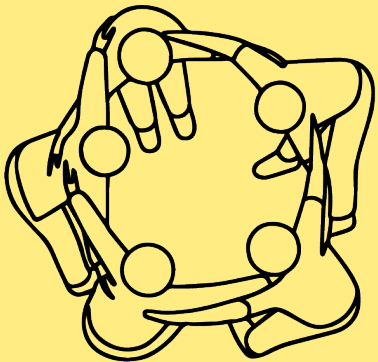


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Strategic Plan

2024 - 2026



PLACE INITIATIVE

Proactive Leadership Advocating for Climate & Equity

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLACE Initiative is a national nonprofit that works towards the goal of equitable climate action for all communities and geographies through place-based solutions. Our work is guided by the PLACE Principles, a set of 9 integrated focus areas that can be used to guide sustainable community development and placemaking in the face of climate change:

- I. *Support Current & Future Residents*
- II. *Establish Partnerships with a Regional Focus*
- III. *Create Resilient Infrastructure*
- IV. *Employ Good Governance*
- V. *Develop Places for People*
- VI. *Connect Communities*
- VII. *Advance Economic Prosperity*
- VIII. *Foster Environmental Stewardship*
- IX. *Reduce Hazard Risks*

Key Activities

Climate change is happening now, and we must adapt to the changes already occurring and disrupting our daily lives. PLACE aims to lead this adaptation through three key activities: **Advise, Assemble, and Advocate**. We aim to foster collaboration and lead a movement towards change, advocating for a world that is prepared for environmental challenges now and in the future. We assist front-line communities, governmental officials,

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and committed individuals engage in collaborative, equity-centered planning and implementation.

Theory of Change

PLACE Initiative is guided by the **Targeted Universalism** framework, which emphasizes universal goals with diverse implementation strategies to ensure all groups thrive, regardless of their structural, cultural, or geographical differences. With this approach, we center our work around equity, rather than equality. For instance, achieving universal access to safe and affordable housing may require different programs for affluent versus under-resourced areas. Targeted Universalism focuses on fair distribution of resources, supporting the needs of particular groups, while recognizing the interconnectedness of all strategies to foster structural change and improve outcomes for all.

Strategic Priorities

We have identified five strategic priorities and associated objectives to guide our work during the next three years.

1. ***Develop a vibrant community of practice: continue to grow PLACE Initiative membership; inspire continued commitment from members; and strengthen and build strategic partnerships.***
2. ***Create effective and innovative tools for PLACE Initiative: participate in iterative***

tool development; collaborate with subject matter experts; and make tools user-friendly, open-source, and widely accessible.

3. *Launch and progress PLACE Program offerings: identify new program offerings of PLACE; develop and launch a Local Champions program, built around an Outreach & Organizing Guide; spin up a new Rural Focus Area; and assess and refine program(s) yearly.*
4. *Advocate for comprehensive policy reform: increase public awareness; produce model policies and educational materials; and conduct, synthesize, and disseminate research.*
5. *Build organizational capacity for sustained growth: increase organizational efficiency; and perform additional fundraising activities.*

communities that promote thriving lives for residents.

Evaluation Plan

Each of our strategic priorities has associated metric targets that will be further discussed in depth in our forthcoming **Business Plan**. These include goals for grant funding, new programs, strategic alliances, peer review, and others.

For PLACE Initiative, the ultimate success would be to influence a greater paradigm shift of how we plan and govern our cities and towns as a powerful (and essential) vehicle for mitigating and adapting to climate change while improving the quality of life for all through the development of walkable human

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

PLACE Initiative (PLACE) is a national nonprofit committed to advancing equitable climate action for all communities and geographies. We have developed the PLACE Principles to share a set of diverse and targeted implementation strategies that recognize that there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' formula when it comes to solving the interrelated climate and social justice crises we face.

PLACE recognizes that the impacts of climate change affect *every* aspect of life on earth, yet these burdens are not distributed equally. Not everyone is starting from the same place, and this must be accounted for when designing solutions. For this reason, we focus on climate **equity** instead of **equality**. This means that rather than simply granting every individual the same opportunity no matter their background (i.e., equality), PLACE's goal is to help everyone reach their potential through differentiated, targeted strategies designed for each unique community. This results in achieving equitable climate action; the "E" in PLACE.

