



# 2018 YEAR IN REVIEW



**At Cities of Service, our expertise is in people.**

Working with a growing coalition of more than 260 cities, we've learned that it's not the skyscrapers and highways and parks that ultimately make a city. It's the people. And it's the connections between them, forged in block club meetings and neighborhood cleanups, that are the engine for change.

That's why we work every day to connect city leaders and citizens and help them collaborate to solve problems.

This year, we've seen once again the impact city hall and citizens have when they work together. They can turn litter-strewn empty lots and vacant buildings into vibrant community spaces, fight flooding and extreme weather, reduce gang violence, and transform communities.

With programs like Love Your Block and our Engaged Cities Award, we spread the best ideas from around the world for engaging citizens to address public problems and help cities implement them.

In 2018, our work broadened and deepened. We developed new strategies and tools that empower citizens to make an impact in their cities. We trained city staff to help them form long-term



relationships with residents, and we asked hard questions to make sure that our efforts — and theirs — result in lasting change. We saw that the investments we make in communities today create the foundation for stronger cities and a healthier democracy tomorrow.

Cities of Service connects people because we know we are stronger together. Together, there is no challenge we cannot meet.

**Myung J. Lee**  
Executive Director  
Cities of Service

**Tom A. Bernstein**  
President  
Cities of Service  
Board of Directors

**CITIES OF SERVICE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Michael R. Bloomberg,** Honorary Chairman & Founder

**Tom A. Bernstein,** President

**James Anderson,** Vice President

**Kathleen McInerney,** Treasurer

**Gail B. Nayowith,** Secretary

**Maria Comella,** Director

**Katharine Leonberger,** Director

**Sean Peterson,** Director

**Jennifer Williamson,** Director



*“Once you have created access to power for neighborhood leaders, you can’t undo it. Programs like Love Your Block change systems. Lansing is proof of that.”*

Andi Crawford, Director of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement for Lansing, Michigan

The success of Love Your Block in Lansing spurred the city to promote Crawford to a cabinet-level position and to create the Department of Neighborhoods and Citizen Engagement.

## LOVE YOUR BLOCK

Since 2009, Cities of Service has helped city leaders in dozens of cities engage residents to revitalize their neighborhoods — one block at a time.

### Revitalizing Legacy Cities

In 2018, Cities of Service selected 10 legacy cities — older, industrial cities, many of which have faced substantial population loss — to participate in a new Love Your Block program. With Cities of Service grant funds, technical support, and two AmeriCorps VISTA members, these cities are working side by side with citizens to address property blight and build stronger neighborhoods.



Don Gosney

### GRANTEE CITIES

- Buffalo, New York
- Gary, Indiana
- Hamilton, Ohio
- Hartford, Connecticut
- Huntington, West Virginia
- Lancaster, Pennsylvania
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Newark, New Jersey
- Richmond, Virginia
- South Bend, Indiana



### From Eyesore to Inspiration

Rancho Market & Deli in Richmond, California, was plagued by vandalism and violence. Residents, businesses, and local government worked together to transform the market using funds from a Love Your Block mini-grant. Volunteers of all ages installed a mural on the building. More than 100 neighbors attended the block party celebrating the mural completion, which has inspired a public art movement in the neighborhood. The market now serves as a community hub and a bright spot for the city.

### Creating Connections to Spur Change

A study of Love Your Block by the Urban Institute found the connection forged between city leaders and participants can transform residents into active citizens in their communities and spur collective action. Participants in Love Your Block projects experience a boost in social capital and are more likely to participate in additional volunteer projects. This expanding network of active citizens further strengthens social cohesion, which can lead to more resilient communities and better social and economic outcomes for residents.

### LOVE YOUR BLOCK IMPACT SINCE 2009

**5.6**  
million pounds  
of trash removed

**900**  
art displays created

**60,000**  
square feet of graffiti cleaned

**730,000**  
square feet of public  
space maintained

*“When people don’t know each other or they don’t engage with their government, they are less resilient. People benefit from relying on the relationships with each other. I think relationship building is the most important work we do.”*

Stephen Stolte, Chief of Staff to the City Manager in Daly City, California, and leader of the city’s Prepared Together program

**Resilience AmeriCorps** was generously supported by The Rockefeller Foundation.

**Prepared Together** was generously supported by Walmart Foundation.

## PREPARED CITIZENS, RESILIENT CITIES

The Cities of Service Resilience AmeriCorps and Prepared Together programs came to a close in 2018. These programs helped city leaders connect and collaborate with citizens to create cities that are better prepared and more resilient in the face of disaster.

