



(Mural near Promise Zone Neighborhood, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.)

Promise Zones: Initial Implementation Assessment Report February 2019



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Foreword

Promise Zones are high-poverty communities where the federal government partners with local organizations to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health, and address other priorities identified by the community. Designed as a place-based revitalization initiative, the Promise Zone program awarded eligible urban, rural, and tribal communities with a Promise Zone designation after each community applied for and participated in a national competition. While no federal grants or subsidies accompanied the designation, community leaders were allowed to engage in joint local planning, gain improved access to Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) personnel, gain improved access to federal staff from multiple agencies, take advantage of the provision of technical assistance, and receive priority consideration through additional preference points on competitive federal grant applications.

Ultimately, Promise Zones designations were awarded to twenty-two communities after three rounds of national competition, with the first round of designations announced in 2014 and the third and final round announced in 2016. The designation terms were standardized to end in 2026. Similar to the approach used for Empowerment Zones, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is the principal federal agency for the fourteen urban Promise Zones and the U.S. Department of Agriculture is the lead for the eight Promise Zones designated in rural and tribal areas.

This report, *Promise Zones Implementation Assessment*, presents findings based on the experiences of three of the initial urban Promise Zones designated in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Philadelphia. The report is not intended to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the Promise Zone initiative, nor does it quantify the program's impact on neighborhoods and residents. Rather, this report is a process study focused on the initiative's implementation, as experienced and executed by officials and staff at the city and local community level.

The findings presented in this report are not only relevant to the Promise Zones themselves, but more broadly are relevant to the issues of implementing new programs and initiatives, coordinating between multiple federal agencies with state and local partners, delivering technical assistance, and building capacity for community development efforts. These findings are based in large part on site visits and interviews conducted with local officials, including city leadership, the AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers and community partners, and staff from nonprofits who shared their experiences with and observations on the implementation process. This report outlines critical factors that the local partners and HUD staff indicated as essential to successful program implementation and execution. Highlighted in the report are challenges that may hinder the efforts of local and federal partners. The report also contains recommendations that could be applied to future place-based and community development programs and initiatives as well as to future federal interagency coordination efforts.

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We are grateful also for the guidance of PD&R Program Evaluation Division Director Carol Star, Ph.D.

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I. Introduction and Background

Introduction

In June through August of 2018, researchers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Policy Development and Research (PD&R) division conducted a rapid turnaround implementation assessment that examined the initial set-up, execution, and resultant program structure of the first round of the three urban Promise Zone sites—Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Philadelphia. The objectives of the assessment were to understand the Promise Zone sites' initial efforts to attract federal, state, and local resources; how resources available to designees were utilized; and the perceptions of local partners concerning what is working and what can be improved. The research team reviewed program documents conducted interviews with HUD headquarters staff past and present, and completed site visits to the Promise Zones in Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Philadelphia.

This report outlines critical factors that HUD staff and partners indicated were essential for program implementation and execution, challenges that hindered efforts of local and federal partners, special components that enhanced community efforts, and recommendations that could be applied to future place-based efforts by HUD. It is *not* intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the Promise Zone initiative overall, nor to quantify its impact on neighborhoods and residents.

In meeting the objectives of this assessment, the report addresses the following research questions:

Program Vision, Organization, and Management

1. What was the original government vision for the Promise Zone program?
2. What were the primary motivations for communities to participate in the Promise Zone program?
3. What were the biggest perceived barriers to launching the program?

Program Experience, Activities to Date, and Outlook

4. What did it mean to be a Promise Zone before the official designations went out in 2016?
5. Did Round 1 receive promised benefits? When and how?
6. What types and how many federal staff were made available to help Promise Zones navigate federal resources?
7. When and how many AmeriCorps VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to America) were obtained?
8. What were the original reporting requirements, and what data was received by HUD?
9. What activities are currently ongoing to enable Promise Zones to provide the required information?

Perceptions and Recommendation for Promise Zones

10. What are the greatest realized benefits of program participation?
11. What are the recommendations for improving the program structure?
12. Has participation in the program created perceived effects on the behavior of local partners? On the ways local entities view and organize their partnerships?

