

# **The Great Communities Collaborative Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020**

*December 7, 2015*

*GCC envisions a socially equitable, economically prosperous, and environmentally sustainable Bay Area where communities are engaged in shaping their own future. GCC believes that multi-sector collaboration is required in order to address the challenges of climate change and equity and that by working together across sectors we can build a region that is made up of healthy, thriving neighborhoods that are affordable to all and well connected to regional opportunities.*

*This Strategic Planning process was facilitated by Odin Zackman, Principal of Dig In and Mariia Zimmerman, Principal of MZ Strategies, LLC. The Plan itself was developed with substantial input from current and past GCC members, GCC staff and a select group of individuals involved with similar coalitions around the country or familiar with GCC's work. Interviews were supplemented with strategic planning sessions and member surveys. We would like to thank Elizabeth Wampler and Geeta Rao for their significant input and guidance throughout the process, in addition to Francesca Vietor of the San Francisco Foundation (GCC Co-Chair), Vu-Bang Nguyen, of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (GCC Co-Chair), Ray Colmenar of The California Endowment, Jeff Hobson of TransForm and Derecka Mehrens of Working Partnerships, USA all of whom served as advisors to the strategic planning process.*

## I. Great Communities Collaborative

### a. History and Accomplishments

Great Communities Collaborative (GCC) came together ten years ago to envision a San Francisco Bay Area made up of walkable, mixed-income neighborhoods near transit, jobs, and services. GCC's goal was that by 2030, half of the Bay Area's homes would be affordable and located in walkable communities served by transit. This objective was built on the premise that equitable transit-oriented development (TOD) would reduce the region's contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and lead to healthier and more livable communities.

Over the past ten years, GCC has helped make equitable TOD a reality by engaging communities throughout the region in local station area planning and fostering regional dialogue. GCC facilitated discussions with public agencies on policy changes; provided grants to organizations working on regional land use and transportation issues; supported local station area planning efforts; developed financing tools and strategies; and built community capacity. Simultaneously, GCC pushed for policies and practices to reduce regional vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and GHG emissions. GCC achieved all of this by bringing funders and advocates together to attract and align resources and action.

Since its launch, 14 funders have pooled over \$12 million to support over 30 non-profit organizations in shaping local and regional land use and transportation policy and investments. GCC regularly convened a core body of first 5 and then 10 non-profit advisors to identify and advance pressing local and regional issues. Over the years, GCC evolved into a trusted advocacy partner for public agencies and an important regional voice for equitable TOD. Like-minded changemakers and grantmakers across the country took note, and many adopted GCC's model to support equitable TOD efforts in their own regions.

Over the past decade, GCC honed its ability to:

- Engage funders and advocates in a collaborative forum.
- Support community voice and engagement in public policy and investment decisions.
- Work across multiple sectors.
- Foster public sector engagement in policy reform.
- Build a pipeline of equitable TOD projects.
- Operate at both a regional and a local level.
- Connect projects to policies and investments.
- Balance an inside and outside approach to policy change.

### b. Mission and Vision

GCC envisions a socially equitable, economically prosperous, and environmentally sustainable Bay Area where communities are engaged in shaping their own future. GCC believes that multi-sector collaboration is required in order to address the challenges of climate change and equity and that by working together across sectors we can build a region that is made up of healthy, thriving neighborhoods that are affordable to all and well connected to regional opportunities.

GCC influences local and regional policies, practices, and investments to maximize climate and social equity outcomes. GCC strategically aligns investments and capital to build TOD without displacement. GCC's new plan will expand on its legacy to build and preserve affordable housing near transit, continue the work it has launched and initiate new bodies of work to respond to the region's growing climate, transit, housing and equity challenges. This means accelerating GCC's

work beyond planning for equitable TOD toward becoming a unified regional voice for equitable and sustainable development, particularly in communities of color and low-income communities where future regional growth is projected to occur. GCC will accelerate its work to build leadership and empower communities to engage in forums and venues where plans, policies and power structures are determined.

