 million in investment, and ~500 units of new housing through real estate partnerships. He started his career with Tishman Speyer's New York team and studied urban policy and real estate finance at Georgetown University.

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In her role as Chief of Staff to the Mayor of Rochester Hills, Maria leads the mayor's key initiatives, fundraising campaigns, special events, and communications. Beyond that, Maria has been supportive to the Mayor in his role as with the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Maria is a founding member of the Young Professionals of Rochester, a founding member of the Rochester Hills Museum Young Leaders Circle Board, and most recently a founding member of Create Collective, a local arts council dedicated to proactively and intentionally bringing art into our community. Maria also serves on boards and committees for the North Oakland YMCA, the Rochester Area Youth Assistance, Michigan Women in Municipal Government and the Rochester Hills Museum Foundation. Her leadership has been notably recognized with Crain's Detroit 20 in the 20's Award (2020), the Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce Young Professional of the Year (2019), and she was named as an Elite 40 Under 40 by Oakland County (2018). Maria Willett earned both a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Masters of Public Administration from Oakland University, where she was awarded the Inaugural Promising Alumni Award.

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Marc Lendermann works as an Economic Counselor with the German Consulate General in San Francisco, covering economic issues in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Prior to his current position, Marc has worked on energy policy issues in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and the Federal Chancellery. He has studied law as well as European Governance and Administration in Berlin and in France and holds a Ph.D. from the University Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne.

## DAS PROGRESSIVE ZENTRUM

Das Progressive Zentrum is an independent, non-profit think tank founded in 2007, devoted to establishing new networks of progressive actors from different backgrounds and promoting active and effective policies for economic and social progress. It involves especially next generation German and European innovative thinkers and decision-makers in the debates. Its thematic priorities are situated within the four programmes Resilient Democracy, Green New Deal, The Modern State and Political Strategy, with a particular focus on European integration and the transatlantic partnership. The organisation is based in Berlin and also operates in many European countries as well as in the United States.

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#### Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft

The Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft is committed to democracy, freedom and progress. In a world marked by disruption, we think change forwards and help shape it responsibly. To this end, we create platforms for interdisciplinary exchange and develop courageous approaches to solutions for the questions of our time in our projects. Society and business always belong together. In our liberal democracy and social market economy, it is important to strengthen their freedom of development so that progress can be made. We are guided by the principles of our namesake Alfred Herrhausen: interdisciplinary thinking, farsightedness, courage and openness, as well as clarity and responsible thinking and acting.



The PPI is an independent think-tank based in Washington, D.C., which has been an international catalyst for new ideas and practical concepts for progressive policy since its founding in 1989. Currently, the Progressive Policy Institute is developing new proposals in various projects to stimulate economic growth and technological, political and social innovation in the knowledge-based digital economy. The focus is also on issues of social mobility and the modernization of the public sector. In addition, the Progressive Policy Institute is strengthening its international projects for the model of liberal democracy and sustainable transatlantic relations. In order to combine conceptual ideas and pragmatic political action, the Progressive Policy Institute relies on an extensive network of experts, decision makers and partner organizations, especially in North America and Europe, but increasingly also in Asia and Latin America.

### SUPPORTED BY:



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Affairs  
and Climate Action

#### About the project:

New Urban Progress (NUP) is a transatlantic dialogue on how urban areas can be more innovative, democratic, and sustainable. By exchanging best practices and collaborating on bold solutions, young urban leaders from Germany and the United States worked on how to deliver social and economic progress while renewing the transatlantic partnership at the city level. The project covered three years (2019-2022), including two delegation trips, and 20 transatlantic fellows.

The project is supported by the **Transatlantic Program of the Federal Republic of Germany** and funded by the **European Recovery Program (ERP)** of the Federal **Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK)**.

### **Disclaimer**

The views and opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the partner institutions.

### **Imprint**

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