

Factors that Drive Implementation of Equitable Land Use and Transportation Policies



Demonstration Projects

Interim design improvements and pilot investments build longer-term support for transportation and land use policies and projects advancing equity

Demonstration projects can be temporary, removable installations that help make short-term progress towards desired policy outcomes or, in larger-scale cases, semi-permanent projects that provide early examples of an innovative, potentially wider development strategy. They are sometimes called pilot or interim projects because they offer an opportunity to **test-run a roadway or public space treatment** before it is made permanent, or a land use approach before it is replicated. Demonstration projects provide the chance for thoughtful evaluation, which can be powerful in giving community members meaningful input on what is made permanent. Community members can also elevate any project concerns and provide direct feedback on usage or design features. Government staff and leaders can then make changes based on these community insights. Demonstration projects can also **generate tangible support and momentum for longer-term policies and plans** so elected leaders and government staff can proceed with confidence.

Akron: Designing at the Speed of Trust

The **Akron Civic Commons** initiative adopted a ‘test and learn’ approach to demonstrate the value of co-creation and the ability to work through tensions. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition worked closely with city staff and community members to ‘re-imagine’ three public spaces connected by the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. Through this innovative process, Akron sought to **overcome racial divides and build trust** between different communities in the city. This process also facilitated relationships between city staff, philanthropy, and communities to move forward with design improvements that considered neighborhood context and fit the desired use and attributes expressed by residents.

Community input elevated simple improvements to address community disinvestment over grander designs that were initially proposed. This feedback also elevated ideas to re-imagine the use of public spaces that city agencies had previously considered impossible. At the Summit Lake site, basic amenities such as benches were updated to face the lake instead of away from the lake, fences were removed around the playground to be more

welcoming, and fire pits/grills were added for residents to use. In addition, portions of the lake bank were cleared to provide residents access to the water. City staff also engaged local community partners and neighborhood leaders to create and lead diverse programming that caters to the community around the lake. After years of testing pilot ideas and improvements, Akron is moving forward with more permanent changes. Akron's demonstration projects present **a model for community engagement and collaboration to build longer-term support** for built environment policies and projects that advance equity.

Chicago: Combining Direct Investment with Policy Change

Implementation of Chicago's **Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD)** policy included a process of selecting 11 community-benefiting facilities or neighborhood initiatives¹ as **pilot projects** and providing community-based developers with funding and technical assistance. Working with the ETOD Working Group, the City identified a range of projects that demonstrate aspects of the Policy Plan. The 11 pilot projects provide opportunities to advance innovative project formats that integrate equity with transit accessibility. The ETOD pilot sites also provide an opportunity to incorporate other city-wide initiatives, with coordination from multiple city departments. Examples include combining transportation and sidewalk improvements with stormwater management and energy efficiency design elements.

Baltimore: Speed and Flexibility in Implementation

To implement the goals of the **Baltimore Complete Streets** ordinance, the city adopted a Complete Streets **manual**, which proposed roadway treatments known as "quick-build" strategies or projects. These installations enable shorter timelines for bicycle, pedestrian, and traffic safety improvements using low-cost materials. Baltimore used these guidelines to install much-needed crosswalk enhancements, pavement marking enhancements, traffic circulation changes, and other traffic safety interventions. Demonstration projects enable cities like Baltimore to **quickly implement capital improvements** when financial resources may be limited. They are also **a great interim strategy where projects can be easily modified or removed** based on measured outcomes, field observations, and community feedback. Quick-Build projects in Baltimore are often used to overcome concerns regarding congestion and perceptions about the users of walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. Often, opponents of proposed roadway treatments come around to support or accept the quick-build projects knowing more permanent infrastructure improvements could be more attractive.

¹ Selected pilots include a community-owned grocery store, non-profit co-working space, local retail/business incubation, public space enhancements, affordable housing, and arts preservation in a variety of physical spaces and ownership/management formats.