### c. Values

**EQUITY** is the driving frame for GCC's work. GCC advances equity through campaigns and projects that influence development, decrease displacement, increase affordable housing, improve transit access, and increase economic opportunity for low-income communities and communities of color in the Bay Area. GCC creates platforms in policy and practice for low-income communities and communities of color to build and influence power and make their voices heard. Correcting power imbalances and building community power are key equity outcomes for GCC.

GCC believes **CLIMATE CHANGE** is not simply a major environmental threat, but one of our greatest social and economic challenges. Without attending to the complex interactions between climate change, equity and TOD, communities cannot adapt and thrive. GCC works in partnership with communities to design and advocate for policy and financing solutions that address the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities and reduce GHGs by reducing VMTs. This approach looks at resiliency, adaptation, and mitigation as opportunities, particularly as they relate to development near transit.

GCC is **PEOPLE-FOCUSED**. GCC solicits the needs and concerns of community residents to create solutions that will address some of our region's most significant environmental, health, economic, and social equity challenges. Central to this, GCC helps communities influence decisions that shape the future of the region. GCC enables local advocates and community-based groups to have a seat at the decision making table through grants, technical assistance, networking and coalition engagement.

GCC advances **COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS**. GCC recognizes that no single actor can create the scale of change needed to attain a sustainable and equitable region. GCC promotes strategic collaboration and collective impact by supporting campaigns and projects that build on and support complementary efforts of partners and other coalitions. GCC facilitates connections among funders, advocates, public, and private sector players to come together to strengthen their collective impact.

GCC supports **STRATEGIC and ALIGNED PHILANTHROPY**. GCC brings together local, state, and national funders to maximize the impact of their grantmaking and changemaking efforts in the Bay Area together with local partners.

**POLICY and SYSTEMS CHANGE** is the ultimate goal of GCC's work. GCC wants to shift the conversation from reactive, project-by-project discussions, to efforts that impact broader policies, investments, and rule-making. GCC aims to build local leadership, correct power imbalances, champion more equitable and climate-friendly policies, and direct investment toward communities most in need.

## II. GCC's Strategic Plan

### a. Context

The San Francisco Bay Area is a prosperous and diverse region, with the highest GDP per capita in the U.S. and nearly sixty percent people of color. We are one of the most progressive regions in the country, with climate investments and emission reduction policies setting an example both nationally and internationally. However, while our diverse, growing population and far-reaching policies are major opportunities to build thriving and sustainable communities, our region is facing two emerging and growing threats to our health and well-being: the rapidly changing climate and growing social and economic inequity.

Fueled by a huge influx of new wealth from the technology sector, the Bay Area is in the midst of a strong recovery from the past decade's economic downturn. Yet the benefits of this prosperity are not universally shared and far too many families are being left behind. As a result, our region is experiencing some of the largest disparities in wealth and income in the nation, with low-income families spending up to two-thirds of their income on housing and transportation alone.<sup>1</sup> Many are struggling to pay their rent or keep their homes. At the same time, climate change threatens to impact these very same communities. Already facing difficulties finding affordable housing, reliable transportation, and quality health care, vulnerable communities will face even greater challenges when confronted with disaster recovery and the impacts of drought, heat, sea level rise and crumbling infrastructure.

As low-income populations are priced out of the housing market, they are moving farther away from public transit and their jobs, and being forced to drive long, unhealthy commutes to get to work. These transportation challenges not only interfere with employment prospects and economic self-sufficiency, but they contribute to the region's GHG emissions. Forty percent of the Bay Area's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector and the Bay Area has the dubious distinction of emitting global warming pollution at three times the world average. Since transportation represents a significant portion of what low-income families pay from their earned income every year (24%), living near transit can save families \$13,350 per year by not driving a car.<sup>2</sup> Co-locating and preserving affordable housing near public transit is a cornerstone of equitable TOD – reducing the Bay Area's contribution to climate change and putting money back into the pockets of those who need it most.

