Case Study: Fitchburg

Assessment of interim outcomes toward shared result

Outcome Areas	Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Fitchburg
Progress toward shared result	Team has a shared knowledge of progress toward shared result, including changes in systems.	Team demonstrates **programmatic progress in service of shared result.**	Moderate Progress
		Interviews surface that team has contributed to several **substantive changes in practice, policies, and resource flows**.	Strong Progress
		Multiple examples of **changing relationships, changing perspectives, or changing capacity** in service of the shared result.	Strong Progress
		WCC activities in the city have **already made a difference in the lives of many low-income people in the city.**	Moderate Progress
	Cross-sector leaders, beyond the WCC team, are informed of team's progress toward shared result.	Team regularly communicates **progress toward the measurable shared result to a broad set of organizations/leaders.**	Moderate Progress
		Stakeholders beyond the core leadership group **believe the initiative has achieved significant progress on its strategies.**	Strong Progress
	Team demonstrates how the progress to date relates to the pathway that will achieve its shared result.	Most stakeholders interviewed can **articulate how their progress to date can lead to greater scale toward their 10-year population-level result.**	Limited Progress
		Team articulates **objective progress measures** toward shared result, and can speak to team's **positive performance relative to those measures.**	Limited Progress

Assessment Key

Strong Progress	
Moderate Progress	
Limited Progress	

Assessment of interim outcomes related to civic infrastructure

Outcome Areas	Indicators	Sub-Indicators	Fitchburg
Expanded and sustained collaborative leadership	WCC team organizations **demonstrate distributed leadership, sharing responsibility for achieving the shared result.**		
	WCC team demonstrates **preparation for sustaining collaborative, system-oriented work in service of shared result.**		
	Existing leadership connections strengthened and new leaders are identified and engaged.	**New or deeper relationships** among organizations in the city **and/or catalyzed changed perspectives among leaders.**	
		New partners have been welcomed into the leadership of the initiative.	
		Partners place increased priority on working with leaders who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the city.	
		Stakeholders cite rising, new, talented civic leaders who reflect the diversity of community.	
	Team pursues **ongoing collaboration with other networks, collaboratives, or other key organizations active in related systems** in the city formally or informally on issues that extend beyond the specific WCC result.		
Value and diffusion of core elements	WCC team sees substantial contribution of core elements in progress toward shared result.	Stakeholders note **collaborative leadership made a substantial impact on the outcomes** the team achieved.	
		Stakeholders note **community engagement made a substantial impact on the outcomes** the team achieved.	
		Stakeholders note **use of data made a substantial impact on the outcomes** the team achieved.	
		Stakeholders note **system change made a substantial impact on the outcomes** the team achieved.	
	Organizational leaders bring core elements back to home organization and diffuse into practices and policies.	Partner organizations have changed systems to support **stronger collaboration.**	
		Partner organizations have changed systems **to better engage residents.**	
		Partner organizations have changed systems **to better use data.**	
Engaged residents	WCC partners **regularly sought out resident voices and insights** when developing strategies.		
	WCC team **strategies directly respond to resident insights.**		
	WCC team demonstrates that it is **accountable to residents by directly communicating progress toward shared result.**		
External recognition	WCC leaders **develop or improve relationships with entities outside the city,** including **attracting new outside resources** aligned with shared result.		

Overview

Fitchburg, a city of nearly 40,500 people located in North Central Massachusetts 50 miles west of Boston, is an older industrial city that continues to suffer from the loss of a once-vibrant manufacturing sector. While the majority of residents are white (81 percent), with 3.9 percent black and 4.5 percent Asian, the city's Hispanic population has increased significantly. Hispanics, primarily Puerto Ricans, now account for 25.7 percent of the population, a 73 percent increase since 2000. Similarly, the number of foreign-born residents has grown dramatically (46 percent) since 2000, with 11.7 percent of the total Fitchburg population in 2016 born outside the United States. The housing crisis hit the city hard, and it is still in recovery. While other cities in Massachusetts are struggling with skyrocketing housing prices, low property values are a challenge in Fitchburg. According to data from 2015, Fitchburg's home values were still 32 percent below what they were in 2005. Its 2016 median home value is approximately half the median home value for Massachusetts.

The Fitchburg Working Cities Challenge (WCC) team, led by the same four core partners over the course of the work—the city of Fitchburg, Montachusetts Opportunity Council (MOC), NewVue (previously the Twin Cities Community Development Corporation), and Fitchburg State University (FSU)—has focused on a 10-year vision to make the North of Main neighborhood a place where people want to live, work, and invest. This neighborhood is home to approximately 18 percent of Fitchburg's total population, with 30 percent of its residents defined as Hispanic in the census. Compared to other Fitchburg neighborhoods, this neighborhood has higher unemployment rates, higher poverty rates, more single-parent families, lower levels of educational attainment, lower levels of English language proficiency, and a lower median income. The North of Main neighborhood faces many challenges including job flight, a blighted and underutilized downtown, a deteriorating housing stock (which has caused health issues for residents), vacant lots and buildings, low homeownership, high crime rates, and low high school graduation rates.

While Fitchburg's core leadership and its vision of improving this one neighborhood in the city have been consistent over the three years of the WCC initiative, the strategies for achieving its vision and the overall structure to governance have evolved considerably.

Fitchburg's initiative, branded as ReImagine North of Main (RNoM), started out under the vision of the previous mayor. Following a relatively long and intensive planning period, the leadership of the initiative developed a complex work plan that involved six domains based upon what they saw as the drivers of change needed to achieve their result. These domains included a combination of activities focused on the residents (i.e., early childhood education and improved access to services) and on the physical environment (i.e., cleaning up the neighborhood and focusing on specific built environment projects).

Over the last year, the leadership team has come to recognize that making progress across each of the six domains was more challenging than envisioned. Moreover, the team realized that some of the strategies that were focusing on "people" were difficult to implement at the neighborhood level. As a result, it narrowed the overall approach and shifted focus to three key strategies: neighborhood development, economic development, and community engagement. Overall, the focus is now more specifically on "place," with considerably more attention on efforts to revitalize the downtown through economic development strategies and specifically on a pipeline of catalytic development projects. The team's neighborhood development work is focusing on housing market conditions and the implementation of an effort to market the neighborhood as a gateway to arts and culture. The team is also trying to strengthen its efforts to engage neighborhood residents and build more diverse leadership.

While RNoM has accomplished a lot over the past three years, there has not been significant evidence that overall conditions in the neighborhood have changed. However, there is acknowledgment that the type of change the team is seeking takes a long time. Moreover, the deepened relationships and agreement on shared priorities among the city, FSU, NewVue, and organizations representing the business community are evidence that Fitchburg is now better positioned to take on some of its longstanding challenges in its downtown and the larger North of Main neighborhood.

Governance structure, backbone organization, and staffing

The city's previous mayor was the original organizer of the Fitchburg WCC team, which consisted of representatives from FSU, NewVue, the city of Fitchburg, and MOC, the North Central region's community action agency. The team selected MOC as its backbone, having played a similar role for a previous collective impact initiative, FUN 'n FITchburg, a citywide initiative to reduce obesity and risk for subsequent chronic conditions through increased opportunities for youth and families to eat healthy and live active lives.

The initial governance structure involved a grant coordination team composed of staff from the four lead partners and a steering committee that included leaders from many different sectors in Fitchburg. Shortly after the initiative began, the team added Fitchburg Public Schools (FPS) because of its involvement in an early literacy effort sponsored by RNoM and the Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts (HFCM), which had approved a five-year grant supporting the team's work. Having more to do with name confusion than content, the team eventually decided to change the names of these committees to the leadership committee and the advisory committee, respectively.

