

## Executive Summary

After decades of disinvestment and the Great Recession, cities are making a comeback, especially in the growing and sprawling cities in the Southern U.S. However, without concerted and meaningful intervention from organizers, advocates, and elected leaders, the “business as usual” practices deployed by many developers and corporations will continue to have a negative impact on the most vulnerable communities.

To build real power and victories for working people of color and immigrants, the Partnership’s approach focuses on supporting and driving comprehensive trans-local campaigns to transform institutions, such as government, universities and corporations, that have historically benefitted from and perpetuated racialized inequality. We rely on our experience and best practices with diverse community and labor coalitions and our network spanning 19 regions across the country (including our affiliate Georgia STAND-UP in Atlanta). Most recently, the Partnership and Estolano LeSar Advisors have developed a set of recommendations based on lessons learned from implementing an inside-outside strategy with coalitions in Nashville and Raleigh-Durham for how to create more progressive, equitable development in cities.

This document provides tools and resources for groups that are building progressive power and advocating for equitable local development against the backdrop of structural racism and entrenched political opposition existing in many regions of the South. After summarizing existing strategies and case studies, we provide a checklist and guidelines for establishing and moving a successful coalition.

## Taking Stock of Innovative Tools for Equitable Development Campaigns

With large-scale development in metropolitan areas across the country, localities are grappling with a housing affordability crisis, the displacement of long-term residents, low and stagnant wages, unemployment, persecution of immigrants, over-policing of communities of color, and a host of other issues affecting their residents. As local governments and residents seek to adopt policies and programs to address these challenges, they are too often confronted by strong state-level opposition that limits their ability to govern. Powerful corporate interests, working closely with state legislators, are securing the passage of state laws that prevent cities from governing on specific issues, override local authority, and halt progressive policies at the city level.

Despite anti-democratic state preemption tactics and reactionary political environments, grassroots coalitions throughout the South are moving forward with city-based strategies to bring equity and democracy into economic development. Organizers are anticipating state interference as they pursue these campaigns. We outline the following tools that organizers and leaders can advocate for to shift towards more equitable development:

- ▶ Disclosure, Transparency, and Accountability in City Development Processes
- ▶ Promoting Sustainable and Community-Appropriate Investment
- ▶ Community Benefits Agreements
- ▶ Strategies for Increasing Access to Sustainable Careers for Low-Income Residents and People of Color

## Recommendations for Building a New Model for Community-Centered Development

### Invest in People:

- ▶ **Leadership development** inside organizations and outside in the community with members and resident leaders is critical to building the confidence and expertise necessary to move a program and campaign.
- ▶ **Organize, organize, organize!** We must empower residents to expect and want greater access into the development decisions that affect their lives and communities. Building a coalition that represents diverse stakeholders and approaches is crucial. A campaign is only as strong as the people it reaches, beyond boardrooms and council chambers.
- ▶ **Build power for the long haul, not just short-term solutions.** The tools and strategies we cover are intended to set your communities on a trajectory for building power in our cities beyond just one victory. These tools are about sustaining a movement. There will be losses and struggles in the process.

### Democratize Development in Our Cities:

- ▶ **Build statewide advocacy to ensure cities have all the policymaking tools at their disposal to alleviate crises**, respond to the needs of their residents, and create innovative policies that address displacement, unemployment, low wages, and other issues.
- ▶ **Adopt transparency and accountability policies** that provide the community with opportunities to learn about and engage in decision making about publicly owned land and publicly subsidized projects in their neighborhoods that will affect their health and well-being.
- ▶ **Empower communities with the tools and leverage to ensure that development creates benefits** that improve job quality, create jobs and affordable housing, mitigate environmental impacts, and identify other strategies to navigate state interference.
- ▶ **Enlist elected leaders and local government staff** as partners in developing solutions and in navigating state interference where possible.