Background

Promise Zones are high-poverty communities where the federal government partners with local organizations to increase economic activity, improve educational opportunities, leverage private investment, reduce violent crime, enhance public health, and address other priorities identified by the community.¹ Working from the precedents of Empowerment Zones and Choice Neighborhoods, in 2013 the previous administration announced an initiative to designate several urban, rural, and tribal communities as Promise Zones.

The selection criteria for the first round of Promise Zones required that the applicants already have received either a U.S. Department of Justice Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Grant, a U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods grant, or a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Choice Neighborhood grant. These criteria were included to signify that the infrastructure and coordination on the ground necessary for making a successful collective impact effort was already in place and that the zones, therefore, had a good chance of achieving results.

To date, 22 Promise Zones have been designated through three rounds of national competition, with the first round of designations announced in 2014. The third and final round was announced in 2016. As a lead agency for the Promise Zone Initiative, HUD is the principal federal resource to the 14 urban Promise Zones, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the lead resource for rural and tribal zones.

The Promise Zone designation partners the federal government with local leaders who are addressing multiple community revitalization challenges in a collaborative way. Promise Zone designees initially expected to gain access to:

- An opportunity to engage five AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) members in the Promise Zone's work.
- A federal liaison assigned to help designees navigate federal programs.
- Preferences for certain competitive federal grant programs and technical assistance from participating federal agencies; and
- Promise Zone tax incentives, if enacted by Congress (tax credits have not been enacted to date).

To enhance collaboration efforts, an *interagency steering committee* initially convened by the White House Domestic Policy Council worked closely with federal liaisons to help ensure full support among participating federal agencies. (Sample minutes from June 2014 can be found in appendix B.)

With HUD serving as the lead agency for urban Promise Zones, additional agency participants included:

- Department of Agriculture (led efforts to support rural and tribal Promise Zones)
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Education
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Justice
- Department of Labor

¹ <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/promise-zones/promise-zones-overview/>.

- Department of Transportation
- Department of the Treasury
- Corporation for Community and National Services
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Small Business Administration

Altogether, the Promise Zone designation was intended to accelerate and enhance local efforts towards community revitalization. The designation will last for a term of 10 years, during which, the specific benefits will vary from year to year, and sometimes more often than annually, due to changes in agency policies as well as appropriations and authorizations for relevant programs.

No federal resources were guaranteed. The “promise” inherent in the Promise Zone designation signifies improved access to federal staff and existing federal resources, improved partnering capabilities, and priority consideration through additional preference points on competitive federal grant applications.

II. Site Selection and Overview

For this assessment, the researchers selected all three cities (Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and San Antonio) from the first round of urban Promise Zone designations. The sites’ early designations made them ideal candidates for assessment in that they have the longest period of program execution among all urban Promise Zone sites—allowing us a longer view of implementation and improvement efforts on the ground.