4 CORE ORGANIZATIONS
- REIMAGINE NORTH OF MAIN
- NEWVUE COMMUNITIES
- FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY
- THE CITY OF FITCHBURG

35 COMMITTED PARTNERS

4500 RESIDENTS

Relatively early in the process, the team experienced a significant transition when then Project Director Mary Giannetti left her position at MOC. The team then hired Tom Skwierawski as project coordinator, and Tricia Pistone, associate director at MOC, took over as project director. During the early period of the initiative, the city's engagement was relatively weak, with no consistent city staff person assigned to attend meetings and the mayor's attention to the effort sporadic and unfocused.

By the midterm of the initiative, the mayor, who had led the initial proposal, had left, and the city elected a new mayor. Under the new mayor's administration, the housing and economic development directors for the city joined the RNoM team. After taking office in January 2016, the mayor would often attend leadership team meetings. At this point, the team decided to reset its governance structure with the leadership team, composed at this point of 11 members, switching from meeting every few weeks to a single monthly meeting. An executive committee made up of Jay Bry from FSU; Tricia Pistone, the project lead from MOC; Tom Skwierawski, project coordinator; and Marc Dohan, executive director of NewVue met more regularly. The team viewed the advisory committee of 30 partner organizations as a more ad

hoc group that met on a quarterly basis. These meetings were often opportunities to highlight the work RNoM was doing and to advocate for support.

Over the last year, the team had condensed its governance structure again by eliminating the executive committee, as many of its roles were duplicative with the grants management team that managed both the HFCM and WCC grants. As the executive committee also oversaw the leadership committee, its elimination shifted more decision-making power directly to the leadership team. During this period, two additional organizations, the Fitchburg Art Museum and the North Central Minority Coalition, joined the leadership team.

Summary of initiative implementation

The team spent much of the first 12 to 18 months of the initiative on planning, which it viewed as involving a neighborhood assessment, the development of new data indicators, and the production of a Neighborhood Action Plan. The intention was that the initiative would then shift to the implementation of the action plan. As part of this early planning process, the team conducted about 40 visioning sessions with 300 community members. The development of an innovative approach to using data was also an initial focus of the mayor's vision of the work. In addition to planning, during its first year the core team successfully applied for a grant to HFCM and decided to partner with the Fitchburg Public Schools to use WCC funds to purchase Footsteps2Brilliance, an early childhood literacy software tool.

During the planning period, Fitchburg team members struggled with competing visions of the initiative and many focus areas. The mayor had become less involved, and the core team spent time identifying the strategy areas that it believed were critical to achieving its vision. The eventual plan identified strategies in the following six categories: resident engagement, housing, quality of life, self-sufficiency, economic development, and education. RNoM implemented and made progress on a number of different activities in these areas.

Resident engagement: The team hosted annual meetings that engaged hundreds of residents and stakeholders. In addition, RNoM hosted five NeighborCircles that engaged about 60 residents and took seven residents to the 2016 Community Leadership Initiative training.

Housing: In the housing area, the RNoM team worked on a number of studies. One sought to better understand the state of current housing in the neighborhood, including an inventory of all properties; a second involved developing an action plan; and the third involved a market study of the neighborhood that emphasized rebranding the neighborhood as "the gateway to art and culture in Fitchburg." In addition, NewVue worked throughout this period on the creation of live-work artist housing at the former B.F. Brown School building. Finally, RNoM also supported the development of a new tool in the city, CityNexus, to identify and score all properties in the city.

Quality of life: The team partnered with Crossroads Community Church on its annual May Cleanup Drive, which engaged many volunteers in efforts to clean up the neighborhood, and worked with the city and local designers to implement the "This is Fitchburg" window project, which created positive images on empty downtown storefronts.

Self-sufficiency: RNoM worked with a consultant, whom the Boston Fed referred, to design a cross-sector, universal referral system among the service delivery provider system in the region. This work included the Fitchburg Community Connections Coalition and a group of students from Harvard University

who studied the existing system. The work resulted in a roadmap for action to improve the referral system.

Economic development: With funding through the Federal Reserve's tactical support grant, the team designed a revolving loan fund reserve as credit enhancement for the chamber of commerce's small business loan fund. In addition, the team worked on an assessment to support the designation of the Theater Block, recently purchased by FSU, as a historic district. The team also supported an architect to inventory 12 vacant storefronts on Main Street, advocated for enhancements to improve walkability downtown, and sponsored events to bring more people downtown. As part of this work, the team provided marketing and programming assistance to Growing Places. Growing Places formed a partnership with the Fitchburg Farmers' Market and was successful in bringing the market to the downtown.

Education: As noted, one of the early projects of RNoM was to pilot Footsteps2Billiance software in partnership with the Fitchburg Public Schools. In addition to the software, this work supported a school liaison who tried to make more of a connection between parents in the neighborhood and the city's schools, with a focus on Crocker Elementary.

In 2017, the final year of the WCC grant, the Fitchburg team realized that it had spread itself very thin and was finding it challenging to continue to pursue so many different activities. As one of the leaders commented, "We started with this super broad world peace approach where we were trying to solve everything overnight." The team came to the realization that by focusing on too many things, it was not accomplishing anything substantial in any one area. In addition, it began to face the challenge of how to properly address the problems of a single neighborhood. The team originally planned to pilot the school system project in a neighborhood school, but as many of the students who attended the pilot school did not live in North of Main, the team struggled to justify the inclusion of the project in RNoM. Similarly, the work on the service delivery referral system proved difficult to focus on at a neighborhood level. Through this evolution of thinking, the team concluded that it needed to narrow its focus. "I think we learned that there just wasn't the bandwidth capacity to tackle everything at the same time."

The entire team supported the decision to restructure the initiative's priorities, and, after many group discussions, key priorities emerged fairly naturally.   By the time the Fitchburg team submitted its sustainability plan in June 2017, it narrowed the RNoM initiative to three areas: neighborhood development, economic development, and community engagement. The team also restructured its community engagement strategies to focus more on resident empowerment and the creation of resident leaders. With it new, more narrow focus, the RNoM team has continued to work on the following activities:

- *Main Street redevelopment* work, including implementation of a revolving loan fund reserve to support business location in the downtown, continued work to support prospective businesses in addressing permitting and other site concerns, to provide support for Main Street businesses, to advocate for the redevelopment of the Theater Block, and efforts to bring more people downtown;

- efforts to address *the housing market in the neighborhood,* including a $20,000 Homebuyer Assistance Program, continued work on creating artist housing at the B.F. Brown School, NewVue's work on 12 homeownership projects and infrastructure work in the neighborhood, and formation of a Market Advisory Group to implement the marketing plan; and

- continued efforts around *community engagement,* including implementing a Garden Box Competition, organizing the Main Street Live Music Festival, organizing residents around

infrastructure improvements, developing new relationships with the North Central Minority Coalition, and creating a Resident Leadership Task Force.

Progress on shared result

Evidence of progress

The team's shared result is relatively general—to make North of Main a neighborhood of choice by improving the overall quality of the neighborhood. Although the team found it a challenge for much of the three years with a very broad and somewhat unclear result, it does point to the achievement of many programmatic outputs over the course of the work.

✓ **The team has had some success with efforts it supported in its first two years, which it has now spun off to other organizations.**

Specifically under the self-sufficiency focus, the team worked with the Harvard Community Development project group to design a service delivery system to integrate the current systems of various providers in the area and to develop a common referral system. The Fitchburg Community Connections Coalition eventually assumed responsibility for this project. Footsteps2Brilliance, the team's early childhood initiative, is now part of the Fitchburg Public School system. While there is evidence that these two efforts have potential impacts on low-income residents in the city, it is difficult to conclude that they have contributed to the shared result, which had a focus only on one specific neighborhood in the city.

