

Anchor Opportunity Network

Strategic Action Plan
for the NY-NJ-CT Region

September 2018

Acknowledgments

This report highlights key recommendations from RPA's Fourth Regional Plan for the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area.

View the full plan at fourthplan.org

This Strategic Action Plan has been made possible with major support from the Ford Foundation.

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Cover Photo by Charter Oak Communities

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Executive Summary

RPA's work on the Fourth Regional Plan ("Fourth Plan") for the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metropolitan region began by looking at data and economic trends and by speaking with people from across the region. What it found was that, over the last generation, our region has seen sweeping change—much of it for the better. Job growth has accelerated, more people feel optimistic about the future, and the tri-state region remains one of the most economically vibrant places in the world. But our success is fragile; while the region's economy has progressed as a whole, too many people have been left behind. More people in our region live in poverty today than a generation ago, and the middle class faces wage stagnation and a crisis of affordability. While poverty rates are still highest in our cities, they are growing fast in our suburbs.

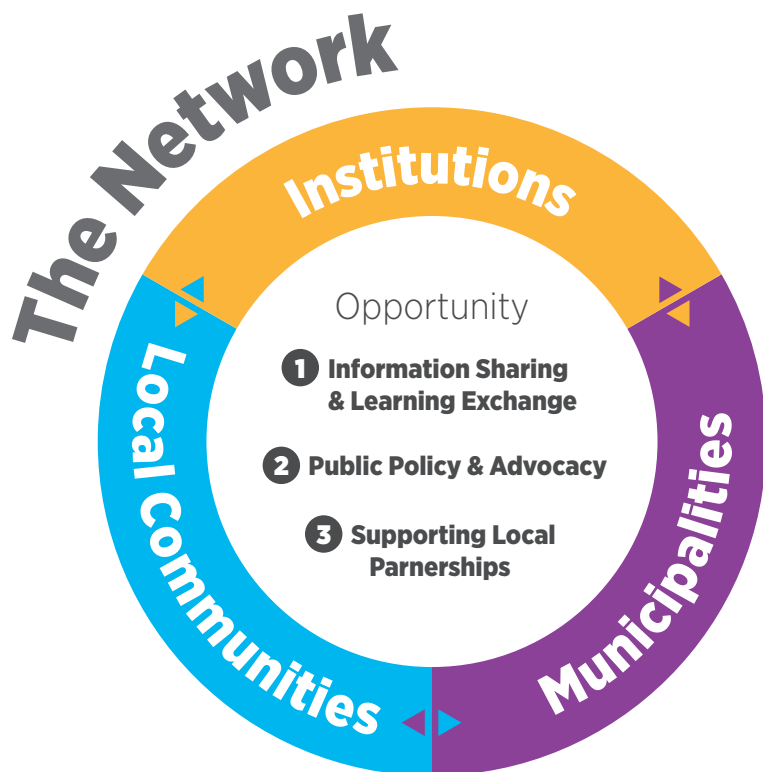
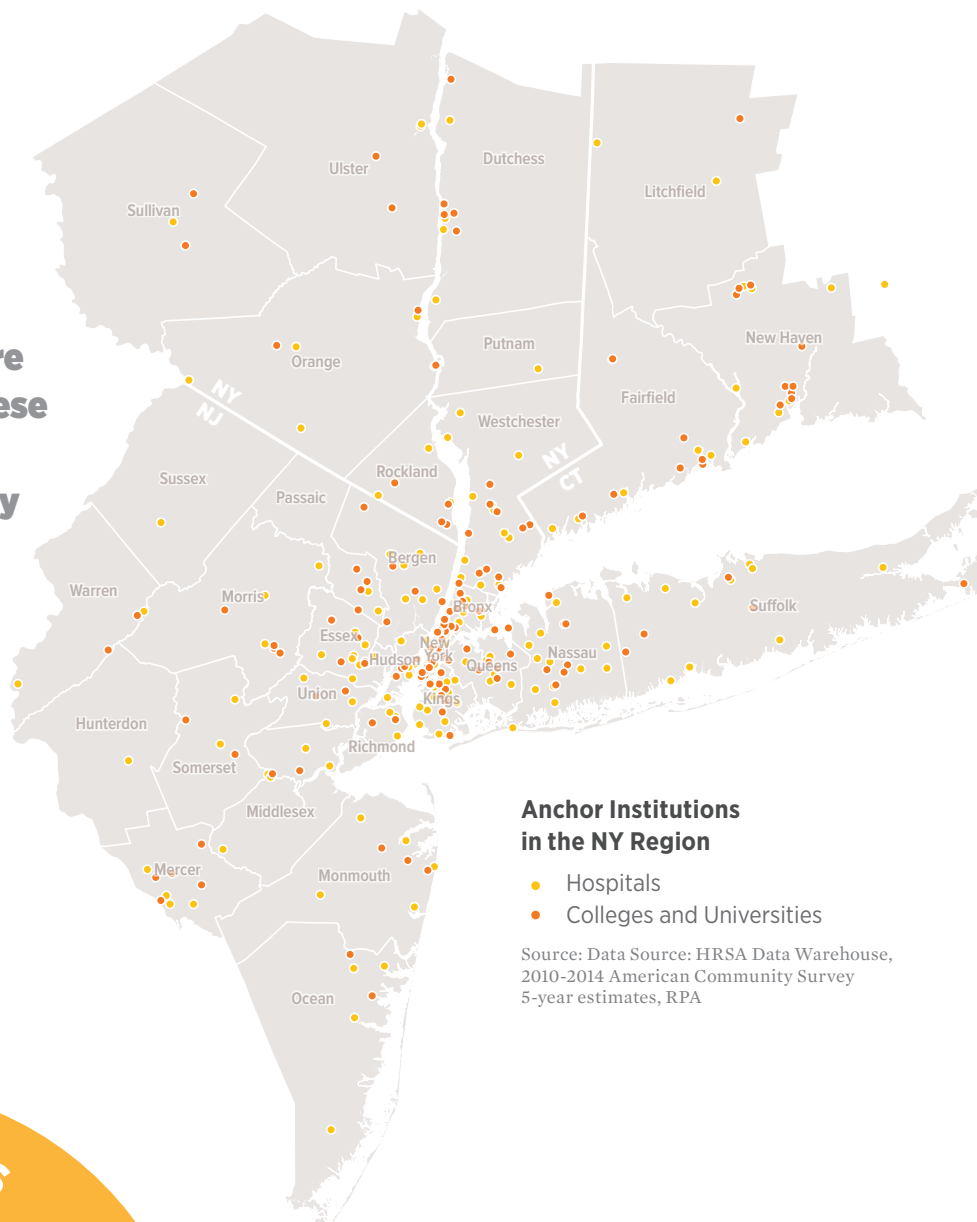
What can we do to achieve a more equitable and prosperous future?