Los Angeles, California²

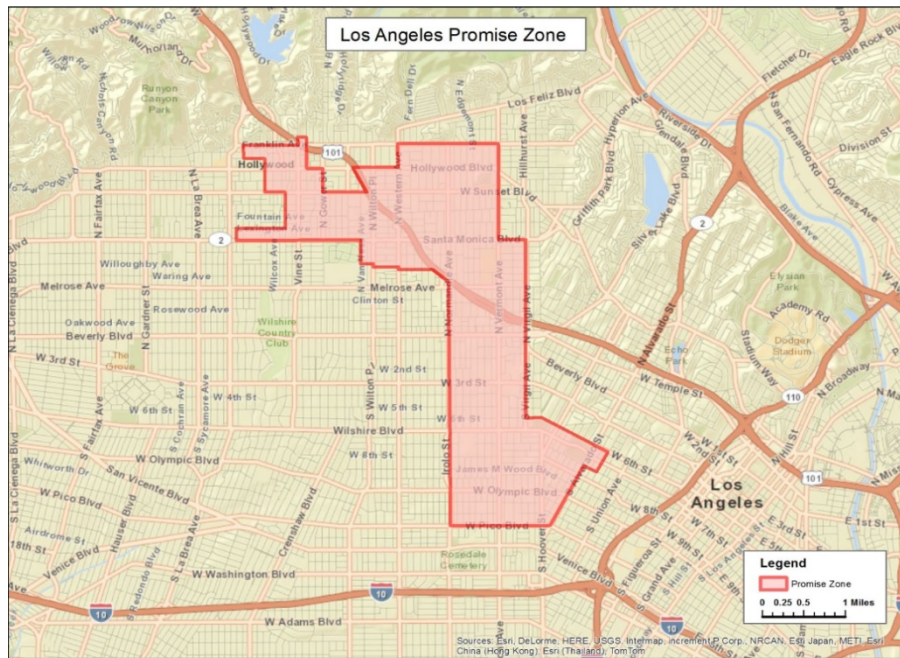
Located in Central Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Promise Zone includes the neighborhoods of Pico-Union, Westlake, Wilshire Center, East Hollywood, and Hollywood, and it has a population of over 165,000. At the time of the designation, 35 percent of residents lived in poverty, and nearly one-fourth of Promise Zone households earned less than \$15,000 a year. Educational attainment was considered a challenge for the community, with 35 percent of residents age 25 and older having less than a high school diploma, as well as high rates of high school dropouts. Additionally, the community struggled with a high unemployment rate and a shortage of affordable housing.

The goals established for this Promise Zone are to:

- Foster good jobs and healthy businesses
 - Includes providing job training programs, supporting small businesses, and promoting local assets—including parks, landmarks, and transportation networks.
- Improve educational opportunities
 - Includes Improving school readiness for pre-school-aged children, increasing during and after school programs to promote kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) success, improving school attendance through parent engagement and wrap-around services, and increasing college readiness and enrollment.
- Make neighborhoods safe

² Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/Promise-Zones-Designee-Los-Angeles.pdf>.

- Includes improving public safety service delivery, providing gang prevention and intervention services for families, and promoting safe routes to school for children and parents.
- Promote more sustainable and livable communities.
 - Includes preserving affordable and rent-controlled housing, supporting homelessness prevention programs, ensuring quality transportation access, and focusing resources on commercial districts, parks, and public spaces.



Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/Image/Promise-Zone-Map-los-angeles.jpg>

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania³

Located in West Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Promise Zone includes the neighborhoods of Mantua, Powelton Village, West Powelton, Saunders Park, Belmont, and Mill Creek, and it has a population of over 35,000. At the time of designation, 49 percent of all residents and 56 percent of youth residents lived in poverty. Additionally, the community suffered from high housing vacancy rates, crime, and low education attainment.

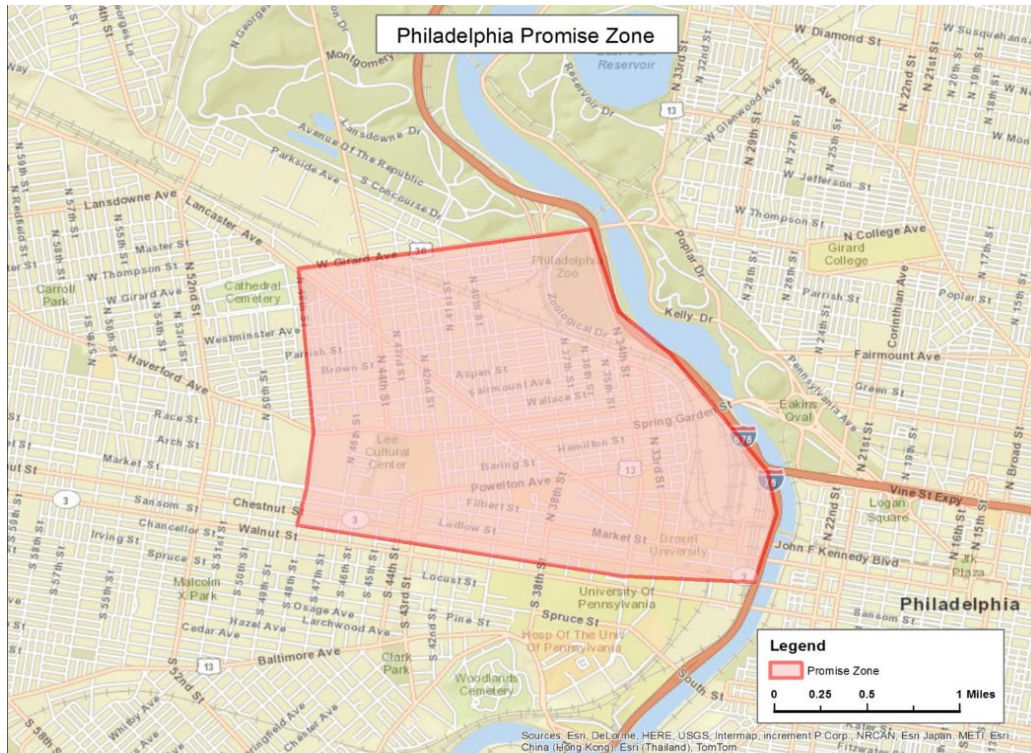
The goals established for this Promise Zone are:

- Create jobs.
 - Includes providing incentives that will attract small businesses, private companies, and institutions to the community, as well as providing job skills for area residents.
- Increase economic activity.
 - Includes private and public investments, financing initiatives, and improved security for small businesses.
- Improve educational opportunities.
 - Includes increasing access to pre-kindergarten programs.

³ Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/Promise-Zones-Designee-West-Philadelphia.pdf>

- Leverage private resources
 - Includes the use of committed and anticipated investments to spur economic development and create job opportunities for residents.
- Reduce violent crime
 - Includes efforts to improve neighborhood conditions by removing blight and maintaining vacant lots.

Additionally, the West Philadelphia site committed to increasing housing options, promoting healthier eating and lifestyles, and engaging residents to inform them of Promise Zone's goals.



Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/Image/Promise-Zone-Map-philadelphia.jpg>

San Antonio, Texas⁴

Located on the city's East Side, the San Antonio Promise Zone encompasses a 20-square-mile area referred to as East Point, with a population of over 64,000. At the time of designation, the community had a poverty rate of over 35 percent and an unemployment rate of over 11 percent. Additionally, the community has suffered from high levels of crime and underperforming schools.

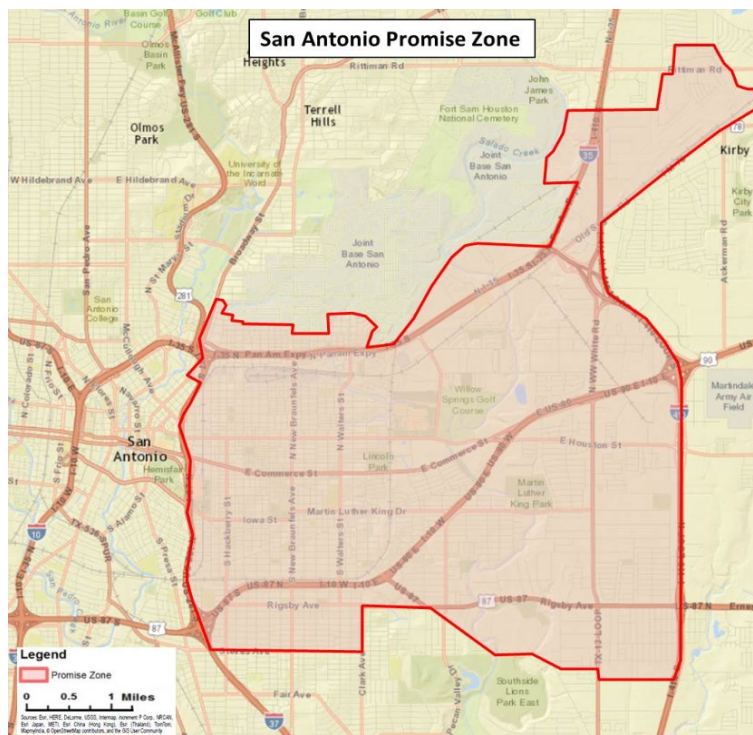
The goals established for this Promise Zone are to:

- Create jobs
 - Includes partnering with education and training providers to provide career training programs in local, high-demand occupations, as well as prioritizing the city's funding for non-profits that provide employment services.
- Increase economic activity

⁴ Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/File/Promise-Zones-Designee-San-Antonio.pdf>.