✓ **RNoM has also had some impact on improving conditions on Main Street.**

The team points to a net increase of about three new businesses in the downtown. While the team is not taking credit for all of these, it does believe that its work has contributed to more interest in downtown locations. RNoM leadership team members worked with the city to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and supported the proposed city ordinance to make Main Street a one-lane road. The team also points to some successful events that brought visitors downtown, including Music on Main Street, the farmers' market, and its Trick or Treat on Main Street event, and to infrastructure improvements such as improved lighting for a park.

✓ **The team has also had success in identifying and getting strong alignment around a project pipeline.**

Through RNoM, the city, FSU, and other key stakeholders agree on the priority to develop two major catalytic projects, the B.F. Brown project, an abandoned school in the North of Main neighborhood that NewVue has prioritized for some time, and the Theater Block, a property that FSU purchased over the course of the WCC process. Although both projects are still in their early stages, the commitment to these projects could have an impact on the shared result over the longer term.

Finally, the team points to the positive change in resident responses to the community impact measurement (CIM) survey as indicators of changing perceptions of the neighborhood. One-hundred ninety-eight residents completed the survey in 2013, at the start of the initiative, and again in 2016. (See table.) Recent respondents are reporting more positive perceptions of the neighborhood.

Measure	2016	2013
Somewhat, or very satisfied with living in North of Main	83%	73%
Probably, or definitely would recommend North of Main to someone as a good place to live	72%	65%
Community has improved some, or a lot	56%	48%
Community is likely to improve some, or a lot	65%	58%

System changes related to the shared result

While specific evidence of changes in the neighborhood is limited, most partners see the more significant progress in the system changes that have emerged, particularly in the area of collaboration and in policies and practices.

✓ **The efforts to revitalize downtown now involve alignment among a variety of stakeholders in Fitchburg.**

The stronger focus on economic development, particularly downtown revitalization, led RNoM to develop much stronger relationships with two business groups. First, much of the downtown work has involved collaborating with Fitchburg Pride, an organization focused on downtown. The board of this group includes some of the leadership of RNoM, but also involves individual business owners in downtown. In addition, there is increased interaction and potential alignment with the Fitchburg Plan, a business-led organization that is focusing on economic development in the city. While it is still not clear how the two groups will work together in the future, the relationship between RNoM and the Fitchburg Plan is stronger, partially as a result of the involvement of both groups in the Kresge Foundation Capital Absorption work, which took members of the RNoM team and the Fitchburg Plan to a multiday convening in Las Vegas.

Related to the new collaborative relationships, developing a common pipeline of projects among the core leaders is also a significant shift in how development has occurred in the past in Fitchburg. Having the city, FSU, and NewVue all agree to strategic priorities and catalytic projects represents a new way of doing business in the city and may provide a much needed "market signal" to investors and the business community.

One manifestation of the new alignment around strategic priorities has been the city's support for the rebuilding of the B.F. Brown School. As noted by one of the stakeholders, "The mayor has shown great leadership and, in some ways, courage in the face of a lot of people who are demanding that he tear the building down and remove this blight from the neighborhood. But I think he recognizes the importance of that being there. So, having that sense of shared vision has really helped the city."

✓ **The effort has successfully branded the neighborhood as "North of Main."**

Perceptions of the neighborhood targeted by the Fitchburg team have been relatively negative. The perception is that the area has high crime, instability, and poor housing. The RNoM effort has been successful in rebranding the neighborhood as "North of Main," the beginning of ongoing efforts to improve perceptions and market conditions. While the name is a small part of this branding, local media now casually refers to the neighborhood as "North of Main," suggesting that the name has stuck. The team sees this small victory as an interim step in changing some of the negative press and perceptions that have dominated references to the neighborhood.

✓ **The advocacy effort of RNoM has resulted in policy and practice changes in the city that are directly related to downtown and neighborhood redevelopment.**

The work of RNoM has also resulted in some policies, practices, and resource flows that have the potential to contribute to progress on the shared result. These include successfully advocating for policy changes in the city, such as the Complete Streets Executive Order, changes in the traffic circulation in the downtown, and locating the farmers' market downtown. In addition, these efforts have caused the city

to change how it is addressing problem properties and to enhance its capacity in this area by using the CityNexus tool. The data analytics tool allows the city to run analysis of department data on a shared platform to create a comprehensive problem property inventory.

✓ **There are new financing tools and incentives to support businesses seeking to locate downtown or to improve their facilities.**

RNoM provided $25,000 to create a loan loss reserve fund to provide credit enhancement of the chamber of commerce's existing loan fund for small businesses on Main Street. By providing this cushion, this fund will be able to serve more small businesses that lenders may have perceived as high risk.

Pathway to the 10-year shared result

Despite the positive improvements related to RNoM's efforts to date, stakeholders struggle to articulate how their progress relates to a 10-year population-level result. Stakeholders remain somewhat unclear as to whether making North of Main a "neighborhood of choice" is about bringing new residents to the community or improving lives of existing residents. With that ambiguity, stakeholders are not entirely clear about how the current strategic focus of the work going forward will generate improvements for low-income residents, WCC's ultimate goal. While Fitchburg is tracking a number of measures, it is not entirely clear how some of what it is measuring will lead to the result that it has articulated.

While RNoM was a fairly high-profile initiative in the community, generating substantial press coverage for its activities, team communication focused on activities and strategies has not reinforced for most how the activities relate to the 10-year shared result. Survey analysis found that only 43 percent of the survey respondents who are not engaged in the core leadership of the initiative could articulate RNoM's shared result. While most could name at least one of RNoM's strategies, interviews found that few outside of the smallest core leadership group could really articulate holistically what RNoM had accomplished or how that relates to long-term benefit for low-income people. Even a senior city official remarked, "I still need to be brought up to speed on how we are bringing the neighborhood into the picture. I sometimes lose sight of what we're doing and where we're going." Stakeholders are generally positive about progress when considering specific strategies, but to sustain broad effort toward a 10-year result, the team will need to sharpen its long-term result and the desired interim outcomes along that path.

Interim outcomes related to the civic infrastructure

Although evidence of significant progress on the actual result the team was seeking to achieve was somewhat limited, there is significant evidence of many positive outcomes related to changes in the city's civic infrastructure.

WCC's theory of change assumes that by building a cross-sector team to work toward Fitchburg's shared result and applying WCC's core elements of collaborative leadership, community engagement, evidence-based learning, and system change in service of that shared result, that WCC can be a vehicle for improving Fitchburg's civic infrastructure over a 10-year period. While just over a third of the way toward that 10-year vision, this evaluation looks at interim outcomes in Fitchburg that suggest WCC is leading to improvements in the civic infrastructure. Since the cross-sector table is the foundation of each city's effort, the evaluation looks at how the work has led to expanded and sustained collaborative leadership. This evaluation also looks for interim outcomes related to the other core elements by initially looking at how the teams applied the core elements, what value they found in the use of those elements, and whether there is evidence that the use of the core elements is diffusing from being something that the

WCC *team* does to something that is *embedded more deeply in the partner organizations*. Ultimately, the goal is that the use of the four core elements becomes the way that Fitchburg and the other working cities do business. Finally, the evaluation looks at what success the Fitchburg team has had in generating additional external connections and resources. While the Boston Fed did not expressly communicate this as a priority to the Round 1 cities, the WCC theory of change identifies the ability to attract outside support to further community priorities as an indicator of a robust civic infrastructure.

The assessment, summarized in the rubric at the start of the case study, is based on a combination of data sources, including interviews and document reviews, but at times uses survey responses to provide objective indicators. The 2017 Survey of WCC Fitchburg Stakeholders captures how the team's use of the core elements in pursuit of its shared result contributed to changes in perceptions, practices, policies, and resource flows that suggest positive improvements in the city's civic infrastructure. (See Fitchburg survey tables 8-12 at the end of the case study.)