Our equity-first approach gives PLACE the opportunity to affect truly transformative change by reimagining the possibilities of a more just future, outside the constraints of existing systems. Whether you live in a large urban city, a small town, or a rural area, PLACE seeks to provide a range of innovative and transformative tools to help make a positive impact on your livelihood, your family, your community, and ultimately, the planet.

PLACE is supported by a small number of contract staff and consultants, with hubs of members and volunteers across the United States. Co-founded in 2019 and formally incorporated in 2023, our bi-partisan volunteer coalition builds upon years of collaboration, ideation, and action from a diverse cross section of place-focused professionals, community leaders and conscientious citizens, including:

- Architects
- Planners
- Geographers
- Engineers
- Outreach / Engagement Specialists
- Economists
- Lawyers
- Elected officials
- Appointed officials
- Developers
- Builders
- Neighborhood Leaders
- Non-governmental Organizations
- Scientists
- Academics / Educators
- Citizen Activists

The members of PLACE are the catalyzers and change-makers of their communities, leading the movement to develop innovative policies that can build sustainable, just, and safe places for people.

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement: The mission of PLACE Initiative is to elevate the PLACE Principles as a holistic climate action framework for delivering walkable human communities as equitable climate solutions for all communities and geographies.

Vision Statement: We envision a future where cities, towns, rural settlements, and agricultural lands grow and operate in balance with nature and with each other. A future where the people and cultures that build and inhabit these places support human thriving, the success and fulfillment of every individual. A future where natural, managed, and constructed ecosystems work together to support the health of the planet, the species it supports, and the systems necessary to maintain sustained equilibrium.

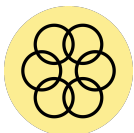
Core Values



Urgency: Our collective response to the global climate and social crises is **not** happening at the pace or scale needed. We must act with a **sense of urgency**, making meaningful change where we are most able and where it is most effective.



Collaboration: We are part of a growing response that must collaborate to **amplify our impact**. There is **no competition amongst peers** striving for solutions, only with those who seek to maintain the status quo.



Holistic: Fueled by individualistic and siloed mindsets, the global **climate and social crises are entwined**, not only in their effects but at their core. Our approach crosses traditional boundaries, to consider all aspects of a system at the **intersection of actors, actions, outcomes, and those affected**.



Fairness: We cannot solve climate threats without **addressing social inequity**. Systemic racism and classism enshrine the very system that perpetuates the climate crisis. We stand for the **rights of all people to thrive**, not only having access to shelter, food, and economic opportunity, but also to community, respect, and personal fulfillment.



Compassion: Everyone has a story, hope for their future, and an environment within which they operate. Many would change the world for the better **given the opportunity**, but most lack or are otherwise denied it. We recognize the contributions of each individual given their situation, and our responsibility to **affect systemic change** to unlock opportunity.



Sustainability: The interrelated climate and social crises are not ephemeral; we must ensure that solutions perpetuate positive change, creating physical and social systems that are **resilient in the face of present and future challenges**.

Key Activities

We advance solutions to equitable climate action through three key activities:

- **Advise.** As subject matter experts, facilitators, and community leaders, we advise decision-makers on the planning and implementation of actionable adaptation strategies that use a holistic approach to help balance the benefits and tradeoffs for diverse stakeholder groups. In addition, we develop tools and resources to help communities understand existing conditions, anticipate potential futures, and plan for intended outcomes. Our tools are built using iterative testing and pilot projects to balance a sense of urgency with appropriate local context and nuance.
- **Assemble.** As conveners and catalyzers, we assemble networks of cross-disciplinary organizational partners to build effective coalitions that elevate the voices of frontline communities.
- **Advocate.** As change-makers in our communities, we advocate for innovative, equity-first policies at the local, regional, national, and international scales to create a more just and verdant world for all. Our work aims to address intertwined social and environmental injustices using transformative, place-based strategies to address the specific needs and desires of each community to achieve better climate outcomes.