Fortunately, the Bay Area has an existing regional strategy for addressing climate change and reducing VMTs. In July 2013, the region adopted *Plan Bay Area*, which put forth a bold vision that ends automobile-dependent sprawl and directs the future growth of 2 million people by 2040 into existing communities. Plan Bay Area sets out a goal to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions by 10 percent by 2020 and 16 percent by 2035, exceeding the goals set by the California Air Resources Board. A key component to Plan Bay Area's success is directing investment and growth to Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and urban centers because this has been shown to be a highly effective climate mitigation strategy. Increasing transportation choices for low-income communities in the Bay Area would create a major reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since low-income families drive fifty percent less when living within a quarter-mile of transit.

Plan Bay Area is a good start, but it has major limitations. A critical challenge to the implementation of Plan Bay Area is the negative impact on existing Bay Area communities, especially low-income

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<sup>1</sup> CNT. Bay Area Housing and Transportation Affordability: A Closer Look, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> APTA. Transit Savings Report, May 2014.

communities and communities of color. A recent report from UC Berkeley found that 82% of low-income residents living in PDAs are at risk for displacement. Not only would the displacement of these communities exacerbate the growing wealth and choice inequities in the Bay Area, this displacement would increase greenhouse gas emissions by making it more difficult for these workers, students and parents to get around in anything but a car. Furthermore, there are no strategies in Plan Bay Area to address the impacts of climate change such as water supply for increased urban development or the threat of rising sea level on infill neighborhoods.

Perhaps most troubling of all, are the significant shortfalls in how to pay for the implementation of the Plan. Of the planned 660,000 new housing units, 371,400 units (56%) are needed for low- and very low-income households. The Bay Area would require an estimated \$4 billion annually to fully subsidize its affordable housing need or \$118 billion over the course of the Plan. Despite allocating 62% of the region's transportation dollars to transit, transit still faces a significant funding shortfall of \$18 billion to maintain the existing system, and this does not account for expanding operations. Additionally, there is a \$24 billion needed for infrastructure improvements such as street, sidewalk, water, sewer and urban greening, and another \$14.5 billion needed for mitigation measures to protect habitat and farmland and for critical ecosystems stewardship. These figures alone point to a \$168.5 billion deficit to implement Plan Bay Area.

In response to these trends, GCC began a strategic planning process in early 2015 to chart a course that would influence regional climate and social equity outcomes while building on its successful legacy of the past decade. GCC determined that greater emphasis is now needed to affect the policies and practices of developers, public agencies and investors. This requires expanding GCC to include a broader diversity of partners, especially in those areas where GCC does not currently have an established presence. It means going beyond GCC's historic focus on land use and transit-oriented development to better address issues of displacement, gentrification, economic opportunity and climate change. It requires a deeper investment in community leadership and power building to ensure participation in critical decisions on policies, practices, and investments. It means developing investment strategies that not only identify and direct public and private capital to build equitable TOD, but also align and coordinate the entire ecosystem of regional grantmaking for greater impact.

**GCC's new strategic plan lays out a roadmap and structure for a stronger, more unified and diverse collaborative with a new set of priorities and strategies to accomplish its ambitious goals.**

#### b. Functions

GCC's strategic plan envisions four core functions as the overarching framework to achieve its outcomes: Networking and Learning, Strategic Communications, Organizing and Advocacy for Policy Change, and Partnerships and Resources.

1. **Networking and Learning.** From grassroots partners to regional agencies, GCC is seen as a trusted convener and serves as a voice for a more equitable and sustainable region. GCC engages with local and regional decision makers and partners playing a leading role on key issues to ensure that our collective voice leads to impact. GCC coordinates across sectors to build local and regional capacity to support equitable and sustainable development. GCC provides various learning and networking opportunities for funders, advocates and agencies to engage with each other and deepen their work. This might include: site visits, presentations from developers or academics, or cross-sector convenings. GCC facilitates trainings and conversations with public officials, developers, academics, philanthropy,

communities and grassroots leaders. These gatherings illuminate the cross-sector linkages between, and interdisciplinary nature of, affordable housing, climate change, transportation, land use, economic development and investments. This is done through an annual regional convening, working groups focused on key campaigns, and social media.