### Planting Community in Jersey City

“It’s important for us to have greenspaces,” says Afaf Mohammed, a resident of a Jersey City affordable housing community. “We’re tired of looking at broken glass and garbage.” She participated in a tree-planting project organized by Cities of Service AmeriCorps VISTA members designed to help alleviate flooding and heat, which inspired her to organize new projects to improve her community with her neighbors. “My favorite part was seeing everyone come together,” she said. “There was someone from every age out there putting their hands in the dirt.”



### RESILIENCE AMERICORPS GRANTEE CITIES

Anchorage, Alaska  
 Boulder, Colorado  
 Chicago, Illinois  
 El Paso, Texas  
 Minot, North Dakota  
 New Orleans, Louisiana  
 Norfolk, Virginia  
 Phoenix, Arizona  
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
 Tulsa, Oklahoma

### PREPARED TOGETHER GRANTEE CITIES

Daly City, California  
 Hoboken, New Jersey  
 Jersey City, New Jersey  
 Newark, New Jersey  
 Oakland, California  
 San Jose, California  
 San Leandro, California



### AmeriCorps in Anchorage

In Anchorage, Alaska, where about 90 percent of the city’s food supply arrives through the city’s aging port, developing additional sources of locally grown food is important to the city and citizens. When Cities of Service AmeriCorps VISTA members began to talk to the community about tackling this issue, residents were eager to get involved. Conversations led to new partnerships, resulting in community gardens, greenhouses, and a school garden network that fosters ongoing collaboration and a more resilient city.

### Making Citizens Safer in Norfolk

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, Nathaniel Jones has been helping others since he received his first Boy Scout badge in first aid. After his retirement, he became an active Certified Emergency Response Team (CERT) member, teaching other residents how to respond in an emergency. The program is part of Seniors Helping Seniors, supported with funds from Cities of Service. “If somebody can help somebody in a dangerous situation because of something we taught them,” he says, “then it’s a success.”

### IMPACT

**18**  
 tons of garbage and debris removed from waterways in Minot

**10,000**  
 people trained in emergency preparedness in San Jose

**1,200**  
 native plants and trees planted to decrease flooding in Pittsburgh

**800**  
 catch basins adopted to reduce stormwater runoff in New Orleans

*“I can’t tell you how much vocal support of our work in Tulsa means to our whole team. There just had not ever been this level of outside interest in Tulsa city government before, but (Cities of Service’s) advocacy is allowing us to show a better mode of governance.”*

Mayor G.T. Bynum, Tulsa, Oklahoma, a winner of the 2018 Engaged Cities Award

## ENGAGED CITIES AWARD

The Cities of Service Engaged Cities Award elevates city-led strategies that most successfully engage citizens to help create and implement solutions to pressing local problems.

In 2018, the inaugural year of the award, Cities of Service received more than 100 applications from cities across the Americas and Europe. With a panel of experts, Cities of Service selected three winning cities, recognizing them at a dinner hosted by Cities of Service founder Michael R. Bloomberg. The Engaged Cities Award Summit celebrated the work of the 10 finalists. These cities have worked with citizens to successfully reduce community violence, make streets safer, transform urban spaces, and much more.



### 2018 WINNERS

- Bologna, Italy
- Santiago de Cali, Colombia
- Tulsa, Oklahoma

### 2018 FINALISTS

- Boston, Massachusetts
- Fort Collins, Colorado
- Hamm, Germany
- Helsinki, Finland
- Huntington, West Virginia
- Mexico City, Mexico
- San Jose, California

### Sharing What We’ve Learned

Cities of Service created resources to share the best solutions with cities around the world to learn from, adapt, and improve upon. Visit [citiesofservice.org](http://citiesofservice.org) to find case studies, blueprints, videos, webinars, and more.

### Urban Data Pioneers

Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum campaigned on data-driven policy making, but upon taking office found he did not have the budget or staff capacity to fully utilize city data. The city created Urban Data Pioneers, forming teams of city staff and citizens to delve into the data and inform decision making. The program has engaged over 120 community volunteers and city staff and helped the city address more than a dozen public problems, including more efficiently prioritizing street repairs, increasing per-capita income, and reducing blight.

### Co-Creating the Urban Commons in Bologna, Italy

Three citizens wanted to repaint a park bench in their neighborhood, but just this simple task required them to interact with five city departments. This realization led Bologna to change the way it governs its shared physical, cultural, and creative resources. City leaders invited residents to co-create their city through a multifaceted approach, transforming abandoned buildings into community centers, concert halls, and startup incubators. Their work has resulted in new cultural institutions, artist collectives, small businesses, and much more.



