



# STRATEGIES for the PUBLIC SECTOR

In panel discussions at the 2022 Equitable Development Symposium, **MEG MCMAHON**, previously at the City of Brooklyn Center and now at the City of Minneapolis; **KARLA HENDERSON**, at the City of Bloomington; and **C TERRANCE ANDERSON**, at the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota discussed how governments and public sector staff can play an effective role in advancing equitable development.

## PARADIGM SHIFTS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

### GENERAL → SPECIFIC

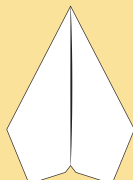
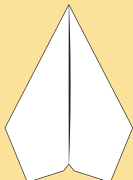
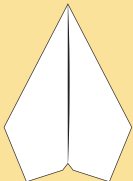
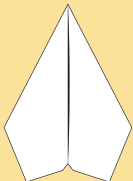
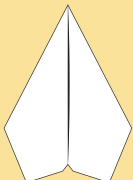
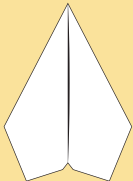
“There’s a misconception that we can abstractly address a history of harm. Governments will reach out and say: ‘Help us make this project more equitable.’ My first question is, what’s the historical inequity that you’re attempting to address? Often the response is “No inequity in particular. We’re just responding to disparities in our region.” **But equitable development is a response to specific harms.** And the more specific we can be about them, the more we can actually address what we’re trying to accomplish.” *C Terrance Anderson*

### BROAD → TARGETED

[For the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Zone project] “We defined community as those most impacted by the project and then **we specifically named them.** It was youth, first generation immigrants, our Liberian and Latinx communities, our Black community, and our Hmong and Southeast Asian communities. Naming that gave those groups a bigger seat at the table and made sure more of our engagement dollars went to engaging those community members in a much more intentional way than spending resources on a traditional engagement processes that would get our traditional responses.” *Meg McMahan*

### GATEKEEPING → CAPACITY BUILDING

[For the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Zone project] “The idea was to remove city staff from acting as gatekeepers to the engagement. So every one of our engagement dollars went to residents and people who work in our community. The community organizations that facilitated the citizen advisory task force really distilled the engagement, determined what was important, and then reported directly to the city council on what to do. It was effective in terms of outcomes *and* it was **an investment in those organizations and people because now we have a relationship with them that we didn’t have before and they have capacity that they didn’t have before** in order to be able to work with us in the future on other projects.” *Meg McMahan*



# Putting Ideas into Action for Equitable Development

## City of Bloomington: SMALL BUSINESS CENTER

### Listening to community:

“When governments were declaring racism a public health crisis in 2020, the Bloomington city council did more than a resolution; they put resources behind listening to our community about what they need. And, in that process, our community said we need a place that our local small business owners or budding entrepreneurs can go. We need a safe space to engage with city staff in ways that go beyond getting a form at city hall and then being on your own.” *Karla Henderson, Bloomington Community Development Director*

### Taking action:

In an effort to uplift small businesses and support under-represented groups including Black, Indigenous and People of Color- and women-owned businesses, youth and artists, the City is taking steps to open a Small Business Center (SBC) that will serve as a space for aspiring entrepreneurs by providing educational and financial resources. The Community Development Department has received multiple grant funds to renovate and repurpose a former fire station within a half-mile of public transit.

[Learn more.](#)

## City of Brooklyn Center: OPPORTUNITY ZONE

### Rethinking the planning process:

“In Brooklyn Center, we had an 80-acre area that was largely vacant and underdeveloped. In government, we like things to be really linear. We like to know the outcome before we start. This was a process where we really let go of that and we let it meander where community wanted it to meander. It was thinking through how do you have a planning process that’s community-led from the very beginning in a way that benefits the community.” *Meg McMahon, previously at the City of Brooklyn Center*

### Resourcing community to lead:

“We created a Request for Qualifications process to outreach to community leaders and organizations that had relationships in the community that we didn’t have as a government. It wasn’t a complicated process; it was only a page long. Then we worked individually with the folks who submitted to hone an engagement strategy that would work best for their communities, and our engagement manager provided technical support. In almost every case, we worked with individuals and organizations that had never had a government contract before.” *Meg McMahon*

[Learn more.](#)

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## Blue Line Extension: ANTI-DISPLACEMENT WORKING GROUP

### Responding to community organizing:

“The Blue Line Coalition and others were organizing for years for Hennepin County and the Met Council to consider anti-displacement as a piece of the Blue Line Extension project and to take responsibility for that. And that organizing was successful. It was an example of an organized group of people realizing what their needs were but also responsive government folks figuring out a way and a structure to respond to those needs [with the CURA-facilitated Anti-Displacement Working Group].” *C Terrance Anderson, CURA*

### Creating knowledge together:

“The ideas exist. They’ve been practiced dispersively around the country and even within our own region. The challenge is figuring out what matches the legal context, the distinct aspects of a light rail construction in five different cities and communities that the line runs through. So we’re producing knowledge for the purpose of community, government and philanthropy to get on the same page about what the problems are – and the policies and power needed to address those problems.” *C Terrance Anderson*

[Learn more.](#)