The Fourth Plan outlines a series of recommendations to achieve greater equity, shared prosperity, better health and sustainability in our region. It has also spurred a civic dialogue that breaks through the short term and siloed thinking impeding the creative, cross-sector solutions needed to resolve complex challenges. Chief among these challenges is developing economic development strategies that feed a virtuous cycle of inclusive, equitable opportunity.

The Fourth Plan highlights the unique and powerful role that partnerships between “anchor institutions,” typically large nonprofit or public institutions such as hospitals and healthcare systems, colleges and universities, and place-based cultural institutions that are rooted in place by physical assets and historic ties and are unlikely to move to another location, and their local communities have in creating this virtuous cycle. This cycle strengthens those very institutions and the communities they serve. Leveraging the financial capital, human resources and economic output of anchor institutions affords an opportunity to address the structural challenges that perpetuate poverty and inequality across our region: access to jobs, quality housing and healthy neighborhoods. Promoting meaningful dialogue and stimulating collaboration will connect the people, knowledge, physical spaces and economic power of these partners to create strong communities and sustainable local ecosystems. Specifically, effective and enduring cross sector partnerships can produce the following benefits:

- ▶ **Local hiring and workforce development:** Training and hiring local and diverse residents creates a reliable workforce for anchor institutions while building effective career ladders.
- ▶ **Inclusive, local purchasing:** Directing purchasing by institutions toward local businesses strengthens local economies while attracting private investment.
- ▶ **Investment in quality housing:** Initiatives to create quality, mixed income housing serve to stabilize neighborhoods where people at multiple income levels, including anchor employees, can live and work.
- ▶ **Coordinated capital investments:** When anchors and municipalities coordinate their respective infrastructure planning efforts, they improve efficiencies and multiply their impact.

