



URBAN AGENDA 2025

Annual Report



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Executive Summary

This Urban Agenda is a bold, collective pursuit for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Since Fall 2019, PolicyBridge has been convening talks and organizing meetings of leaders and representatives from local government, philanthropic, business advocacy, and social and community support organizations. Building on a 2021 report from PolicyBridge advocating for “Resetting the Table” in Cleveland, these meetings have sought to bring together stakeholders and challenge them to think differently and act collaboratively to address deep-rooted problems that have too long held back the local community and its people. The COVID-19 pandemic slowed progress but ultimately enabled the effort to ride the tide of an unprecedented wave of new institutional leadership. Now is the time for an Urban Agenda envisioning a brighter future for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County through collective action.

The assembled Urban Agenda partners united behind a single shared objective: improving economic mobility for Black and Hispanic/Latino residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The Urban Agenda is unapologetically directed toward rebooting long-entrenched systems and upending biased structures that have perpetuated racial disparities. By focusing deliberate collective attention to address factors that contribute to stark differences in income, wealth and poverty among Black and Brown populations of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, the hope is that raising prospects and realities for these groups will, in turn, create opportunity and spark renewed economic vibrancy for the region overall.

Over the past year, more than 88 participants of 44 organizations, local government entities, philanthropies, social service agencies, educational institutions, and advocacy groups have come together to build consensus, identify strategies for systemic change and community engagement, and commit to a more equitable and economically robust future for all residents.

PolicyBridge, which will serve as the backbone organization for the initiative, has built out the Urban Agenda project team and has laid the groundwork for collective problem-solving and coordinated actions. Community Partners have demonstrated their support for the Urban Agenda and its economic mobility goals by publicly signing a memorandum of understanding. The Urban Agenda has developed an Economic Mobility Community Dashboard, which provides data on local racial and ethnic disparities and will be used to monitor progress toward eliminating them.

The Cleveland Foundation and Gund Foundation have provided financial support for the work of the Urban Agenda thus far and have committed to funding the project team and identified activities into 2026. The United Way of Greater Cleveland and Greater Cleveland Partnership have provided in-kind contributions to the Urban Agenda. Members of the systems change and community engagement committees have identified three primary areas of strategic focus for 2025: homeownership, business ownership, and workforce preparedness.

Vision

The vision for the Urban Agenda is a shared focus on improving economic mobility among Black and Brown families in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, giving rise to a region that is both just and economically robust for all its citizens.





Gregory Brown
Executive Director



Randell McShepard
Board Chairman

Message From Leadership

On behalf of the PolicyBridge Board and Staff, the Urban Agenda Project Team, and our Community Partners, it is our pleasure to present the inaugural “Urban Agenda Collective Impact Project Annual Report.” Since the fall of 2019, PolicyBridge, with partners and stakeholders from various sectors of the community, has been engaged in myriad planning activities to create and implement an Urban Agenda Collective Impact Project for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

This annual report documents the collective efforts and resources deployed to address one critical community priority—economic mobility. The collective working group has identified three economic mobility goals with benchmarks to be achieved by 2050, and three unique aspects highlighting the work of this project are outlined below:

- Initiating significant improvement in systems and institutions that prevent economic mobility for Black and Brown residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.
- Tracking economic mobility indicators at the population level to ensure large numbers of Black and Brown families’ wealth and income substantially improve.
- Working together across many sectors to co-create and co-design new and different ways to significantly improve economic mobility outcomes for Black and Brown families in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

We encourage you to carefully review this report, and to note that we are asking our community to think differently so that it can act differently to eliminate economic mobility disparities for Black and Brown families in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. This report is a “Call to Action” for our region to work collaboratively to eliminate economic mobility disparities and create a 21st century economy for Northeast Ohio that is robust and equitable for all.

Handwritten signatures of Gregory L. Brown and Randell McShepard in black ink.



2024-2025

Photo Credit - Greater Cleveland Partnership

Urban Agenda At A Glance

Commitment

Enabled by a singular moment of leadership change and new energy within stakeholder organizations, this Urban Agenda brings together Community Partners representing key governmental, corporate, institutional, and community stakeholders charged with improving economic and social conditions in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. In a public signing event in January 2025, Community Partners inked their commitment to a memorandum of understanding outlining a long-term collective-impact approach to improving economic mobility. For three years, with options to extend the MOU through mutual consent, Community Partners agreed to unite behind co-designed strategies, collaborative planning, coordinated activities, shared metrics, and mutual accountability. The Urban Agenda will incorporate annual tracking of population-level progress, data analysis, and community input to guide priorities, approaches, and resource allocation.

