

The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
May 17, 2016

Nearly 150 individuals attended the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Philadelphia and New York Regional Offices and the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Institute for Urban Research and Perry World House co-hosted event, *The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III* held at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on May 17, 2016. The day included insightful discussions about best practices throughout the region that, if adopted in larger scale, may strengthen the nation's urban areas.

"Habitat III is an opportunity for the U.S. to leverage the collective expertise of those addressing sustainable development globally and develop shared priorities domestically," stated HUD Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Jane C.W. Vincent in her [welcoming remarks](#). Co-host and Co-director of the Penn Institute for Urban Research Eugenie Birch [framed the day with her talk](#) on the U.S. involvement in Habitat III. Dr. Birch made clear that the distinctions between Habitat III and the precedent Habitat conferences in Vancouver and Istanbul were the inclusiveness and integration of civil society and stakeholders discussions leading up to the conference and the focus on implementation, rather than planning. Implementation is the definitive ultimate goal of the Quito event.

In her [keynote address](#), Amy Liu, Metropolitan Policy Program Director at The Brookings Institution, provided her view on the importance of creating Pathways to Inclusive Prosperity, emphasizing the connection between cities and the larger economy. To successfully implement a new urban agenda, she argued, we must bridge economic strategies with those focused on people and place. We must align social mobility and community development with economic development to create meaningful pathways to quality jobs and neighborhoods by focusing on growth through economic expansion, prosperity by making people contributors to and beneficiaries of economic growth by investing in innovation and skills and inclusion. Even though nationally the U.S. has achieved strong economic growth since 2009, prosperity has lagged with lower median wages and inclusiveness regressing, with racial disparities in income widening. Some cities, like Philadelphia, are doing worse than others and metropolitan aspects of poverty and social mobility becoming more obvious. Cities that do the most to help workers adjust to the new realities of technology, globalization and demographic change, will endure and prosper. To address growth, prosperity, inclusion and these new realities, there must be strategic coordination. Systems, including the arenas of economic, educational, skills, community and infrastructure development must align with the players including public, nonprofit and private entities at regional and community levels that create growth and opportunity. As best practices for strategies, Dr. Liu cited Louisville/Lexington, Kentucky FAME and Michigan's Detroit Motor City Match that developed skilled local workers to fill industry needs and vacant properties. Chicago, Illinois' i.c. stars and Greater Chatham Initiative provided training and job placement. In Maryland, the Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership provided low-income voucher holders with the tools needed to move to neighborhoods of higher opportunity.

Session Highlights

- Moderated by Next City's Tom Dallessio, the [opening session](#), *Investing in People and Communities for Social Mobility*, examined the issue of social mobility by offering strategies that have been employed to promote economic opportunity and achieve greater economic inclusion. Penn Institute for Urban Research's Susan Wachter opened with the epiphany that we are now a majority-minority nation, noting that over 50 percent of school-age children belong to a minority. The characteristics of neighborhoods, not of people, create social mobility for individuals. In Northern New Jersey, Jon Carnegie described how the Metropolitan Planning Association created its Access to Opportunity-themed regional sustainable development plan. Data driven by Fair Housing Equity Assessments from each jurisdiction reveal stark patterns of segregation, poverty concentrations and divergent educational opportunity. Philadelphia Works' Mark Edwards published a report on the City's economy dubbed a "Tale of Two Cities," and defined his agency's workforce development strategy through literacy programs, re-entry support to returning citizens and their employers, and work-based learning opportunities. Anne Fadullon, Director of Planning and Development for Philadelphia, a position created by Philadelphia Mayor Kenney to integrate and synthesize those functions, stated her goal is to make prosperity inclusive and become a tale of one city. Examining the Habitat III literature, she felt descriptions of third world slums described some Philadelphia neighborhoods and agreed with the UN's new emphasis on implementation.
- During the [luncheon panel discussion](#), *Securing Housing Options for All*, HUD's Bryan Greene provided an overview of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule—and how the entire community participates in the process by looking at the demographic data to see if there are barriers to people living in the community. In the study of the Baltimore City and County region in Maryland, Dan Pontious described how The Opportunity Collaborative looked at housing needs and housing cost burdens before creating strategies to boost vulnerable communities and residents by providing intensive support, cracking down on gangs and non-taxpaying landowners. Fair Share Housing Center's Kevin Walsh shared the ongoing successes and challenges in enforcing "fair share" or regional need for affordable housing in New Jersey's state constitution. Despite home rule powers, 300 towns want to comply with the law. According to Rose Gray, Asociacion Puertorriquenos En Marcha (APM) was initially organized by Puerto Rican Vietnam War veterans who found themselves excluded from Philadelphia's social services. Forty-six years later, APM has leveraged \$140 million of public/private investment, created the City's first mixed-use, transit-oriented development and much more through the grassroots efforts of a strong Neighborhood Advisory Council.
- In the [final session](#), *Responding to Change & Building Resilience*, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Barry Seymour described how significant social, economic, environmental and technological factors have emerged in recent years that will have a transformative impact on urban areas in the future. This session highlighted how cities have been in the forefront in addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation, demographic shifts and changing lifestyle preferences, and fluctuating employment and transportation paradigms while showcasing how different communities are responding to the challenges created by these future forces. City of Philadelphia's Sustainability Director Christine Knapp cited that climate change is real. Since 2010, the City has

experienced the wettest years, the wettest day, the warmest summers, most days of 90 degrees, the snowiest winter on record. With climate records, sea level rise and the possibility of a storm surge, the City must prepare. City of Hoboken Planner Caleb Stratton, who also serves as a Rebuild by Design team member, illustrated how the City has responded to flooding by Hurricanes Irene and Sandy by marrying the City's efforts with coastal storm risk reduction. Urban Land Institute's local chair, Antonio Fiol-Silva, created a model for a neighborhood denser and greener by bridging two very different communities with North Central Philadelphia's Paseo Verde, while incorporating affordable and market-rate housing next to an active rail commuter line. This is the first LEED ND Platinum certification in the nation. Demonstrating the need for collaboration and partnerships, Sustainable Strategies DC's Matt Ward stated that communities are either shaped by choice or shaped by chance—we must make a choice to make them better places.

In her [closing remarks](#), U.S. Department of State's Special Representative for Habitat III Dr. Nancy Stetson added a full-circle perspective of why Habitat III is so important to our cities—and our nation. To learn more about the regional convening, visit the [online virtual *The City We Want & Need: A Mid-Atlantic Regional Convening on Habitat III*](#). For photographs, visit [Region III's Flickr photo collection](#).

Key Partners

In concert with issue experts from the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Institute for Urban Research and Perry World House, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, Middle Atlantic Regional Council of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (MARC NAHRO), Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, Next City, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, City of Philadelphia, William Penn Foundation, Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute Philadelphia District Council, WHYY, Citiscope and others.