More than 340 **health care** and **higher education** institutions are located in the tri-state area. These institutions are partnering to create healthy and economically vibrant neighborhoods.



The Anchor Opportunity Network will engage with anchor institutions, municipal leaders and local communities to create meaningful and sustainable partnerships that leverage diverse capital and human resources to drive community well-being and equitable economic growth.

How will we do it?

We can accomplish this by working together. When leaders from our anchor institutions, municipalities and local neighborhoods sit at the same table to share information, build relationships, and work toward a shared mission, they can *connect the dots* between resources and needs. Simply put, the answer to many of the seemingly intractable challenges we face in local neighborhoods across our region lies in the spaces between sectors and individual job descriptions. When we innovate across sectors we unlock the potential for systems change that is latent within our local communities.

This Strategic Action Plan (“Plan”) provides a roadmap for how we will create and sustain the Anchor Opportunity Network (“AON”), a regional group of anchor institutions, municipalities and community leaders collaborating to address local and regional challenges. Guided by a Steering Committee of representatives from anchor institutions, municipal planners and community stakeholders in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, the AON will support the implementation of anchor strategies in the region through:

- ▶ **Information sharing and learning exchange:** Build relationships and a shared vision across partners to move the needle in overcoming complex challenges facing urban areas.
- ▶ **Policy development and advocacy:** Share methodologies and advocate for public policies that support effective anchor strategies to enhance equity and build community health and wealth.
- ▶ **Supporting partnerships between and among anchors, municipalities and local communities:** Unlock human and financial resources within and across partners to power investment in local communities.

A Call to Action

By engaging in these activities together we will encourage and support the application of anchor strategies in communities throughout the region, generating inclusive economic development and improving the health and well being of residents and neighborhoods.

Now is the time to work together to address growing health, educational and wealth disparities in our region by unlocking the potential of anchor institutions to be effective partners with their local communities. We can’t afford not to.

Introduction



Gamble Associates

Anchor institutions generally are large nonprofit or public institutions rooted in place by physical assets and historic ties and are unlikely to relocate. These institutions, which typically include hospitals and healthcare systems, colleges and universities, and place-based cultural institutions, have a vested stake in local communities by virtue of their land holdings, capital and physical investments and historic ties. Over time, many anchor institutions have grown to become the largest employers in their communities, and their substantial economic footprints are reflected in their hiring and purchasing power.

In many cases anchor institutions are located in neighborhoods that face physical, economic, and social disinvestment. This disinvestment hinders not only residents' access to opportunity, but also anchor institutions' ability to compete globally for clinical and academic talent, students and patients, funding, and local constituent support. Clearly, the vitality and success of these institutions is directly linked to the health of their local community. But anchor institutions have been historically inward facing, and they are often physically and operationally disconnected from their neighborhoods. Many think of their business functions as separate from their missions rather than potential assets to be leveraged to benefit both themselves and their surrounding communities. This disconnect is a missed opportunity for both anchors and their neighbors.

As key job generators and employers with access to human capital and financial resources, anchor institutions have unique potential to spur broad-based revitalization in their local communities. Across the country, anchors are driving economic development, job creation, and private

investments in the communities they serve. In places like Cleveland, Baltimore and Newark anchor institutions are working to shift their hiring, purchasing, and investment practices to better meet residents' needs. By linking available jobs and existing procurement opportunities to residents and businesses, they are strengthening the local economy and increasing the economic multiplier of precious dollars, a benefit for all parties¹.

As identified in the Fourth Plan, strategies that leverage the significant financial capital, human resources and economic strength of our anchor institutions can potentially unlock opportunity in our region's underserved communities and advance RPA's vision for greater equity and shared prosperity.² In developing this recommendation of the Fourth Plan, RPA consulted with a roundtable of anchor, municipal and community stakeholders who helped inform and shape these ideas. Following the Fourth Plan's release in November 2017, a working group³ of stakeholders representing the three sectors (anchors, municipalities, local communities) and the three states (NY-NJ-CT) began exploring practical opportunities for catalyzing anchor strategies across the region. The framework for a regional Anchor Opportunity Network (AON) described in this Strategic Action Plan is the outcome of this working group's effort.