Goals	2030	2040	2045	2050
 <p>Increase median household incomes of Black and Brown families.</p>	Racial and ethnic median household income disparities in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are no greater than those seen in Ohio overall.	Racial and ethnic median household income disparities in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are no greater than for the nation overall.	Racial and ethnic median household income disparities in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are 10% better than those seen for the nation overall.	Racial and ethnic disparities in median household incomes are eliminated in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.
 <p>Close the Black/Hispanic/White wealth gap.</p>	Racial and ethnic disparities in wealth in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are no greater than such disparities seen in the nation overall.	Racial and ethnic disparities in wealth in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are 10% better than racial and ethnic wealth gaps seen nationwide.	Racial and ethnic disparities in wealth in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are 25% better than racial and ethnic wealth gaps seen nationwide.	Racial and ethnic disparities in average wealth gap are eliminated.
 <p>Reduce poverty in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.</p>	Poverty rate for Black and Brown residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County is on par with the rate of poverty seen among Black and Brown residents in the state overall.	Poverty rate for Black and Brown residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County is on par with the rate of poverty seen among Black and Brown residents in the nation overall.	Poverty gap between Black and Brown residents and White residents of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County is 10% better than such disparities in poverty for the nation overall.	Racial and ethnic gaps in poverty rates is eliminated in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, and poverty rates overall are lower.



Randell McShepard
Board Chairman

Gregory Brown
Executive Director

Dwain Johnson
Policy Fellow

Jaye Lynch
Design Specialist

Alyssa Moore
Policy Fellow

Diana Rosa
Project Management
Consultant

Dr. Elaine Sutton
Community Engagement
and Outreach Consultant

Dr. Fran Stewart
Shared Measurement
Consultant

Victor Ruiz
Systems Change and
Strategies Consultant

Project Team



Justin M. Bibb
Mayor



Blaine Griffin
President of City Council



Chris Ronayne
Cuyahoga County Executive



Dale Miller
President of County Council



Baiju Shah
President and CEO



Lillian Kuri
President and CEO



Tony Richardson
President and CEO



Sharon Sobol Jordan
President and CEO



Tania Menesse
President and CEO



Dr. Jill A. Gordon
Dean



Dr. Eric Kaler
President



Dr. Michael Baston
President



Marsha Mockabee
President and CEO

PROJECT
ADVISOR

Stephanie Howse-Jones
Councilwoman Ward 7

Community Partners



Systems Change and Strategies Committee

The purpose of this committee is to engage in systems-level policy change and advocacy using strategic thinking, planning, and actions in support of the Urban Agenda Collective Impact Economic Mobility goals and benchmarks.



Shared Measurement Committee

The purpose of the Shared Measurement Committee is to engage in strategic thinking, planning, and actions that identify, define, measure, and track the appropriate Urban Agenda Collective Impact Economic Mobility indicators, goals and benchmarks.



Community Engagement and Outreach Committee

The purpose of this Committee is to engage in community engagement and outreach activities using strategic thinking, planning, and actions to solicit insights and perspectives to successfully reach the Urban Agenda Collective Impact Economic Mobility indicators, goals and benchmarks.

Committees

Committee Membership - See Appendix pages 14-15



2024 - 2025 Accomplishments

Quarterly Meetings of Local Leaders

Leaders or representatives of local government, philanthropic, social service, business advocacy, and educational institutions met regularly to discuss community challenges and disparities, identify economic mobility as a consensus goal, envision opportunities for collective impact, and build relationships necessary for shared action and accountability.

Meetings of Standing Committees and an Ad-Hoc Business Advisory Panel

Representatives of the Community Partner organizations as well as members of the broader community came together several times over the year to hear presentations on the data documenting economic disparities, learn about the goals of the Urban Agenda, and identify opportunities for collaboration and future interventions in support of identified economic mobility goals. The Urban Agenda also assembled an ad-hoc business advisory group to gather insights and support of private-sector leaders.

Four Small-Group Convenings to Gather Community Insights

Four local organizations agreed to serve as hosts for a series of Urban Agenda focus groups in September and October, 2024. The four hosting organizations – Young Latinos Network, Neighborhood Connections, Environmental Health Watch, and Third Space Action Lab – selected members of the communities they serve to engage in the discussions. The four sessions gathered insights from a total of 37 attendees, reflecting a variety of ages and backgrounds. Participants were provided an overview of the economic mobility goals and collective impact approach of the Urban Agenda, as well as data analysis on relevant indicators of economic disparities. They were then asked to provide feedback, ask questions, and share their personal insights on obstacles to economic mobility. Discussions touched on a range of topics seen as affecting economic mobility, including systemic racism, poor job prospects, intergenerational dependence, public benefits cliff, lack of inherited wealth, low literacy and inadequate schooling, limited career networks, and lack of exposure to financial literacy and career paths.