Expanded and sustained collaborative leadership

✓ **Fitchburg team members consistently point to collaborative leadership not only as a key element of the RNoM initiative, but also as one of its major outcomes.**

Before WCC, the organizations in Fitchburg did not frequently work together and there was a general lack of trust and communication among stakeholders. However, the emphasis placed on collaborative leadership brought organizations to the table and, in a sense, forced everyone to work together. The Fitchburg team agrees that its shared vision allowed the team to better communicate the work to others and resulted in changes in the civic infrastructure by providing a focal point for the process that cultivated the deeper relationships. As noted by one of the core leaders, "The process that we went through, while extremely painful, I think the trust and structure we have today wouldn't have been as tight if we had not gone through that process." The survey results provide evidence in that Fitchburg had the strongest responses of the Round 1 cities with regard to distributed leadership; 89 percent of core partners expressed that their organization shares responsibility for achieving the shared result.

The RNoM initiative has sparked stronger collaboration across the city. One of the leaders remarked, "I think it might feel like process, but from my perspective, it's the biggest positive outcome because they can sustain it. It's the key piece here." Many team members point out that cultivating deep relationships among previously siloed organizations and sectors is a long-term process, but they do already see positive improvements in how stakeholders interact and how they prioritize collaboration. Almost every interview indicated that this change was transformative. As one leader mentioned, "If we're really successful, RNoM will go away and it will just be how we do business, as opposed to right now—we need to remind ourselves to do this collectively."

✓ **The most significant change with respect to collaborative leadership is FSU's more grounded role in the community.**

Although FSU was always active in the community under the previous president, it seems its participation in RNoM at least partly contributed to it embracing its role as an anchor for the city. The relationships between FSU and the city are much stronger, with FSU now working collaboratively with the city on a number of projects. FSU has become a major investor in the downtown area through its purchase of the Theater Block, and it is now the new backbone to the RNoM initiative. The president's house is located in the North of Main neighborhood, providing a new direct link between the school and the residents.

These changes are a manifestation of a larger cultural shift, with FSU now seeing itself as a critical player in the city on a whole range of issues beyond just revitalizing downtown and the North of Main neighborhood. The new relationship between MOC and FSU led to the university buying a MOC-owned building in the North of Main neighborhood for a childcare center.

✓ **The evolution of the RNoM initiative strategies led to the engagement of a broader set of stakeholders, expanding the collaborative network.**

RNoM's greater emphasis on the downtown and its existing arts and culture infrastructure caught the attention of both the Fitchburg Art Museum and The Fitchburg Plan. The art museum now sees itself clearly as part of a larger strategy for the neighborhood and downtown. The Fitchburg Plan, a business-led collaborative, is looking at the possibility of either merging with or at least aligning efforts with RNoM.

✓ **Fitchburg has yet to fully cultivate a rising group of diverse leaders.**

Both the survey and interviews revealed limited perceptions of new leaders emerging from the work over the past three years, although they regarded the initiative generally as welcoming of new leaders to the governance group. Respondents did cite Program Coordinator Tom Skwierawski as a new leader in Fitchburg, and his move from RNoM to a key leadership position in the city is a strong indication of his role in leading Fitchburg in community development and economic development.

While community engagement has been a significant focus of the work of RNoM over the past three years, all of the leadership interviewed reported that they do not believe that they have been effective in helping to nurture new leadership in the neighborhood. While interviewees pointed to one or two individuals, overall they do not think that leadership in Fitchburg reflects the diversity in the population, and their work has not been able to impact this challenge.

Team members are conscious of the demographics of the North of Main neighborhood and its combination of a predominantly Hispanic/Latino population with a large number of FSU students. One of the team's goals through its community engagement efforts is to increase the diversity of resident leaders to a level that is more in line with current demographics. The leadership of RNoM recognizes that this is an area where they have fallen short and which they are intending to focus on more intensely as part of their sustainability planning. This is an area in which RNoM will be devoting significant energy in the future, led by the new provost at FSU who has considerable experience in this area. The team has created a resident leadership taskforce whose purpose is to discuss how to increase resident inclusion in public decision-making and to identify barriers to inclusion. Thus far, it has been difficult for the taskforce to reach its goal of 50 percent resident attendance, but it is looking to collaborate with similar groups and organizations.

Value and diffusion of core elements

While Fitchburg stakeholders had a mixed assessment of the extent to which use of the core elements contributed to their results, partners generally embraced the elements and made changes in policies, practices, and resource flow to better incorporate the practices in their work.

✓ **The Fitchburg team fully embraced the importance of community engagement in its work and partner organizations note that they are changing systems to support better engagement of residents. Despite its perceived value, partners struggle to articulate the difference it has made in progress toward their shared result.**

From its inception, the Fitchburg team realized that its work needed to authentically and deeply involve the residents of the neighborhood. In fact, one of the areas of debate throughout RNoM was whether community engagement was a tool for achieving some of its other goals, or a goal in itself. The leadership landed on the side of making this a separate goal of the work. Its first efforts involved many visioning sessions and included residents of the neighborhood. In addition, the team worked very closely with Bill Traynor, a consultant provided through WCC, to develop an approach to community engagement that would cause residents to take on more of a leadership role in the work and in the city. The intent of many of the activities that the team implemented over the three years, such as the cleanup, the annual meeting, and the mini-grant program, was to create more resident involvement in the work of RNoM.

Despite the significant effort, Fitchburg's progress related to community engagement is mixed. RNoM leadership reported that community engagement was not an area in which they believed the team made significant progress. One leader stated, "Resident engagement has been a thorny issue." Another reported that is the area where the team believes it has made the least progress. Based on the survey, 53 percent of respondents who named community engagement as a strategy believed that the team had made substantial progress on that strategy. Yet, only 30 percent strongly agreed that RNoM had increased resident engagement and leadership on key issues impacting the city (although 77 percent saw at least some increase). Less than 25 percent felt that increased resident engagement had made a large positive impact of the outcomes of RNoM.

Despite the mixed progress, the team is highly committed to broader community engagement. Survey responses show that more than three-quarters of core partners believe their organization has made system changes to better engage residents.

✓ **It is unclear how Fitchburg's community engagement efforts have contributed to WCC's long-term vision of a civic infrastructure in which residents are empowered to participate in civic life and have mechanisms to do so.**

The WCC theory of change assumes that if the WCC city team's work in service of the shared result enlisted and responded to resident insight, and residents felt heard, engaged, and empowered in addressing this challenge, that they might be more apt to engage and tackle other challenges in the community in the future. However, this evaluation found that while RNoM had been effective in convening residents to share what they were doing and to work on specific projects, it was more challenged in demonstrating how the team had taken the input of residents and actively shaped strategies with that guidance. There is a sense among some leaders that perhaps if the team had worked with residents from the beginning, "we might have been able to weed out what was less important. Then we would have a focus from the beginning and then it wouldn't be struggling with resident engagement now because it would be something that the residents had already identified."

This finding from the interviews is confirmed by the survey findings; only 26 percent of survey respondents strongly agree that the approach taken by the initiative was informed by residents whose lives will be impacted by the work (as compared to roughly 50 percent in Chelsea and Lawrence). One stakeholder remarked, "People had lots of different expectations about what they wanted community engagement to

be. And a lot of the expectations were around numbers versus actually engaging people." While in general a couple of those interviewed pointed to one or two residents who have taken on more leadership, they do not believe their efforts to date have built the engagement or leadership that they had hoped to achieve.

✓ **Evidence-based learning has been a critical component of the work in Fitchburg.**

The team's use of data has been important to its work and has become an example of system change in the Fitchburg community. A number of projects through RNoM have required the use of data. The team also hired consultants to conduct studies of the area, including a housing study and a marketing study of the downtown. The team then used the results of these studies and available data when working with problem properties and Main Street storefronts. The team's initial work on an inventory for Main Street properties, although not completed, triggered the desire to create a database of city properties. Collecting data through the initiative has also helped the team shape the focus of its work, most notably shifting the focus from solely homeownership-based work to work that looks at multifamily properties.