¹ Purchasing at locally owned businesses has a multiplier effect for local economic activity. Dollars spent at locally owned businesses recirculate in the community at a greater rate than money spent at national chains and absentee-owned businesses. See: American Independent Business Alliance, "The Multiplier Effect of Local Independent Businesses," accessed July 7, 2016, www.amiba.net/resources/multiplier-effect

² <http://fourthplan.org/action/community-anchor-institutions>

³ Working group membership noted on page ii.

The Opportunity for Our Region

**Physical environment
is critical to ensuring
equal opportunities
for health.**

Air Quality

80%

*of a community's
health depends
on place-based
conditions*

Housing

**Access
to Parks**

Education

Exercise

Access to Care

Transportation

Food

Through a dynamic, regional *network*, anchors can help drive equitable growth and opportunity including access to jobs, quality housing and healthy neighborhoods. As highlighted in the Fourth Plan report on the *State of the Region's Health*, 80 percent of a community's health is shaped not by access to health care, but instead by socioeconomic and environmental factors, which are strongly affected by coherent planning and public policy. By collaborating with municipal and community partners, anchor institutions can drive both improvements in community health and access to opportunity across our region.

Engaging these large, mission-aligned employers with community and municipal leaders provides an alternative to traditional attraction-based approaches to economic development. It unlocks the creative problem solving needed to address growing disparities in health and wellbeing, household wealth, environmental quality, education, and other quality-of-life disparities between populations who often live only a few miles apart. By supporting access to affordable housing, inclusive business ownership, and other

wealth building opportunities, anchors can foster healthy communities, complementing their existing community benefit efforts and deepening the social and economic impact of their other investments.

The economic output and human capital resources of anchor institutions and their local communities represent critical and often untapped local assets that can be leveraged to sustainably and equitably address both community and anchor needs. There is significant opportunity to connect anchors' core business operations, capital investments and other internal assets to their missions to improve community well-being.

Benefits

Forging stronger ties between anchors and their partners is a shared value proposition that can improve economic, physical, and social conditions in low-income communities in five key ways:



1

Mission Alignment

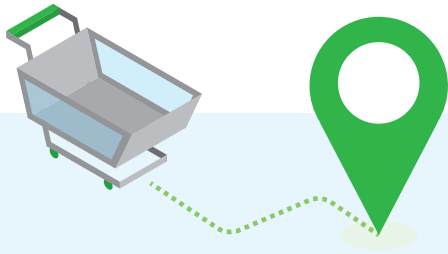
Nonprofit and public institutions bring expertise to local communities in areas such as healthcare, education and arts and culture. Working with local residents to tackle persistent community challenges and address social determinants of health in these areas not only benefits local neighborhoods, but also helps institutions advance their core missions and values.



2

Hiring and Workforce Development

Partnering with existing workforce intermediaries and community-based organizations to train local and diverse residents for existing employment opportunities not only benefits those hired, but also strengthens institutions by allowing them to leverage existing public resources and community infrastructure to create a diverse, local and culturally competent workforce. Hiring locally reduces transportation costs for employees and minimizes tardiness resulting from long commutes. Further, strategic partnerships and investments in front-line employees helps improve both employee morale and retention.



3

Inclusive, Local Purchasing

Healthcare and higher education institutions have tremendous purchasing power. Keeping money spent by institutions in the local neighborhood provides critical support to and growth opportunities for neighborhood businesses, and it strengthens the local economy. By supporting diverse and locally owned vendors and helping to incubate new community enterprises to fill supply chain gaps, institutions can leverage existing resources to drive local economic growth.

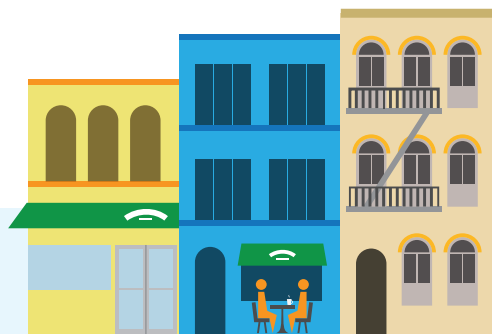
In addition, healthcare and higher education institutions can earn a financial return on their investments while producing a positive social, economic, or environmental impact within their local communities by shifting deposits of cash and cash equivalents to local community banks and credit unions and investing in low-risk fixed income products offered by community development financial intermediaries (i.e. CDFIs).