THEORY OF CHANGE

Targeted Universalism

PLACE Initiative is guided by the Targeted Universalism¹ framework to define organizational goals, program objectives, and project strategy. Targeted Universalism emphasizes universal goals that guide the pursuit of diverse implementation strategies so all can thrive, irregardless of how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies. The Othering and Belonging Institute at UC Berkeley introduced this framework as an alternative model for policy reform. Tradition policy responses, even well-intentioned ones, have used either a universal, 'one-size-fits-all' formula, or targeted interventions to benefit certain groups. By focusing on an ultimate goal, policymakers are forced to confront the

Targeted Universalism emphasizes universal goals that guide the pursuit of diverse implementation strategies so all can thrive, irregardless of how different groups are situated within structures, culture, and across geographies.

¹ powell, john, Stephen Menendian and Wendy Ake, "Targeted universalism: Policy & Practice." Othering & Belonging Institute, University of California, Berkeley, 2019. www.belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism

visible and invisible biases present in the existing system to achieve the desired outcome for everyone.

For example, if the ultimate goal is for all people to have access to safe and affordable housing, there will need to be a different set of programs for those in an affluent area than those in under-resourced areas. Privileged areas may need programs to support small-scale housing builders and developers to create more diverse housing options. Another area may need a Small Developer Program, a First-time Homebuyer Assistance program, workforce development programs to access higher paid jobs, and appropriate shelter, housing, and treatment resources for any individuals experiencing homelessness. Thus, the focus is not on an 'equal' distribution of resources, but a fair one.

Equity... not Equality

One of the most important aspects of Targeted Universalism is that it supports the needs of particular groups, "even the politically powerful or those in the majority, while reminding everyone that we are all part of the same social and civic fabric."² In other words, this approach can help to raise the expected outcomes of all groups, instead of focusing solely on elevating disadvantaged groups to the level of an advantaged group. Targeted Universalism is not a collection of differentiated siloed strategies, rather it is a collection of interconnected strategies woven together to create a blanket of solutions that result in the structural change needed to achieve the articulated universal goals.

With Targeted Universalism at the core of our organization...

***PLACE Initiative empowers communities to envision equitable
and sustainable futures, one community at a time!***

The PLACE Principles

At PLACE Initiative, we developed the PLACE Principles to operationalize a Targeted Universalism approach to holistic climate action. The PLACE Principles embody a flexible, adaptive, and community-centric approach, providing a roadmap for equitable and sustainable community development in the face of evolving challenges.

The nine Principles represent various focus areas for communities, guiding equitable efforts to strengthen and future-proof their collective built, economic, environmental, social, and cultural well-being. For more information on the PLACE Principles, [see our website](#).

² *ibid.* p. 6

I. Support Current & Future Residents

II. Establish Partnerships with a Regional Focus

III. Create Resilient Infrastructure

IV. Employ Good Governance

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VII. Advance Economic Prosperity

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IX. Reduce Hazard Risks

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As a coalition of aligned members and partners, we seek to elevate the use of the PLACE Principles through initiatives, programs, and strategic areas. Over the next three years, PLACE Initiative will seek to make a measurable and meaningful difference, engage in five mission-driven strategies to grow our organization, spread awareness for our approach, and support the implementation of specific projects.

Strategy I: Develop a vibrant community of practice

PLACE Initiative needs a broad support system of collaborative partners and supporters to affect change at a nationwide or international level. To thrive as an organization, PLACE relies on a strong and consistent base of volunteers made up of practitioners from an interdisciplinary range, including local and national advocates, students, professionals, and leaders.

OBJECTIVES and IMPACTS

1. Grow PLACE Initiative membership, including by increasing the appeal of PLACE Initiative to a larger group of people, beyond those that work in the built environment, to engage experts from different professional and/or ideological backgrounds under a common cause.
2. Inspire continued commitment from members, so that members feel a sense of autonomy to pursue their ideas and shape the direction of PLACE, rather than just enacting someone else's ideas.
3. Strengthen and build strategic partnerships, so that new strategic partners help to build and support a broad constituency, to spread our mission and package of solutions to

more change-makers on the ground. Diverse partnerships help us to tap into the knowledge base of groups that previously were rarely acknowledged, leading to more innovative strategies instead of traditional solutions.