Despite these achievements, team members have pointed out weaknesses in their application of data. One is the lack of data to measure success throughout the initiative. In one respect, this is not surprising as the team's 10-year result is much more of a vision than a measurable result. Because of the lack of initial data in the city, it was also difficult for the team to establish a baseline. The team's evaluation work through Brandeis provided updates on the team's work and tracked progress, but it did not include progress updates relative to the neighborhood data.

The influence of the RNoM team has steered the city of Fitchburg to be more data driven. Prior to Fitchburg's involvement in WCC, data use and the availability of data in the city were limited. A representative from the city noted, "[The RNoM team] brought in a couple of tools that have allowed you to visualize data and manipulate data. And they are so data focused these days; it helps immerse you in the culture of it so it feels more routine."

✓ **The RNoM team is in agreement as to the importance and relevance of applying a system change perspective to its work.**

The team cites its work on the service delivery system as an example of a project that brought its attention to the importance of thinking about the bigger picture. The team has had success in changing the perspectives and involvement of many community stakeholders, most notably the city and FSU, which it points to as a strong first step. And, most of the interviewees noted that they now are looking at the larger system barriers in how they are approaching improvements of the neighborhood.

The WCC focus on system change contributed to NewVue's recognition that it needs to look more systemically at neighborhood development. Team members from NewVue state that their organization's participation in the RNoM initiative has helped them expand their thinking from individual projects to broader neighborhood change. "I think the biggest thing is that we went from focusing on widgets to focusing on how the neighborhood improves as a whole, and recognizing that there are things that are better for others to do." After seeing the kind of impact that a more collaborative approach can have, the general mindset of the organization has shifted to think more deliberately about who should be leading particular efforts and how best to shape strategies to include outside partners.

New resources flowing into city

The Fitchburg team had early success in securing additional funding through HFCM, and the foundation has agreed to continue its funding as the RNoM team moves into sustainability planning. In addition to this major grant, other new resources include:

- NeighborWorks America recently awarded NewVue a $500,000 Project Reinvest grant to use for home rehabilitation and sidewalk improvement in North of Main. In the application, NewVue referenced its role in RNoM and used the collaboration as "the value add."

- Smart Growth America selected the city of Fitchburg, with support from RNoM, to participate in a two-day "(Re) Building Downtown" technical workshop.

- The city is applying for the Bloomberg Mayor's Challenge grant to support the creation of "a tool that is building what we're calling the neighborhood return on investment…it takes into account…the different quantitative and qualitative factors that create the full fair value of not only property but the way the property impacts and is impacted by the surrounding environment."

In addition, interviews suggest that regional community development lenders see a change in the civic leadership in the city that will likely make the city more attractive to future investment. One lender specifically noted that civic leaders appear far more aligned on the city's strategic priorities and are able to provide a united, compelling rationale for a pipeline of future projects. The clarity and alignment around those strategic priorities increases the CDFI's willingness to invest and take greater risks in the city.

Contextual factors contributing to progress

There were a number of contextual factors that have impacted the team's progress; some have helped to accelerate the work, while others have created unforeseen challenges.

✓ **The political transitions in the mayor of the city, while somewhat disruptive, ended up being a positive accelerant, with more stable involvement of city staff with the new mayor.**

The change in mayors had a significant impact on the Fitchburg team's work. The former mayor had been involved in the initial convening of partners and came to the table with a vision for the project that was not entirely supported by the rest of the team. During the transition between the two mayors, the team felt that its work stalled a little as it had very little support from the city, and there was uncertainty about how the new mayor would view the project. Mayor DiNatale, however, proved supportive of the initiative, particularly of its focus on economic development and the revitalization of the downtown. Overall, team members state that the change of mayors was a challenge but produced a positive outcome in a new relationship with the city. Team members expect that the city will re-elect the current mayor to another two-year team, but several have expressed concern that the impact an eventual change in city leadership could have on RNoM.

✓ **The improving housing and commercial markets over the course of the initiative may have contributed to some of the positive outcomes and increased potential concerns about gentrification and displacement.**

The housing market has continued to rebound from the previous recession, and there has been some improvement in Fitchburg's market. Market trends show a 7 percent increase in median home sales in the last year and a general upward trend in both the median selling price and the number of homes sold for the past five years.[1] Recent reports have shown high demand for homes in the state of Massachusetts, and an April 2017 local article is predicting a "bullish" real estate market in Fitchburg.[2] The gradual improvement of the housing market and overall economy has also had an effect on the team's work. While it is difficult to measure direct impact, improvement in these markets has been an accelerant and has allowed for greater impact.

✓ **The fire at the B.F. Brown School building, a key priority in the neighborhood plan, seriously hindered progress on the project.**

In September 2016, a four-alarm fire broke out in the former B.F. Brown School building. At this point, RNoM partners had been working to convert the building into an artists' space for a year-and-a-half. The fire badly damaged the building. This, coupled with significant delays regarding insurance claims, halted the project for the RNoM team. The mayor, along with RNoM team members, has since fought to keep the project alive, and now a year later work is set to continue. However, the fire and yearlong uncertainty about the B. F. Brown project had a negative impact on the team's work. The building was poised as a key project for the team's new strategy around marketing the neighborhood as a gateway to arts and culture.

✓ **Staff transition slowed the work at many points during the initiative.**

There were several leadership changes within partner organizations, including the departure of the team's first project director as well as other key staff at MOC, a change in university presidents at FSU, and the RNoM project coordinator's shift to a position at the city. The departure of MOC's executive director and other smaller staffing changes among organizations has not had a significant impact on the RNoM work. The team sees a silver living in Tom's move to executive director of planning and community development for the city as it opens up new opportunities to work with the city. The team is optimistic about how the change in FSU presidents will affect work. Although the previous president was a longtime local resident and well known in the community, the team believes that FSU's new president is committed to the RNoM work and to FSU's now stronger role in the initiative. He supported FSU's purchase of the Theater Block and lives in the North of Main neighborhood. The one staff transition noted by many as having a negative impact was in relation to staffing the community engagement work. The first individual who took on this position at NewVue left, and it took a relatively long period of time for the leadership team to hire a replacement. The team noted this as one of the factors contributing to some of the challenges it faced in its community engagement efforts.

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[1] https://www.trulia.com/real_estate/Fitchburg-Massachusetts/market-trends/
[2] http://www.sentinelandenterprise.com/news/ci_30895507/low-inventory-high-demand-has-boosted-average-mass

✓ **The opportunity to engage in the Kresge capital absorption work strengthened the relationships of the team and provided a framework and process for aligning around strategic priorities.**

An important event for the team in building strong relationships was the trip some of its members took to Las Vegas for a capital absorption convening hosted by Robin Hacke, a consultant to Kresge at the time, and her team. The trip, along with providing the team a useful framework for its work and new insights on the community development finance system, allowed new relationships to form. At the time, both the mayor and the FSU president were relatively new to their positions, and the president of The Fitchburg Plan was still uncertain of a partnership with RNoM. The opportunity, therefore, for attending RNoM team members to work more closely with these influential figures was no doubt invaluable. One team member stated, "The trip was really important to the process and the relationship-building. I actually asked the Fed if we could do another trip and maybe do another facilitated meeting for the sustainability piece – just to further build relationships."