4

Coordinated Capital Investments

Institutions can leverage their capital assets and investments to improve community well-being. Capital investments in streetscapes and public spaces are a key element of neighborhood revitalization and the leverage achieved through coordinated infrastructure investments between anchors and their local municipality accrues to both parties. A safe and attractive neighborhood benefits residents and helps anchors retain and attract talent, reversing historic patterns of disinvestment and disparities among communities.



5

Increased Access to Quality Housing

Ensuring a quality, mixed income housing stock in the local community creates a resilient, socially diverse neighborhood where people at multiple income levels can live and work, whether they are doctors or technicians. Quality housing improves health outcomes for children, families and individuals, and well-maintained homes and streets help improve neighborhood safety and security. In addition, can anchors help support access to homeownership opportunities, a critical vehicle to aid employees and local residents in building wealth.

Challenges

Growing partnerships among public and nonprofit anchor institutions, community-based organizations and other intermediaries exist across the country and in our region in places like the Bronx, Newark and Stamford. The alignment of institutionally-held assets with opportunities for community economic development is helping to reverse decades of disinvestment in many neighborhoods, with significant benefits accruing to long-term residents.

The question is: Why aren't these synergies developing with greater frequency in more places in our region? This is largely due to two central challenges:

1. The historic culture and inward facing orientation of anchor institutions; and
2. The absence of formal mechanisms for incentivizing collaborative relationships among municipalities, neighborhoods and anchors.

Addressing these challenges requires meaningful dialogue and engagement among anchor institutions, local municipalities and community stakeholders. Making such conversation standard practice among these key partners is critical to unlocking anchor institutions' potential to catalyze more outward investment. While this may sound like an obvious solution, in reality, regular communication across sectors is typically not part of the job description for any of these players. Anchor, municipal and community leaders are all tasked with a host of internal responsibilities, and external collaboration is rarely identified as a top priority.

This current reality leads to the next question:

How can we make it easier for leaders across these sectors to share information, and to plan and implement projects together?

The Mission and Core Values of the Anchor Opportunity Network

The mission of the Anchor Opportunity Network (AON) for the NY-NJ-CT region is to *engage with anchor institutions, municipal leaders and local neighborhoods to create meaningful and sustainable partnerships that leverage diverse capital and human resources to drive community well-being and equitable economic growth.*

Together as a Network we can learn from one another and support regional and local efforts that unlock opportunities through three key actions:

1. Information sharing and learning exchange
2. Methodology and policy development and advocacy
3. Supporting partnerships between and among anchors, municipalities and local communities

These actions align with the following set of core values developed by the working group⁴, which are intended to guide the practices of the Network as it evolves:

1. Cultivate relationships and shared vision across partners
2. Be intentional about planning and linkage to comprehensive and strategic plans
3. Improve the leveraging of existing human and financial resources
4. Encourage integrated economic development to spur local investment
5. Address socio-economic disparities through equitable investment
6. Engage communities in planning and project implementation for shared outcomes
7. Stimulate cross-sector solutions to complex challenges to achieve collective impact
8. Prioritize actions that improve health in communities
9. Focus on prevention and upstream drivers of social determinants of health
10. Apply regional considerations and seek regional benefit



Lehman College
Bronx, NY

⁴ The core values identified in bold italics (1-6) are proposed as first tier, near term priorities.

Creating Value: Opportunity in Action

The Anchor Opportunity Network's value rests in its members' ability to align their strategic interests and work collaboratively to realize them. The AON describes these interests as areas of opportunity. Building strong and enduring ties among anchor partners, municipal government and local communities is the foundation of this Network, generating shared value while also furthering individual missions. While collaboration begins with an information exchange and the sharing of broader perspectives, it advances when partners apply both innovative and tested models to tackle persistent and complex challenges. This approach encourages members to practice openness and creativity, and it works best when local community members have a meaningful role at the table.

A key objective of AON is to advance a culture of collaboration within and among member organizations so that anchor strategy implementation becomes institutionalized and is not solely dependent upon leadership, which can change over time. This approach seeks to foster systems change whereby member organizations can develop the internal structures necessary to facilitate sustainable alignment across entities and disciplines. By creating a culture of collaboration, the Network will help solve local and regional challenges that no individual organization can solve alone, specifically:

- ▶ Enhancing equity in institutional practices and community impact; and
- ▶ Creating healthy, sustainable communities by proactively eliminating health, educational and socioeconomic disparities.

The following section describes the areas of opportunity around which the Network will engage members and the actions we will take in each area to achieve AON's mission and core values.