*“The news about Bologna winning the Engaged Cities Award created great excitement in the city and it allowed all the citizens that took part in our engagement and participation policy to understand even better how, together, we are doing something great.”*

Mayor Virginio Merola, Bologna, Italy, a winner of the 2018 Engaged Cities Award

*“These civic councils that we have in the city — we’re giving them more life. The money came to us in a good moment to help us energize these councils moving forward.”*

Mayor Maurice Armitage, Santiago de Cali, Colombia, a winner of the 2018 Engaged Cities Award

### Transforming Santa Rosa School

Gang and drug activity made getting to school difficult for students of Santa Rosa School, located in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of Santiago de Cali, Colombia. A border between rival gangs ran close to the school, and gang members regularly recruited students near the schoolyard. The city changed that by asking citizens to serve on a local community council and design projects that reduce conflict. The council organized schoolyard cleanups and enlisted former gang members to paint murals around the sports court. The area is now clean and well lit, reducing drug and gang activity, and school attendance has doubled. This is just one example of the city-wide effort that is successfully decreasing violence with the help of citizens.



### The Second Annual Award

Cities of Service opened applications for its second Engaged Cities Award in November 2018. In 2019, Cities of Service is considering solutions in the following categories: impact volunteering, crowdsourcing, participatory design, and citizen-sourced data. Learn more at [engagedcitiesaward.org](http://engagedcitiesaward.org).



BY CITIES OF SERVICE



*“My time as a Cities of Service AmeriCorps VISTA member in Birmingham gave me firsthand knowledge and understanding of what it takes to actually serve the citizens of Birmingham. It laid a foundation for professional development. It gave me a heart for the residents of Birmingham.”*

Ryan Jackson, Cities of Service AmeriCorps VISTA member since hired by the City of Birmingham as Executive Assistant to Mayor Randall Woodfin

## EXPANDING IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

With new partnerships, Cities of Service is reaching more communities and cities around the world.

### Going Beyond the Day with Comcast

Cities of Service facilitated a new partnership with Detroit and Comcast NBCUniversal. With program design and implementation assistance, Cities of Service helped Detroit’s Department of Neighborhoods introduce a mini-grant program for community groups to improve their neighborhoods. The winning projects continued the work kicked off on Comcast Cares Day, when hundreds of Comcast employees helped beautify commercial corridors and remove blight. These efforts build upon Detroit’s other initiatives to improve neighborhoods and reduce crime.



### Reaching New Residents with AARP

This year, Cities of Service formed a partnership with AARP to help expand community engagement of people age 50 or older through strategic guidance, resource creation, and participation in events such as AARP’s Livable Communities Conference. With this partnership, Cities of Service is reaching new communities and strengthening local leaders’ abilities to engage residents who have expertise, an abundance of experience, and the desire to give back.

### Preparing the Next Generation of City Leaders

Since 2015, Cities of Service has embedded 84 AmeriCorps VISTA members in more than 20 city halls. Over 25 percent of Cities of Service AmeriCorps VISTA members have been hired to work in city government after completing their terms of service. Many have chosen a career in public service because of their experience and more than 10 percent now work at nonprofits and other government agencies. They are using the skills they gained and building on relationships developed during their service year as they continue to serve communities in need.



## Engaging the Community to Create Community

Working together, local leaders and residents can build more vibrant cities, towns and neighborhoods for people of all ages. Here’s how.



*“Cities of Service has been a game-changer when it comes to our citizen engagement and volunteer efforts in Phoenix. Your investment in our city is something we take seriously, and we are committed to ensuring that it keeps delivering impact for our residents in years to come.”*

Mayor Thelda Williams,  
Phoenix, Arizona

## A COMMUNITY OF LEARNING

Cities of Service continues to increase its impact by connecting to existing networks, fostering its own robust community, and training city leaders to more effectively engage residents to solve problems.

### Bringing Citizen Engagement to New Networks

In 2018, the ability of Cities of Service to share its expertise in citizen engagement and learn from other leaders grew through new networks. Executive Director Myung J. Lee was a keynote speaker at Smart Cities Week in Washington, D.C., moderated a discussion at Independent Sector’s Upswell Conference, and shared her insights in *Governing* magazine and *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Cities of Service also joined the NewCities network and Deputy Director Mauricio Garcia began serving as a GovLab advisor.



### Cultivating City Leaders

Throughout the year, Cities of Service brought together chief service officers and other city leaders, along with AmeriCorps VISTA members, to learn and share best practices.

- At the Cities of Service annual convening, new and seasoned city staff gleaned insights from each other and the first-ever Engaged Cities Award finalists.
- Cities of Service brought program leaders from eight cities to San Jose in August for a two-day study tour where they shared what they’d learned through the Prepared Together and Resilience AmeriCorps programs.
- AmeriCorps members and city staff from 10 legacy cities chosen for the Cities of Service Love Your Block AmeriCorps VISTA City Hall program came to Orlando to learn, connect with one another, and plan their projects.





---

FOUNDING PARTNER

---

# Bloomberg Philanthropies

Cities of Service's work is made possible with generous funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies.

---

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

---



JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