Interventions of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston

Overall, team members saw the Boston Fed interventions and the assistance the consultants provided as extremely helpful to their work. "I think all the interventions have been very cohesive and relevant to the work that we've tried to achieve. And they've just been great supporters…The support and technical assistance have been equal if not more important to the money." The team, however, had mixed views about the learning communities, thinking that some were better than others were. The team does feel that one of its biggest struggles as a group was staying on track and avoiding a "solving world peace" sort of mindset. Team members pointed out that the scale and diversity of Boston Fed's interventions were at times a bit too inspiring, as the team would lose sight of its goals by trying to do too much.

Conclusion

With its narrowed focus on three areas, the RNoM team has been able to identify more specific measures that it will track and has been laying the groundwork for future progress. After struggling with success in its community engagement efforts, the team is targeting its work toward building leadership among community residents and has new leadership through the FSU provost who will steer the effort going forward. The team has also identified the Theater Block and the B.F. Brown School building as pivotal and catalytic projects and will be targeting its attention and resources toward the successful development of these projects.

Sustainability

The team's vision for the North of Main neighborhood remains largely the same as it moves into sustainability planning. Current work includes strengthening the neighborhood marketing campaign, working with Main Street businesses and landlords, implementing a loan program to support local businesses, and creating resident leaders, supported by the resident leadership task force. The biggest concerns team members raised are the impacts of unforeseen changes in funding, city support, and/or team makeup. Although the first two are somewhat secure at this point, some team members have expressed worry that RNoM still rests on the shoulders of a few key partners.

To address these concerns, the team states that part of its sustainability planning will be to "develop a MOU among partners to more clearly define each partner's role." Tom Skwierawski's new position as Fitchburg's executive director of planning and community development creates new opportunities for

RNoM to partner with the city. The RNoM team is also looking more closely at merging or at least collaborating with The Fitchburg Plan and is working on a potential structure for integration.

Major learning

✓ **A shared result should be ambitious, but narrow and clear enough to provide some strategic direction.**

The premise of the WCC model is a cross-sector team coming together to achieve a long-term and ambitious shared result. The RNoM team did develop such a result and was consistent about it for the three years. However, unlike the other sites, the Fitchburg "result" was extremely broad, somewhat ill defined, and very hard to measure. As one of the leaders noted, "We started with this very abstract result." It was difficult to mobilize stakeholders and keep them engaged when it was sometimes unclear exactly what they were trying to achieve beyond "improving the neighborhood." The team may have kept the result broad and somewhat vague in an attempt to keep everyone at the table. To talk more specifically about exactly who would benefit and how would potentially reveal some of the underlying differences and tensions within the group. Yet, many of the challenges that the group faced over the three years could probably trace back to its definition of the result.

✓ **A collaborative must be able to balance planning, process, and action.**

Team members all report that the team spent about 18 months in more of a planning mode. Many of the participants expressed significant frustration at the sense that the process was bogging down the team. In effect, the team lost a lot of momentum and spent significant time working on very complex models and work plans. From the point of view of residents and organizations not directly involved, it was difficult to identify specific actions that were leading to visible improvements. While RNoM did take action early on the literacy software, it did not spend adequate time ensuring that this work was actually related to the agreed upon shared result.

✓ **When focusing on neighborhoods, do not lose sight of the result by attempting to solve both issues related to the "place" and issues that affect the people who live in the neighborhood.**

Many comprehensive community change initiatives focusing on a single neighborhood have faced some of the same challenges as RNoM. There is often an ongoing tension between strategies that focus on the built environment and quality of life improvements and strategies that address the conditions that keep people in poverty, such as lack of a job, education, or access to appropriate services. Moreover, in places like Massachusetts, this work always involves an underlying tension about whether changes will actually benefit the low-income individuals living in the neighborhood or promote gentrification and displacement. These tensions were underlying some of the difficulties the RNoM team had in getting to action and led in some ways to its extremely broad agenda and effort to solve all problems.

✓ **Put measures in place to ensure that individuals who wield significant power through the political process or funding do not dominate the work or impact honest dialogue.**

There were challenges in Fitchburg related to the structure of the collaborative table. In the early phases of the initiative, the mayor, who had the initial vision for the project, would come to meetings with multiple new ideas for the work and other members tended to defer to her. This made it difficult for the team to have honest conversations and move on strategies that might differ from the mayor's thinking.

The Fitchburg team also had its local funder sitting on the executive committee. As a major funder, this individual had significant power over the direction of the work and the dynamics of the team. Interviews with other stakeholders revealed that the involvement on the leadership team at times affected the ability of other actors to talk as openly as they would have liked.

✓ **Create the time and venues for promoting informal team building.**

A number of the leaders in Fitchburg had the opportunity to spend time away from the city together in Las Vegas as part of a convening on capital absorption that the Kresge Foundation sponsored. A number of those involved in this convening reported that it was a tipping point in terms of building trust among those involved in RNoM. Being away allowed those involved to spend time with each other informally and to work through some of the challenges in a facilitated process.

Fitchburg survey results

Overview

Survey Overview	
Invitations sent	64
Complete responses	31
Incomplete responses	10
Response rate	64%

Profile of stakeholder engagement

Table 1. Involvement in RNoM (n=41)		
Involvement	Frequency	Percentage
I have played a leadership role, overseeing the direction and implementation of the work.	9	22%
I have served on a committee, workgroup, or advisory group to ReImagine.	14	34%
I worked on a specific program or project.	23	56%
I have been directly involved in the work of ReImagine in some other way.	8	20%
I have not been directly involved in the work of ReImagine.	0	0%
Total	54	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 1 (Check all that apply).

Table 1a. Other involvement in RNoM (n=41)
I am the City Councilor in this Ward and attended public meetings they had
Mayor
Working Cities Advisory and One Lane Main Street
Involved in strategic thinking

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 1a.

Table 2. Length of involvement in RNoM (n=39)		
Length of time	Frequency	Percentage
Less than six months ago	4	10%
More than six months ago but less than a year	3	8%
Between one and two years ago	13	33%
More than two years ago	19	49%
Total	39	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 2.

Table 3. Functioning of the team leading RNoM		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
Organizations involved in ReImagine trust each other to share information and to provide honest feedback	Frequency	1	1	13	11	4	30
	Percentage	3%	3%	43%	37%	13%	
Organizations involved in ReImagine have open discussions about difficult issues	Frequency	2	2	11	9	6	30
	Percentage	7%	7%	37%	30%	20%	
Participation in ReImagine is not dominated by any one stakeholder group or sector	Frequency	2	3	13	7	5	30
	Percentage	7%	10%	42%	23%	17%	
Organizations involved in ReImagine share responsibility for the work and hold themselves accountable for achieving the desired results	Frequency	0	4	9	11	6	30
	Percentage	0%	13%	30%	37%	20%	
Over the course of the initiative, new partners have been welcomed and invited to participate in the leadership of ReImagine	Frequency	1	2	7	14	6	30
	Percentage	3%	7%	23%	47%	20%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 18.