Fairgate, Vita Health & Wellness District

Charter Oak Communities,
Stamford, CT



AON Convening, June 20, 2018
Regional Plan Association

Opportunity 1: Information sharing and learning exchange

Action: Build relationships and a shared vision across partners to move the needle in solving complex challenges facing urban areas.

- 1.** AON members engage in relationship-building activities, including roundtable meetings, webinars, site visits and peer-to-peer exchanges.
 - AON members share experiences, approaches and outcomes of their joint planning efforts and local projects.
- 2.** AON members engaged in collaborative initiatives share their experiences and provide case study examples to the Network, demonstrating challenges and benefits of:
 - Deploying existing human and financial resources in support of anchor strategies; and
 - Leveraging public-private partnerships and external investments.
- 3.** AON members work together to identify opportunities for partnerships across sectors and disciplines and tools for unlocking these opportunities at both regional and local levels.



FairgateFarm
Stamford, CT

Opportunity 2: Inform policy development and advocacy

Action: Share methodologies and advocate for public policies that support effective anchor strategies to enhance equity and build community health and wealth.

1. AON members share successful anchor strategy methodologies and lessons learned.
2. AON members work together to inform and develop public policies that promote community alignment and support local implementation of anchor strategies.
3. AON members advocate for public policies that encourage and/or incentivize anchor strategies at the state, county and local levels.



Hire Newark Employment Ready Bootcamp
RWJBarnabas Health, Newark, NJ

Opportunity 3: Support partnerships between and among anchors, municipalities and local communities

Action: Unlock human and financial resources within and across member organizations to power investment in local communities.

1. AON members organize and participate in local anchor strategy convenings
 - Meetings explore the opportunities, challenges and dynamic characteristics of local circumstances.
 - Meeting programs facilitate alignment and stimulate joint, measurable action.
 - Participants include diverse players who are decision makers and/or have influence with decision makers within their respective organizations. Members of the private business and finance sectors are encouraged to participate, as appropriate.
2. AON members within local geographies engage one another in their respective strategic planning efforts to identify potential synergies and undertake joint projects with local partners.

- Members endeavor to be transparent regarding their goals and objectives, encouraging local partners to participate in studies, feasibility analyses and the creation of conceptual plans for mutual benefit.

Expected outcomes include:

1. Creating trust and strong relationships that empower member organizations to **achieve shared value outcomes in local communities**.
2. Public policies that coordinate the objectives of anchors, municipalities and local communities, **encourage collaboration and synergy and build effective, enduring systems**.
3. Strategic alignment that **leverages the contributions of each partner, creates more efficient processes and yields mutual benefit** for anchors, local governments and community stakeholders.
4. Better alignment of anchor, neighborhood, and municipal planning processes, **creating more opportunities for joint problem solving and more equitable outcomes**.
5. **Identification of shared priorities earlier in the planning process**, enabling parties to collaborate more effectively on both planning and implementation.

Creating Impact

The Anchor Opportunity Network is a focused effort that will achieve measurable results on behalf of its members and communities throughout the region. We will measure our performance against the core values identified by the working group at the outset of this initiative. Table 1 provides an overview of the types of measures that may be

used to quantify the benefits of the Network. The Steering Committee will refine these measures over time and serve as the guiding body for the development, implementation, and governance of the AON.

Table 1: Performance Measures

Core Values	Potential institutional actions	Indicators of cross-sector collaboration	Community impacts	Long term outcomes
Cultivate relationships and shared vision across partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include shared vision in comprehensive and strategic plans • Create community advisory board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared agenda among different community actors • CEOs (anchors, municipal, community) meet 1-2 times/year • Designated staff meet 2-4 times/year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater social cohesion • Improved infrastructure such as parks, transportation and internet • More joint projects implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced health inequities • Improved length and quality of life • Improved economic prosperity
Be intentional about planning and linkage to comprehensive & strategic plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in municipal planning efforts • Allocate resources to community engagement • Undertake community health needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher civic participation rates • More equitable comprehensive plans linked with anchor strategic plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More local employment opportunities • Improved health and wellness services & improved community utilization of services 	
Improve leveraging of existing human and financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire local policy • Buy local policy • Coordinate capital investments with municipality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger local businesses • More affordable housing • Higher quality housing 	
Encourage integrated economic development to spur local investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical assistance to small businesses (contracting, procurement, etc.) • Business incubators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New or expansion of existing partnerships with local goods and service providers 		
Address socio-economic disparities through equitable investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy to invest in local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with local CDCs • Shifting deposits to community banks and credit unions • Investing in low-risk fixed income products offered by CDFIs 		
Engage communities in planning and project implementation for shared outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create community advisory board • Community access to university/hospital expertise and human capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved community trust • Increased interaction between anchors and community • Increased community involvement in anchor activities 		