URBAN AGENDA 2025

Press Conference and MOU Signing Event

MOU SIGNING

Photo Credit - Greater Cleveland Partnership

Signing of MOU by Key Community Partners

On January 31, 2025, leaders of the dozen community partner organizations came together for a public declaration of their support for the Urban Agenda. The memorandum of understanding is not formally binding but signals the intent of signing organizations to commit to the economic mobility goals and collective impact approach of the Urban Agenda. The signing event was held at the Greater Cleveland Partnership, and was open to the local news media. Nearly all signatories were in attendance, and several expressed their reasons for committing to the Urban Agenda and their hopes for the effort. Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, who was unable to attend, provided remarks via pre-recorded video.

Economic Mobility Community Dashboard

The Economic Mobility Community Dashboard, available at pbua.net, is a tool to help partnering organizations and community members at large assess local economic disparities compared to the state and nation overall and monitor progress toward the three bold goals of the Urban Agenda: increasing median incomes for Black and Hispanic/Latino households, narrowing racial and ethnic gaps in wealth accumulation, and decreasing poverty rates in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. The Community Dashboard also provides data on various driver indicators that are reasonably assumed to contribute to median income, wealth, and poverty disparities and that may offer areas for intervention by partner organizations and other members of the community. These include measures regarding employment, education, digital divide, homeownership, business ownership and family structure, among others. The Dashboard will be updated annually.

PBUA.NET

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions
About the Urban Agenda



What is an Urban Agenda?

An Urban Agenda is not a report or policy brief and is not a new program or initiative. An Urban Agenda is a call for coordinated and integrated planning, collective action, and accountability. An Urban Agenda advances economic and social inclusion; builds a vital, sustainable, healthy, and engaged community for all; addresses conditions that have resulted in disinvestment in communities; mitigates policies and practices that foster ineffective systems and structural racism; and serves as a blueprint that clarifies community priorities, codifies joint approaches for action, and unifies like-minded leaders from various backgrounds and disciplines to ensure successful implementation.

Why an Urban Agenda?

PolicyBridge was conceived to address issues negatively affecting life in Cleveland's distressed neighborhoods, especially the African American community. In our 20 years of research and advocacy, we have seen a significant number of quality programs and initiatives to address a wide range of specific issues. Yet even our most successful endeavors have not moved the needle in improving overall quality of life and access to economic opportunities in Cleveland's low-wealth neighborhoods. Cleveland is a city that consistently ranks among the poorest in the nation and is also singled out for undesirable realities ranging from Black infant mortality to the digital divide. Cleveland's Black and White populations lag woefully behind most other U.S. cities in terms of average wages and economic vitality. How can this be? We are a city of many diligent and innovative community leaders and activists, an engaged business community, and admirable philanthropic institutions and resources. However, to truly make a dent in such broad-based needs, we must unify our many individual efforts behind a single plan.

Why implement the Urban Agenda now?

The last few years have brought significant transformations in institutional leadership across various sectors, including government, philanthropy, social services, and business advocacy. This indicates a unique opportunity for innovative thinking and bold ideas. The Urban Agenda seeks to capitalize on this moment to create impactful change for the residents, businesses, and communities of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.

What happens if we don't change our approach to the challenges we face?

In 2004, Cleveland gained the unwanted title of the nation's poorest big city. The city has largely remained among the nation's poorest, despite various efforts over recent decades to improve. Data suggest that the city and county have failed to keep pace with the state and nation overall in terms of measures of economic well-being, such as incomes, house values, education, and wealth. This relative decline has profound implications for the region as a whole. If we don't change and look for new ways to address the challenges we face, we can only assume that we will continue to fall behind and lose economic vitality.

What makes the Urban Agenda unique from other initiatives?