2. **Strategic Communications.** GCC develops and champions communication strategies that convey the climate and social equity imperative for the Bay Area. GCC works with funders and partners to identify and share best practices, translate and distill policies, foster discourse, and disseminate a shared message that articulates the urgency and value of growing in a more equitable and less carbon-intensive way. GCC works to develop a shared, unified voice on issues of regional importance and advance a narrative of equity and inclusion. GCC coordinates and integrates a range of diverse issues, voices and constituencies. GCC develops a broad communications strategy to provide a stronger and more unified regional voice for change. GCC will leverage the voice and influence of foundation partners along with other key stakeholders.
3. **Organizing and Advocacy for Policy Change.** GCC supports and funds local and regional advocacy and base-building organizations to advocate for common goals and equitable outcomes. GCC brings together disparate and diverse voices to discuss and advance issues of regional importance. GCC will lend its collective voice to relevant policy issues and will develop and implement policy initiatives.
4. **Partnerships and Resources.** GCC will seek to build strategic partnerships with private and public sector allies to advance GCC goals. GCC will build on the success of past planning efforts to strengthen the ability of communities to directly engage in policies, practices, and investments. GCC will raise and align public and private dollars to build mixed-income neighborhoods near transit with affordable housing, safe streets and resilient infrastructure. GCC will develop the tools and relationships necessary to build a pipeline of housing and infrastructure projects. GCC provides grants and support to non-profits working to change policies and practices.

### c. Structure

The San Francisco Bay Area is fortunate to have an impressive ecosystem of high-capacity non-profits and coalitions. These like-minded coalitions and organizations work on many of the same issues identified as GCC priorities and several of these groups are supported by the same funders who sit at the GCC table. However, these efforts and lessons learned have not been strategically coordinated enough to realize the change we need.

One of GCC's greatest values is its broad set of relationships – with funders, advocates, non-profit organizations, the public and private sector – who work together for equitable and sustainable development throughout the Bay Area. GCC is now poised to better serve the region by supporting and strategically linking the many groups that are part of the Bay Area ecosystem. GCC will become the connective tissue that ensures that we work together effectively toward common objectives. This broader approach will recognize the unique strengths of individual organizations, elevate campaign messages, and articulate the regional imperative for equity in our transit, development and climate policies. Moreover, the structure will provide GCC with the elasticity to engage with a larger set of partners from various sectors to advance GCC's goals. Other successful TOD collaboratives around the country have shown that a flexible organizational structure allows for a broader set of partners to come together to effectively advance mutually shared goals.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mile High Connects in Denver, the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative in Minnesota's Twin Cities, and Atlanta's Transformation Alliance

GCC's new structure will include the following elements: the Funders Network, the Leadership Council, Partners, Working Groups and GCC staff.

- **Funders Network.** GCC's Funders Network includes philanthropic organizations with a strong social equity mission. Some lead with climate and environmental protection while others are committed to improving the economic, health and social outcomes of specific communities. GCC has historically provided the forum for these national and local funders to come together several times a year to discuss collective grantmaking and discuss pressing regional issues.

With this strategic plan, the Funders Network will take a more active leadership role and work with GCC staff to create a shared strategic investment plan. The investment plan would incorporate not only grants made through GCC, but identify aligned grants of each of the individual foundations. The investment plan would be used to create more coordinated, strategic and impactful grantmaking in the region. It would also identify public and private capital, finance and investment opportunities. GCC staff will facilitate the scope and development of the investment plan.

The Funders Network is the governing body for GCC with ultimate decision making authority. The Funders Network is co-chaired by Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) and The San Francisco Foundation (TSFF), supported by GCC staff and advised by GCC's Leadership Council.