Assessment of shared result

Table 4. Expression of key result (10-year goal) of RNoM		
ID'ing specific data points or inflection points that signal urgent need, and using them to help strengthen quality of life in the North of Main neighborhood.	An improvement of the quality of life of the residents of the NOM area, through community and economic development efforts.	An active collaborative has become focused on guiding a collective impact on North of Main.
This may be more process, but the collaborative approach is the key result, because it's something we can replicate and use to solve a whole host of potential problems/challenges that the city may face. My second result would be making the NoM a place people want to live work and play.	Using collective impact to bring about positive change in Fitchburg, making the city a desirable place to live, work, visit, or pursue an education.	Ultimately I believe that the one key result all the work happening in ReImagine is geared toward is trying to fill in the vacancies; empty businesses on Main Street and vacant homes in the neighborhood.
To see transformation of the North of Main area.	To engage residents and organizations in efforts to improve the community.	Creating partnerships.
Vision for the Neighborhood that engages residents/stakeholders in the development and execution of vision. Improve conditions in city's downtown and neighborhoods.	To create a neighborhood of choice where individuals want to live, work, play, and invest.	Creating a neighborhood where people want to live, work, and invest.
To make Fitchburg a better place to live, work, and play.	Revitalization of Downtown Fitchburg and surrounding neighborhoods.	To improve the quality of life for the North of Main neighborhood.
Cooperation and sharing of resources among the residents, nonprofits, and the business communities.	Making the NoM a neighborhood of choice, where people want to live, work, play, and invest.	Community engagement and overall improvement of community sectors.
Citizen empowerment.	Helping create a synergy within the city so we can strive toward our goals.	The re-invigoration of the most impoverished part of the city.
To produce a thriving community.	To build engagement within the community.	Resident engagement.
Engaging residents and empowering ownership in a declining, blighted neighborhood.	Neighborhood revitalization in the North of Main neighborhood.	A thriving, self-sustaining community of residents that are actively engaged with the city and are empowered to with the skills necessary for constructive civic engagement, collaborative growth and personal success.
Reorganizing the North of Main community. Engaging the residents more, and making sure north of main residents don't get cut out of this area.	The most visible results involve Main Street economic impacts. There are many organizations involved in the objectives and it receives publicity from the local newspaper and the results are visible.	Better image of North of Main, better functioning housing market, more social connections with the neighborhood.
Don't know.		

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 5.

Table 5. RNoM's result (10-year goal)

		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
The selected result helped focus the team's effort	Frequency	0	1	7	13	9	30
	Percentage	0%	3%	23%	43%	30%	
The selected result helped the team to gather the "right" people at the table	Frequency	0	2	11	9	8	30
	Percentage	0%	7%	37%	30%	27%	
The selected result addresses a critical challenge for our city	Frequency	0	0	6	15	9	30
	Percentage	0%	0%	20%	50%	30%	
The selected result enabled the team to readily measure and communicate progress	Frequency	0	1	10	9	10	30
	Percentage	0%	3%	33%	30%	33%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 19.

Table 6. Organizations' sense of responsibility to achieve shared result (n=32)

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	3	9%
Somewhat Disagree	1	3%
Somewhat Agree	8	25%
Strongly Agree	20	63%
Don't Know	0	0%
Total	32	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 6

Table 7. Perceived progress by grouped RNoM strategy

		No Progress	Limited Progress	Substantial Progress	Do Not Know	N/A	Total
Economic Development	Frequency	0	8	13	1	0	22
	Percentage	0%	36%	59%	4%	0%	
Community Engagement	Frequency	0	12	15	1	0	28
	Percentage	0%	42%	53%	3%	0%	
Collaboration	Frequency	1	1	5	0	0	7
	Percentage	14%	14%	71%	0%	0%	
Quality of Life/ Housing	Frequency	0	9	6	1	0	16
	Percentage	0%	56%	37%	6%	0%	
Other	Frequency	0	2	8	1	0	11
	Percentage	0%	18%	72%	9%	0%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 7a.

Table 8. Approaches to the work and perceived contribution to outcomes of RNoM																
		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total			Large Negative Impact	Modest Negative Impact	No Impact	Modest Positive Impact	Large Positive Impact	Don't Know	Total
ReImagine established a diverse, cross-sector collaborative of leaders	Frequency	2	2	16	7	3	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	1	1	16	8	4	30
	Percentage	7%	7%	53%	23%	10%			Percentage	0%	3%	3%	53%	27%	13%	
The approach taken by ReImagine was informed by residents whose lives will be impacted by the work	Frequency	1	3	15	8	3	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	2	2	16	6	4	30
	Percentage	3%	10%	50%	27%	10%			Percentage	0%	7%	7%	53%	20%	13%	
ReImagine has increased resident engagement and leadership on key issues impacting the city	Frequency	2	3	14	9	2	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	2	2	17	7	2	30
	Percentage	7%	10%	47%	30%	7%			Percentage	0%	7%	7%	57%	23%	7%	
ReImagine regularly uses data to refine strategies	Frequency	0	2	12	8	8	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	1	2	12	7	8	30
	Percentage	0%	7%	40%	27%	27%			Percentage	0%	3%	7%	40%	23%	27%	
ReImagine has pursued system-oriented strategies such as changing policies, practices, or funding flows	Frequency	1	0	8	13	8	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	1	12	9	8	30
	Percentage	3%	0%	27%	43%	27%			Percentage	0%	0%	3%	40%	30%	27%	
ReImagine has facilitated new or deeper relationships among organizations in the city and/or catalyzed changed perspectives among local leaders	Frequency	1	0	10	16	3	30	What difference did this make (positively or negatively) in the outcomes of the work?	Frequency	0	0	1	13	12	4	30
	Percentage	3%	0%	33%	53%	10%			Percentage	0%	0%	3%	43%	40%	13%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Questions 12-17a.

Outcomes

Table 9. Changes in organizations' policies, practices, or allocation of resources influenced by RNoM (n=31)		Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to develop stronger collaborations with other leaders or leading organizations in the city	Frequency	18	4	9	31
	Percentage	58%	13%	29%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to better engage residents	Frequency	16	4	11	31
	Percentage	52%	13%	35%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human or financial) to better use data	Frequency	11	8	11	30
	Percentage	37%	27%	37%	
Changed policies, practices, or resource allocations (human of financial) in support of the goals pursued by ReImagine	Frequency	19	3	9	31
	Percentage	61%	10%	29%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 11.

Table 9a. Changes in organizations' policies, practices, or resource allocations. (n=18)	
We engaged in the community gardens project, among other things, to better engage residents with healthy options, especially lower income residents.	Leadership has bought into "collective impact" - allowed for practices to support this work. CDBG funds allocated to support staff towards work; responsiveness to key partners
The municipality, both budgetarily and through staff efforts, now actively uses a collaborative approach in addressing "problem properties" and overall blight through data driven decision-making.	When we pursue new grant programs, they are almost exclusively collaborative. Resident Engagement is just a way of doing business now. Similarly so with data. We are always searching for ways to incentivize data-based decision-making,
Stronger collaborations with residents.	State budget and grant awards.
I serve on a Task Force connected to Fitchburg State University. The University supports the Reimagine Main Street in many ways: lending professional support and by providing meeting space and meals, when appropriate.	Increased participation and awareness of our collaborations and outreach for more complete and diverse engagement by Fitchburg's residents.
Our organization has made distinct efforts to reach out to a wider spectrum of demographics for input and collaboration. We have developed a plan of action to make sure the demographics of our Council members more closely reflects the demographics of our city. We now reach out directly to residents and organizations and invite them personally to apply for grants. We now include grant training sessions with Q&A rather than just using social media to announce the process.	The collaboration has been a critical component to implementing strategies. In general, potentially daunting tasks seem more manageable when you have a team working with you to share the burden. The collaborative approach is really a mind-set change vs. a formal policy change. With respect to engaging residents, from a city perspective, we see it play out in our One Lane Main initiative. In the past, I think you'd see the City making more decisions that the City thinks are in the residents' best interest. Instead, we are asking business owners and residents for input and opinions before making a decision. Data has become a key factor in addressing problem properties and seeking to create goals and measuring effectiveness. There is a citywide push to keep data in a format that is electronic and can be manipulated, vs paper documentation. We are still in a process to develop measurements for addressing problem properties, and are working with Harvard Kennedy School's students to this end. The RNoM team has done a terrific job of identifying strategies that align with the City's work and articulating how they align, making it easier for us to continue our work and dedicate time to implementing RNoM strategies.
Participation with F2B has increased partnership with FPS.	The Provost has become involved in community engagement and resident leadership.
The Director of the Fitchburg Art Museum now serves on the ReImagine North of Main Leadership team. ReImagine has strengthened our institutional collaborations with partners on the BF Brown project, and has helped provide and leverage resources for the Museum to conduct a feasibility study for an on-site, arts-based, low-cost after-school program for neighborhood children.	The entire time I have worked with my organization we have been involved with ReImagine and so it hard for me to speak about changes within the organization caused by ReImagine because I did not see how my organization functioned before working with ReImagine. I have seen strong collaboration with ReImagine partners that I heard we did not have before I also know that our agency has made internal changes to better support ReImagine goals. Some of the work with data and residents our agency would be doing with or without ReImagine.
My organization has been more engaged in this project than we would have been if not for ReImagine.	We now coordinate with other agencies on devising strategies that will have an impact and not just have an output.
We have made an effort to further our commitment to serve all residents.	Increased funding for the project.