- The Urban Agenda is laser-focused on economic mobility. In a 2021 report called "Resetting the Table," PolicyBridge set forth an Urban Agenda framework outlining six key areas of focus: Economic Opportunity and Mobility, Neighborhoods and Housing, Community Health and Wellness, Criminal and Social Justice, Educational Attainment and Career Launching, and Community Mobility and Stability. However, our coordinated efforts to improve conditions in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County will concentrate solely on Economic Mobility, defined for this effort as improving the economic status of Black, Brown, and other marginalized people, particularly regarding income and wealth. Economic mobility was chosen as the focus of this Urban Agenda because of stark racial and ethnic differences in local economic well-being and because numerous interconnected issues and challenges, such as employment, education, transportation, and housing, contribute to these differences.
- The Urban Agenda is about systemic, not programmatic, change. PolicyBridge believes that harmful and ineffective systems greatly limit social and economic opportunity for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County residents, particularly Black and Brown people. Policies, practices, values, and attitudes within governmental agencies, financial institutions, corporations, and nonprofit organizations must change to achieve the Urban Agenda goal of improving economic mobility and to realize its vision of a just and economically robust Cleveland and Cuyahoga County for all citizens.
- Systems change involves fundamental shifts in the underlying structures, norms, and institutions within a society or organization, encompassing broad, long-term transformations that may impact multiple aspects of a system. Programmatic change, conversely, tends to have a narrow scope and aim for immediate results, such as with specific initiatives, projects, or interventions created to achieve targeted outcomes. Programmatic change can bring about benefits for individuals and communities and may contribute to some level of improvement in economic well-being, but systemic change aims for long-term solutions to protracted, large-scale challenges. The Urban Agenda has brought to the table local entities that manage and influence systems and have committed long-term to identifying and taking action to mitigate policies, practices, and mindsets that contribute to poor economic outcomes and stark disparities in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County.
- The Urban Agenda recognizes that significant change will take decades: Disparities that hold back the region and its people have persisted for decades, meaning achieving lasting change and closing vast racial and ethnic differences in income and wealth will take time. Unlike initiatives that set unrealistically short time horizons of 5 years or less to bring about meaningful change, the Urban Agenda has set a 25-year goal for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in economic mobility measures of income, wealth, and poverty in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County by 2050. To achieve that bold goal, the Urban Agenda project has identified a series of shorter-term goals and benchmarks to work toward. A community dashboard has been created that will allow partnering organizations, and the broader public, to track progress toward those goals annually and for years to come.



- The partner model of the Urban Agenda is unique. Other local initiatives have focused on collaboration and coordination. However, the Urban Agenda has strategically selected partner organizations (Community Partners) that have the capacity to, by working in concert, transform systems and bring about lasting change. The Community Partners have demonstrated their commitment to this effort by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support the Urban Agenda. Community Partners include Cleveland and Cuyahoga County elected officials, business leaders, community-serving nonprofits, philanthropy, and higher education institutions. These organizations have committed long-term to the Urban Agenda. Although many of these Community Partners have interacted on various initiatives over the years, it is uncommon to have them at the table together. Moreover, the general public has been engaged in and will continue to help guide the process through committee memberships and participation in small- and large-group gatherings. Nearly 100 people are already actively participating in this work in various capacities.
- The Urban Agenda adopts a collective impact approach to systemic change. The Urban Agenda is operationalized through a networked systems approach commonly known as Collective Impact. The approach advocates a new mindset envisioning what can be accomplished by working together toward shared goals and holding each other accountable versus the isolated, limited results of siloed efforts of the past. If we want to go far, as the African proverb instructs, we must learn how to go together. Our Community Partners have committed to uphold the five essential conditions associated with a Collective Impact approach:

Common Agenda – Partners have a shared vision for change that includes a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving the problem through agreed-upon actions.

Shared Measurement – Partners have agreed on the ways success will be measured and reported, and we have adopted a list of common indicators that will be used across all participating organizations for learning and improvement.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities – We have engaged the Community Partners and the community in a coordinated set of differentiated activities through a reinforcing plan of action.

Continuous Communication – We have established 4 committees (Community Partners, Community Engagement, Shared Measurement, and Systemic Change) to allow for frequent and structured open communication across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.

Backbone Support – PolicyBridge is serving as the backbone organization for the Urban Agenda and provides ongoing support and a funded staff dedicated to the effort, including guiding the initiative's vision and strategy, supporting aligned activities, establishing shared measurement practices, building public will, advancing policy, and mobilizing funding.