- **Leadership Council.** GCC is advised by a multi-sector Leadership Council. This group of advisors will be recruited from across the region and will represent a diverse set of regional, local, public, private and non-profit actors who come together periodically to advise GCC staff and funders, share issues of regional importance and recommend future work areas for GCC. The Leadership Council serves as ambassadors for GCC and recommends new potential GCC partners. Leadership Council members are recommended by GCC staff, with input from GCC partners, and are selected by the Funders Network with an eye towards sectoral, racial, and geographic diversity. Members of the Leadership Council are not paid for their involvement.
- **Partners.** Our region needs to better align and coordinate across relevant community development, climate, and equity efforts to ensure that the sum of our collective impact is larger than the individual pieces. Given the breadth of activity and a robust set of actors in the region, GCC will need to be flexible and engage partners in various ways. At times, it will make sense for GCC to 1) support existing efforts that are highly aligned with GCC goals; 2) link to and leverage other efforts; or 3) lead and create new initiatives that fill important gaps in the ecosystem. For instance, Six Wins – a regional coalition of base-building and advocacy organizations working on social equity issues – could be an important partner for GCC. Likewise, public sector actors are planning and implementing initiatives with important implications for GCC. Public sector agencies may be precluded from participating as a formal GCC Partner, but nevertheless, GCC should engage them.

GCC will build a strong network of strategic Partners that have a deep commitment to advancing equity, addressing climate change and building safe, healthy and affordable neighborhoods. GCC will connect and coordinate organizations, coalitions and Partners who are leading campaigns or policy platforms so that they are aligned with strategic

regional objectives and provide a larger platform to push for change. Working groups will help advise GCC on when and how to best partner on various efforts.

Partners can be from any sector as long as they are mission-aligned with GCC. Partners may include local and regional non-profits working to advance equitable development and climate change solutions, public and private sector allies, and organizations that represent low-income communities and communities of color. Partners may include grantees, representatives of aligned coalitions/networks, and strategic partners from affected sectors selected by the Funders Network, Leadership Council, or GCC Staff. GCC partners will be managed by Staff who nominates members to the Funders Network for approval.

The following are among the potential opportunities for new strategic partnerships for GCC:

- **Bridge Equity and Climate Gaps in Plan Bay Area:** Work in close partnership with organizations and networks to identify GCC's role and its added value. Incorporate learnings and best practices into GCC's core strategies.
  - **Advance Anti-Displacement Strategies:** Coordinate with coalitions and partners working on issues such as tenants' rights, housing affordability, and transit justice to collectively support an anti-displacement agenda. Identify key priorities for local, regional and state advocacy.
  - **Support Regional Planning and Investments:** Ensure Plan Bay Area's successful implementation and leverage associated opportunities to achieve regional equity. GCC will connect and support research and advocacy efforts at the state, regional or county level that influence how investment decisions are made and engage communities in public processes while building community power throughout the region.
- **Working Groups.** GCC's working groups develop and implement specific work plans or campaigns to advance GCC's core work. Working groups are led by GCC staff or a GCC partner. The working group "chair" is responsible for convening the group, developing its work plan and following through on implementation. The leader of each working group interacts closely with GCC staff to coordinate across groups; identifies opportunities to leverage and deepen GCC's activities; fosters communications; and elevates the work of GCC partners. Working group participants may or may not receive GCC funding or other grants to support their work or participation.

Working groups may deploy their campaigns in multiple cities, working at the sub-regional or regional level. This is modeled after GCC's station area planning efforts, in which advocates across GCC were engaged in many planning processes simultaneously. GCC will utilize this model to coordinate efforts and share best practices among locations, while building transformational leadership among advocates and decision makers.

- **Staff.** GCC staff serves as liaisons between GCC's Funders Network, Leadership Council, Partners and working groups. GCC staff acts as network weavers by disseminating information, convening partners when appropriate, and identifying opportunities for funders to support shared goals. Staff communicates the regional vision for GCC, and ensures that working groups achieve their outcomes and regional impact. Staff provides operational support to GCC, including grantmaking, budgeting, and fundraising. GCC staff identifies new Partners, strengthens relationships with existing ones, supports and expands



the Funders Network, coordinates the Leadership Council, and helps set GCC's strategic direction.

GCC staff is led by the GCC Initiative Officer (IO), who will serve as the executive leader of GCC, with responsibilities that include: overall leadership and coordination; fundraising and finance; operations and grants management; and communication and evaluation. The IO will actively support the Funders Network; help coordinate strategic regional investments; manage relationships with grantees, funders and public agencies; and coordinate GCC activities and working groups. The IO is responsible for raising GCC's annual budget.