Strategy 2: Create effective and innovative tools for PLACE initiatives

Our strategy to affect widespread change is through the development of tools and resources to guide communities and decision makers in implementing neighborhood and local climate adaptation projects. Through a series of pilot projects, PLACE will be able to test innovative techniques and technologies, spurring further innovation and the improvement of our organization's programs.

OBJECTIVES and IMPACTS

1. Participate in iterative tool development, such that improvements to program tools and frameworks occur quickly due to feedback loops within pilot projects. This allows us to measure success and impacts, and identify opportunities for growth and tool evolution.
2. Collaborate with subject matter experts to produce tools that enable local communities to plan and implement climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that will produce widespread equitable outcomes without the need for additional project management support or technical assistance.
3. Make user-friendly, open-source, widely accessible, intuitive tools that are usable by advocates at the hyper-local scale to expand techniques neighbor-to-neighbor, rather than being administered as a top-down policy.
4. Regional, National, and International government bodies and agencies provide sufficient institutional support for local communities to use tested strategies, so that our initiatives and tools can assist local governments across the country in shaping future development and the evolution of the built environment in a climate smart and inclusive direction.

Strategy 3: Launch and progress PLACE Program offerings

At the time of our strategic planning process, PLACE is still actively determining the scope and focus areas of our future programs. We expect over the next three years to have an increase of program offerings to support different stakeholders and populations to plan and implement equitable climate action. Our intentions are specified through this list of objectives, targets, and impacts:

OBJECTIVES and IMPACTS

1. Identify new program offerings of PLACE, to expand the impact of PLACE Initiative through network building and collaboration with aligned organizations and strategic partners.
2. Develop and launch a *Local Champions* program, built around an *Outreach & Organizing Guide*, in order to elevate everyday voices in communities throughout the country by popularizing the use of collaborative community engagement strategies.
3. Spin up a new Rural Focus Area, one that focuses on increasing access to walkable, livable human communities, reducing automobile dependency, increasing economic mobility, and increasing environmental and economic sustainability.
4. Assess and refine program(s) yearly, implementing a Continuous Improvement Program that thoroughly documents processes, programs, and workflows to elevate and celebrate innovation and advancements.

Strategy 4: Advocate for comprehensive policy reform

We advocate for innovative, equity-focused urban policy at local, regional, and national scales. To spread awareness of the PLACE Principles as a climate action strategy, PLACE must establish and maintain a broad body of knowledge that resonates with policy makers, advocates, and community leaders.

OBJECTIVES and IMPACTS

1. Increase public awareness, to raise public awareness of the impact that policies related to the built environment can have on overall wellbeing, incrementally working to become a trusted source of accurate and complete information where community members, governmental entities, and NGOs can source policy, educational materials, and innovative concepts at the intersection of climate, equity, and social justice.
2. Produce model policies and educational materials that reframe the climate crisis as an opportunity to enhance collective wellbeing and equity in the conversation about adaptation and mitigation, to be at the forefront in the elimination of exclusionary zoning and built form, in order to quickly achieve climate policy reform where bureaucracy would usually slow down progress and weaken the message for equitable outcomes.
3. Conduct, synthesize, and disseminate research in order to build a movement upon a firm foundation of findings that follow the science, elevate case studies of success, and

spread awareness within and through academia of the necessary role that walkable human communities must play in a successful package of climate strategies.

Strategy 5: Build organizational capacity for sustained growth

To maintain the level of coordination that PLACE Initiative has developed in the last year, funding is needed to maintain and build upon our existing capacity, and to expand responsibilities and activities undertaken by staff. Presently, the capacity of PLACE Initiative is constrained by the limited capacity of our dedicated volunteer board of directors, co-founders, and contract staff. By expanding organizational capacity, PLACE can expand our impact to more quickly achieve our vision.

OBJECTIVES and IMPACTS

1. Increase organizational efficiency through organizational protocols and systems that are optimized to reduce strains on resources, cultivating an expectation and culture of the continuous improvement of organizational procedures, resulting in an increase in efficiency, and thus, organizational capacity, so that members are motivated by the reasonable pace of the organization and become committed, active volunteers for the cause.
2. Perform additional fundraising activities to put the organization on firm financial foundations that support its growth and expansion of programs and activities.
3. Right-size board responsibilities and activities to ensure the sustained growth of the organization over the next three years and into the future.