Appendix

Name	Organization	CP	CEO	SMC	SCS
Joe Andre	Case Western Reserve University	●		●	
Dr. Michael Baston	Cuyahoga Community College	●			
Cathy Belk	Deaconess Foundation				●
Justin Bibb	City of Cleveland	●			
Joe Black	Cleveland Foundation		●		
Tonae Bolton	Birthing Beautiful Communities				●
Katie Brennan	Greater Cleveland Career Consortium		●		
Gregory L. Brown	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Freddy Collier	Greater Cleveland Partnership	●		●	●
Delores (Ms. Dee) Collins	A Vision of Change		●		
Jenice Contreras	NEO Hispanic Center for Economic Development				●
Rhonda Crowder	Rhonda Crowder & Associates		●		
Shayla L. Davis	Ohio Legislative Black Caucus Foundation				●
Jacob Duritsky	Team NEO			●	
Kim Foreman	Environmental Health Watch		●		
Gabrielle Fowlkes	Urban League of Greater Cleveland			●	
Dr. Jill A. Gordon	Cleveland State University	●			
Blaine Griffin	Cleveland City Council	●			
Kathleen Hallissey	Cleveland Foundation				●
Trevelle Harp	Neighborhood Leadership Institute		●		●
Brian Heath	United Way of Greater Cleveland			●	
Dr. Michael J. Henderson	Case Western Reserve University	●		●	
Paul Herdeg	Cuyahoga County			●	
Erika Hood	See You at the Top (SYATT)		●		
Ebony Hood	TIES; NeoStem; SYATT		●	●	●
Stephanie D. Howse-Jones	Cleveland City Council	●			●
Joy D. Johnson	Burten, Bell, Carr Development		●		
Vaughn Johnson	Cuyahoga County			●	
Trey Johnson	George Gund Foundation	●			●
Dwain Johnson	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Kevin Johnson	Team NEO	●			
Colette Jones	Cleveland Foundation			●	
Pernel Jones Jr.	Cuyahoga County Council	●			
Dr. Mittie Davis Jones	PolicyBridge		●		●
Dr. Eric W. Kaler	Case Western Reserve University	●			
Aaron C. Kinney	Cuyahoga County			●	
Lillian Kuri	Cleveland Foundation	●			
Dr. Steven M. Lake	Thrive Scholars				●
Jasmine Lastery-Butler	Office of U.S. Rep. Shontel M. Brown	●			
Lenora Lockett	Cuyahoga County		●		
Jazmin Long	Birthing Beautiful Communities		●		●
Jaye Lynch	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Arianna Mack	Environmental Health Watch		●		
Cynthia Mason	Cuyahoga County Council	●			

Name	Organization	CP	CEO	SMC	SCS
Randell McShepard	RPM International; PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Tania Menesse	Cleveland Neighborhood Progress	●			●
Dale Miller	Cuyahoga County Council	●			
Arin Miller-Tait	City of Cleveland			●	
Frances Mills	City of Cleveland		●		●
Tyson Mitchell	City of Cleveland	●			
Marsha A. Mockabee	Urban League of Greater Cleveland	●			
Alyssa Moore	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Thomas Nobbe	Greater Cleveland Congregations		●		
Tom O'Brien	Neighborhood Connections		●		●
Emily Garr Pacetti	Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland				●
Selina Pagán	Young Latino Network		●		
Joyce Pan Huang	Cleveland Foundation				●
Lynn Phares	Housing and Community Development Consultant				●
Dr. Merissa C. Piazza	Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland			●	
Sonya Pryor-Jones	City of Cleveland				●
David Razum	Cuyahoga County	●			
Hazel Remesch	Enterprise Community Partners				●
Tony Richardson	George Gund Foundation	●			
Sabrina Roberts	Cuyahoga County	●	●	●	●
Rev. Max Rodas	Nueva Luz Urban Resource Center		●		
Chris Ronayne	Cuyahoga County	●			
Diana Rosa	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Victor Ruiz	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Autumn Russell	Greater Cleveland Career Consortium				●
Molly S. Schnoke	Cleveland State University	●		●	
Baiju Shah	Greater Cleveland Partnership	●			
Sharon Sobol Jordan	United Way of Greater Cleveland	●			
Dr. Fran Stewart	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Ken Surratt	United Way of Greater Cleveland	●		●	●
Dr. Elaine Sutton	PolicyBridge	●	●	●	●
Kathryn Terrell	Cleveland Foundation			●	
Teleangé Thomas	Community Member		●		
Jan Thrope	Inner Visions of Cleveland		●		●
Timothy L. Tramble Sr.	Saint Luke's Foundation		●		●
Jeffrey T. Verespej	Cleveland Neighborhood Progress				●
Jeffrey D. Wade	Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority		●		
Fred Ward	Community Member		●		
Shanique Washington	Ohio Legislative Black Caucus Foundation				●
Lindsay Wheeler	Cleveland Neighborhood Progress		●		
Helen Williams	Cleveland Foundation	●			●
Kandis Williams	Local Initiatives Support Corporation				●



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