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 11a.

Table 10. Change in organizational engagement with community outside of RNoM since 2014 (n=36)		Significantly Less Engaged	Somewhat Less Engaged	No Change	Somewhat More Engaged	Significantly More Engaged	N/A
Cities Agencies	Frequency	1	1	8	8	14	2
	Percentage	3%	3%	24%	24%	41%	6%
State or regional agencies	Frequency	0	2	10	14	8	1
	Percentage	0%	6%	29%	40%	23%	3%
Financial Institutions (e.g., banks, CDFIs)	Frequency	0	2	14	11	6	1
	Percentage	0%	6%	41%	32%	18%	3%
City nonprofit organizations	Frequency	0	2	8	12	11	1
	Percentage	0%	6%	24%	35%	32%	3%
Business/employers in your city	Frequency	0	1	10	16	6	1
	Percentage	0%	3%	29%	48%	18%	3%
Grassroots organizations/ resident groups	Frequency	0	2	11	15	4	1
	Percentage	0%	6%	33%	45%	12%	3%
Educational Institutions	Frequency	0	1	8	11	13	2
	Percentage	0%	3%	23%	31%	37%	6%
Foundations (local, regional, national)	Frequency	0	1	13	11	8	1
	Percentage	0%	3%	38%	32%	24%	3%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 3.

Table 11. Change in personal beliefs around community change since 2014 (n=36)		Significantly Less Important	Somewhat Less Important	No Change	Somewhat More Important	Significantly More Important	N/A
Sharing decision-making and responsibility with other organizations	Frequency	0	0	7	12	16	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	19%	33%	44%	3%
Seeking out leaders who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the city	Frequency	0	0	7	17	11	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	19%	47%	31%	3%
Seeking the perspective of a racially, ethnically, economically diverse body of residents to inform approaches to improve the city	Frequency	0	0	7	17	11	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	19%	47%	31%	3%
Pursuing strategies to support resident empowerment/ leadership	Frequency	0	0	6	14	15	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	17%	39%	42%	3%
Using "data" to develop strategies, assess progress, inform learning, catalyze adaptation and innovation	Frequency	0	0	8	13	14	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	22%	36%	39%	3%
Building new relationships with individuals and/or organizations or bringing different types of organizations into problem-solving discussions	Frequency	0	0	6	11	18	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	17%	31%	50%	3%
Pursuing strategies to change policies, practices, funding flows	Frequency	0	0	6	13	16	1
	Percentage	0%	0%	17%	36%	44%	3%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 4.

Table 12. Influence of RNoM on the city of Fitchburg (n=31)		Yes	No	No Opinion
Fitchburg is better off because of ReImagine	Frequency	27	0	4
	Percentage	87%	0%	13%
Low-income people in Fitchburg are better off today because of ReImagine	Frequency	19	2	10
	Percentage	61%	6%	32%
ReImagine has started making longer-term changes that will benefit low-income people in the region in the next 5-10 years	Frequency	25	0	6
	Percentage	81%	0%	19%

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Questions 8-10a.

Table 12a. How Fitchburg is or is not better off because of RNoM		
There is now a consistent, instinctive use of collaboration when tackling a variety of different plans, projects, and initiatives, not just in the downtown but also citywide.	ReImagine has acted as a point of connection between many of the previously unheard members of the community to many downtown business organizations.	We have a collaborative structure that we didn't have before. It is now just a way of life. Additionally, we have a common vision that we are working to achieve together. It is evident in our partnerships, our pipeline projects, and our shared commitments.
We do not have the resources to accomplish what ReImagine has done.	We need such orgs here to make it all happen. The locals cannot do it on their own and are not doing it.	Any efforts to revitalize Fitchburg are better.
Residents and city government, colleges, and nonprofits and business sector coming together.	I think the city can be, but there is still much work needed.	The city has an active partner working to improve a section of the city.
Community involvement including Footsteps2Brilliance.	More grassroots groups have the resources they need to make incremental change or offer new programs. Increased awareness of the importance of supporting local businesses and organizations.	The focus on bringing economic development to Main Street helps to strengthen the property values and provide a more pleasant environment. In the long run, this effort should bring about reinvestment in the Main Street Area.
Fitchburg is better off. The neighborhood has gotten lots of visibility because of RNoM efforts that have involved city leaders, lenders, realtors, businesses, and these groups are more engaged in the efforts. Also, there has been a change in perceptions in seeing all the effort being put into an area - it is seen as getting better (or why would so much investment be happening?)	The North of Main area has been activated and engaged with the rest of the city. The citywide perception of the area has changed away from otherness and poverty into one of community, and potential. The change is activating the Main Street area and brings hope and possibility to other projects and ideas in the city.	Although I answered "limited progress" for two of our strategies in the last question, I think our progress is somewhere in between limited and substantial. Our work is having impact. We are addressing blight, we are engaging residents, and we are increasing the vitality in downtown with new businesses. The team effort has resulted in identifying more opportunities that the team can take advantage of and has allowed us to take on challenging, time consuming work as a team, where we may not have been able to undertake the work individually.
I believe we have seen improvements in infrastructure and community involvement.	Improving the enabling environment of the neighborhood/city to allow for investment in key pipeline projects that support the overall vision/ strategies.	I believe ReImagine has engaged a lot of stakeholders in a more uniform and organized fashion to address a number of significant challenges.
A team focused on giving residents a voice and enabling them to improve is always valued. Being committed to improving our city is at each strategy previously mentioned should help us stay future focused.	Just the presence of a group contemplating these issues is important.	Because of the collaboration amongst the partners who may have not previously worked together or saw a need to work together.
Working together toward one strategy.	There have been many community activities to bring together residents and businesses within the neighborhood and to bring in other city residents.	Competent organizations are now working together productively to effect change in the region's most diverse and economically challenged neighborhood.
The mayor has embraced ReImagine in his platform to improve the city.	I believe that ReImagine has helped to leverage more funding for Fitchburg. I also believe that there is more collaboration and communication between key organizations in the city.	Community has a voice and an opportunity to partner and be part of the future goals/changes.
Greater collaboration.		

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 8a.

Table 13. Future work of RNoM		Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Total
I believe that the group of organizations collaborating on ReImagine will still be working together toward the desired result three years from now	*Frequency*	0	1	8	18	3	30
	Percentage	0%	3%	27%	60%	10%	
If a new mayor is elected in my city next year, the work of ReImagine will continue to move forward	*Frequency*	0	1	9	15	5	30
	Percentage	0%	3%	30%	50%	17%	
My city has a group of rising, talented civic leaders poised to make a difference in my community over the next decade	*Frequency*	0	1	15	8	6	30
	Percentage	0%	3%	50%	27%	20%	
If my city faced an unexpected economic, physical, or social shock (e.g., loss of major employer, sudden rise in high school dropout rates, etc.), the civic leadership in my city could respond quickly and capably to the challenge	*Frequency*	1	4	11	8	5	29
	Percentage	3%	14%	38%	28%	17%	

Source: Analysis of the Working Cities Challenge Final Survey: Fitchburg. See Question 20.