The IO will develop funding and program recommendations for approval by the Funders Network, with input from the Leadership Council, Partners and working groups. The co-chairs of the Funders Network make all final decisions, in consultation with the full Funders Network.

#### d. Goals

The three central goals that will advance GCC's strategic plan include 1) advancing equitable and sustainable policies and practices 2) directing public investment and 3) expanding finance tools for affordable housing and infrastructure.

- 1) **Advance Equitable and Sustainable Policies and Practices.** GCC will engage in policy opportunities and practices to build a socially equitable, economically prosperous, and environmentally sustainable Bay Area. This may include identifying and communicating key policies and tools that all cities should adopt, or supporting campaigns around specific needs across cities. GCC will build on the Regional Prosperity Plan, monitor regional and state policies and help facilitate GHG emission reduction strategies in key cities. GCC will work with public agencies to link affordability, opportunity, and emissions reductions.
- 2) **Direct Public Investment.** GCC will work with public agencies to push for greater investments in GHG reduction and equitable TOD. GCC will ask public agencies to dedicate their resources to equity and climate outcomes. GCC will advocate for public land near transit to be prioritized for affordable housing development and for investments that reduce GHG emissions (for example: transportation infrastructure to improve walkability, equitable bike and car sharing programs). GCC will focus efforts and attention on Priority Development Areas (PDAs) to ensure that investments there advance GCC goals, support good development projects and direct resources to low-income communities of color.
- 3) **Expand Finance Tools.** GCC will expand and leverage the Transit-Oriented Affordable Housing (TOAH) Fund to attract Cap and Trade's Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities (AHSC) and other state and regional dollars to the Bay Area. GCC will help identify and develop other finance mechanisms to fill gaps in the equitable TOD financing sector. GCC will expand the use of district-level funding and financing tools across the region and elevate a regional conversation on the need to expand and fund affordable housing development and preservation. GCC will explore additional funding opportunities through various policy mechanisms such as housing impact fees, commercial linkage fees, and bond measures.

### III. Moving Forward: MEASURING SUCCESS

GCC recognizes that the economic, environmental and equity challenges facing the region are significant, and go beyond policies focused solely on the built environment. Taking a more comprehensive and integrated approach will necessitate new partnerships, new areas of engagement, and new strategies. With its new five year Strategic Plan, GCC will set a course to respond to the rapidly accelerating challenges of climate change and equity. GCC's work will now include influencing practices, policies and investments in order to build an equitable, sustainable region.

The following indicators are some of the metrics that will be used to measure GCC's success in the coming years:

***Long-term indicator: Public and private land use and transportation investments benefit low-income communities of color and reduce regional GHG emissions.***

*Short-term indicators:*

- Adoption of policies that direct public or private resources for the benefit of low-income communities and communities of color.
- TOAH Fund is deployed strategically to build a pipeline and leverage state Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund/Cap and Trade investment.
- Bay Area cities across the region win successful grant applications to the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities program.
- Pilot sites for new district financing tools are identified and explored.
- GCC members from low-income communities and communities of colors actively lead and coordinate on activities related to changing investment patterns in Bay Area.
- Low-income communities build leadership and have a seat at the decision making table where plans, policies and power structures are determined.

***Long-term indicator: Equitable, affordable TOD is the preferred growth model instead of sprawl. Regional actors embrace a proactive role in building an equitable and sustainable region.***

*Short-term indicators:*

- A growing number of local governments adopt anti-displacement strategies and adjust growth plans to reduce displacement risk.
- GCC partners support a regional anti-displacement agenda and identify key priorities for local, regional and state action.
- Regional efforts in county-wide measures win public dollars for equitable TOD.
- GCC partners identify and recommend how GCC can support or incorporate one new facet of work related to economic prosperity and climate equity.
- GCC Funders Network develops and implements a shared strategic investment plan for equitable and sustainable development in the region.