Next Steps

The first step in implementing this Strategic Action Plan is to establish a Steering Committee that is responsible for guiding and overseeing the Anchor Opportunity Network, serving AON members in building an effective coalition that will grow in strength and influence over time. The Steering Committee will ultimately comprise representatives from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and the three sectors critical to this effort: anchor institutions, municipal government and local community stakeholders. The development of the Steering Committee will consist of two phases: an initial *Launch* Committee that evolves into a *Sustaining* Committee:

- ▶ The Launch Committee will include individuals with specific skills, experience, contacts and access to resources; and
- ▶ The Sustaining Committee will seek a balanced distribution of members from across the region and sectors; its service will oversee continuous operation and development of the AON.

The Steering Committee will play a vital role in the introduction and sustainability of the AON, as guided by the Steering Committee Charter.⁵ Significant enthusiasm exists to attract and engage important voices from across the region; the activation of these voices as members of a coherent body remains the work ahead. Steering Committee members will be asked to embody a commitment to this goal and invest an appropriate portion of their valuable time in its pursuit.

The Steering Committee will be tasked with:

1. Oversight of key, strategic objectives with an initial emphasis on-
 - Formation of the Network.
 - Membership recruitment.
 - Business plan creation and implementation; and
 - Other start-up matters.
2. Overseeing the operation of the Network.
3. Building Network membership and seeking potential external affiliations.

4. Identifying sources of revenue to support Network operations.
5. In all respects, promoting the AON *value proposition*.

The committee may form subcommittees, charged with individual responsibilities, to fulfill its tasks.

The Steering Committee will hold the professional staff accountable for carrying out its roles and responsibilities. Regional Plan Association (RPA)⁶ and Dovetail: SIP, Inc. (Dovetail)⁷ will provide backbone support services including facilitating the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and supporting its initial objectives as the Network gets started. As the Network attracts sufficient members and financial resources, it will build professional capacity to carry on these support functions.

The Steering Committee will adopt a timetable for implementing this Strategic Action Plan with an initial emphasis on the formation of the Network, membership recruitment, business plan creation and implementation, and other start-up matters. It will focus its near-term efforts on the first 12-24 months of Network operation. Updated timeframes will be created no less than annually.

In the immediate term, the AON will pursue member engagement activities to strengthen its connection to the individuals and organizations who participated in initial roundtables, convenings and working group meetings, while attracting interest from potential new members. This member engagement will include:

- ▶ Conducting site visits, webinars and other convenings on a scheduled basis;
- ▶ Conducting subject-specific, facilitated focus group discussions;
- ▶ Conducting one-on-one meetings to engage regional leaders (e.g. mayor, university president, hospital CEO); and
- ▶ Launching a web-based presence as the “place to go” for Network resources and information.

⁵ See Steering Committee Charter

⁶ www.rpa.org

⁷ www.dvtl.org



Although the Strategic Action Plan describes a comprehensive approach and major objectives for achieving the primary goals of the AON, it is an iterative plan that will be refined and adjusted during its implementation. The Plan's primary mission, core values and areas of opportunity, as developed by the AON Working Group, are intended to result in measurable impact and, ultimately, *systems change*. These features should be considered in any future iteration as a framework for further development as we build and strengthen the Network.

Significant enthusiasm exists to attract and engage important voices from across the region; the activation of these voices as members of a coherent body remains the work ahead.



Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association is an independent, not-for-profit civic organization that develops and promotes ideas to improve the economic health, environmental resiliency and quality of life of the New York metropolitan area. We conduct research on transportation, land use, housing, good governance and the environment. We advise cities, communities and public agencies. And we advocate for change that will contribute to the prosperity of all residents of the region. Since the 1920s, RPA has produced four landmark plans for the region, the most recent was released in November 2017. For more information, please visit www.rpa.org or fourthplan.org.

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