

# WHO IS LIVING CITIES?

**LIVING CITIES IS THE ACTION ENGINE FOR EQUITABLE CITIES**

Living Cities is **an engine in motion**, advancing economic equity--city by city--through inclusive economic initiatives that change lives and futures. It advances a clear truth: inclusive economies are more resilient, productive, and sustainable over time.

## What does Living Cities believe?



As a member collaborative of leading philanthropic foundations and financial institutions, Living Cities believes that the United States economy must become more inclusive and equitable so that all Americans have an opportunity to thrive. Through place-based initiatives in cities, we focus on business ownership, home ownership, impact investment, and narrative change models that remove barriers to opportunity and build economic opportunity,

## What does Living Cities do?

### Living Cities:



**Investigates/Diagnoses A City's Economic Problem or Challenge** – Identifies local, structural, place-based barriers to economic opportunity that require fiscal and policy solutions.



**Gathers and Connects Key Stakeholders** – Builds coalitions empowering residents, and public, private, civic, investment and philanthropic leaders to collaborate in co-designing programmatic initiatives that yield market and policy solutions addressing persistent patterns of inequity and exclusion.



**Mobilizes Collaborative Philanthropy** – Aligns philanthropic partners to provide the capital, voice, and attention needed to bring programmatic initiatives to life and address specific community problems, shift systems, and foster transformative change.



**Jumpstarts the Work** – Seeds specific programmatic initiatives that deliver measurable outcomes, scales local wins, and secures long-term transformation.

## Why Membership Matters?

Because no single institution—no matter how well-capitalized or mission-aligned—can shift economic systems alone. As a strategic economic collaborative, Living Cities exists to reduce fragmentation across philanthropy, finance, and civic leadership by aligning capital, policy insight, and narrative strategy into a shared operating model.



Membership is not symbolic affiliation; it is participation in a national platform that mitigates risk, accelerates learning, and moves inclusive economic solutions from pilot to scale.

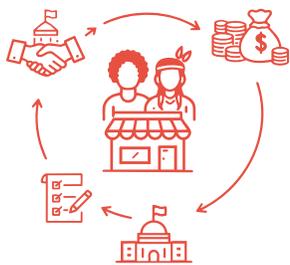
In a moment defined by constrained public resources and heightened accountability, collaborative capital is not idealism—it is infrastructure. Living Cities provides that infrastructure.

## How Does Living Cities Work?

Living Cities advances a replicable model, demonstrating that when communities are economically strengthened, cities prosper, and states benefit fiscally.

A living city is a connected ecosystem where capital and collaboration move together. These are four examples of how Living Cities does its work in cities around the country:

### The Ujima Collective | Albuquerque | Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Motion



In Albuquerque, New Mexico, longstanding participation gaps left Black and Native/Indigenous residents underrepresented in business ownership, owning less than 2% of businesses.

Living Cities partnered with the City of Albuquerque to co-design and fund the **Ujima Collective Entrepreneurial Training Program**, embedding equity within the local entrepreneurship ecosystem. The policy win resulted in the passage of House Bill 281 which removed licensing restrictions for natural hair stylists statewide. Prior restrictions made professional natural hair care among Black and Indigenous people virtually illegal.

This initiative aligned partners, capital, and policy to accelerate inclusive small-business growth—by transforming access to capital from aspiration to infrastructure, demonstrating how connected ecosystems can expand ownership, opportunity, and long-term economic resilience.

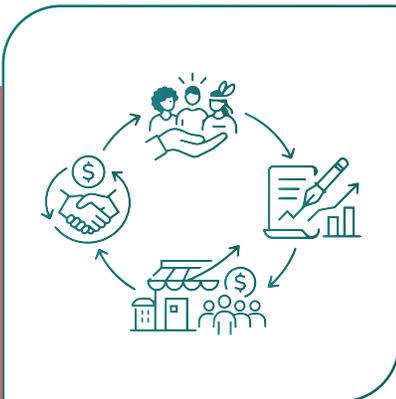
## Breaking Barriers to Business | Charlotte | Inclusive Infrastructure as Economic Competitiveness



In Charlotte, North Carolina, entrepreneurs faced zoning and safety barriers that constrained small-business growth and workforce equity. Living Cities convened the City of Charlotte, Main Street America, and regional partners to launch the unique **Breaking Barriers to Business (B3)** initiative, pairing incubator space, grants, and employer-aligned incentives.

This effort created incubator space with a \$25,000 grant for 30+ entrepreneurs. As a result, the B3 initiative redesigned infrastructure, aligned hiring and wage standards, and removed systemic barriers. It also strengthened competitiveness by retaining talent and positioning inclusive workforce development as a driver of citywide resilience. To date, the B3 initiative has been replicated in four other cities around the country.

## Minneapolis | Investing in Narrative Infrastructure

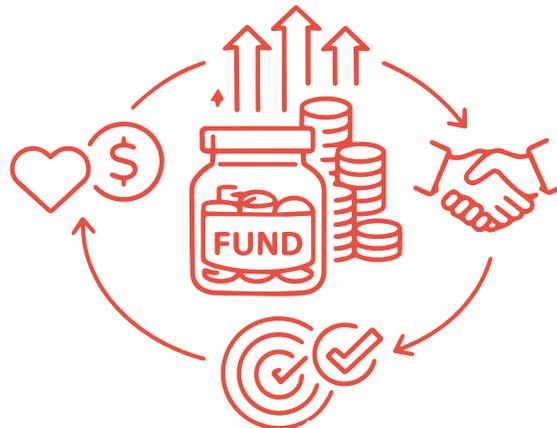


In Minneapolis, Minnesota, systemic exclusion limited wealth-building opportunities for Black and Indigenous communities. Living Cities partnered with **Youthprise** and the City to launch cooperative ownership and narrative-driven entrepreneurship cohorts supporting emerging, young founders.

The initiative sought to embed narrative infrastructure within economic development, shifting perception, policy, and capital access. By aligning storytelling with investment and ownership pathways, Living Cities advanced shared wealth creation, strengthened community credibility, and demonstrated how narrative capacity accelerates inclusive, scalable economic growth.

## Impact Investment

### The Blended Catalyst Fund



To demonstrate that inclusive capital can perform at market scale, Living Cities launched the **Blended Catalyst Fund**, aggregating philanthropic and private investment into a single vehicle deployed through mission-driven intermediaries.

The Fund mitigated perceived risk and delivered full principal repayment ahead of maturity, while also leveraging \$25 million into nearly \$500 million in additional capital. By aligning capital with inclusion, Living Cities advanced a replicable model proving that equitable investment strategies generate financial performance, resilience, and that they can do at scale.

Living Cities is proving that inclusive economies are not theoretical—they are measurable, replicable, and investable. Aligned capital, local leadership, and narrative clarity are transforming barriers into pathways for ownership, resilience, and shared prosperity.

As these place-based models scale, they signal a broader market shift: inclusion is emerging as the operating system of durable economic growth. The Living Cities invitation for the future is clear—align, invest, and act together to build an inclusive economy where opportunity expands and every community can thrive.