- Includes employing a business consultant to develop an economic development plan that will enhance investment among business owners and government contractors.
- Improve educational opportunities
 - Includes increasing enrollment in pre-kindergarten programs, installing a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) program, expanding enrollment in early college programs, and increasing adult education opportunities by partnering with a local college.
- Leverage private resources
 - Includes pledging 50 percent of existing business assistance grants to Promise Zone enterprises and developing a capacity building and sustainability plan for the area's non-profits.
- Reduce violent crime
 - Includes increasing proactive policing activities, improving lighting, cleaning up vacant lots, and razing abandoned buildings.

Additionally, the San Antonio East Side Promise Zone committed to increasing affordable housing stock, renovate vacant houses, and sell or lease vacant houses to eligible families.



Source: <https://www.hudexchange.info/onecpd/assets/Image/Promise-Zone-Map-san-antonio.jpg>

III. Data Collection

For this assessment, researchers collected and reviewed program documents, and conducted structured interviews with HUD staff at headquarters and field offices, and with AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs), city leaders, and local partners. The interview questions explored how the Promise Zone structure was launched, what efforts and resources were dedicated to the project, and thoughts

concerning the most important components of the program. Responses were recorded through note-taking, and in some cases, a recording device. A sample interview guide can be found in appendix C.

Promise Zone Program Documents

Policy Development and Research (PD&R) researchers collected designation agreements and available annual reports from each of the three sites. These documents provided an understanding of the selected neighborhoods, goals, community partners, resources, and areas of need within each of the sites. The researchers also reviewed publications created by Promise Zone agencies for their community partners and the public at large as well as those developed by HUD as information and training materials for the program launch.

Interviews with HUD Headquarters Staff

PD&R researchers interviewed former and current HUD headquarters staff who were involved in the initial implementation of the program, as well as staff currently overseeing the program. Since the implementation of Promise Zones, the program has moved within HUD from the Office of Community Planning and Development's Economic Development division to the Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM). This change created some challenges, as most original program staff no longer work on Promise Zone efforts, and some are no longer working for the Department. PD&R researchers were able to locate and interview some original program and management staff to better understand the program's vision at the outset, however, and how the agency organized to implement the program and to address its unique challenges.

Interviews in the Field

Researchers also traveled to each of the selected Promise Zone sites to see the areas and conduct interviews with HUD field office staff, AmeriCorps VISTAs, city leadership staff, and lead partners and non-profits who were affiliated with local Promise Zone efforts.

IV. Observations

Several commonalities arose when talking to multiple Promise Zone participants. From most perspectives of the first three urban Promise Zones, the initiative (1) provided a direct channel of communication between community organizations and federal agencies; (2) utilized existing collaborative relationships to build capacity in smaller partner organizations; (3) granted preference points for competitive grant applications; and (4) provided AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTAs) to coordinate new collaborative efforts. The provision of staff in the form of Community Liaisons, VISTAs, and to an initial extent, desk officers located at HUD headquarters, was highlighted as a key component in Promise Zone efforts by respondents.

The availability of preference points for federal grant applicants from Promise Zones was a key motivator for participation in the Promise Zone effort. Channeling access to the preference points for federal grants through the lead organization created an incentive for partnerships between and among the local lead organization and smaller, sometimes competing local non-profits. The lead organization in each zone could certify only one application for preference points for each grant opportunity, which encouraged collaboration among the local partners.

An example of how this makes or made a difference: Area groups collaborating rather than competing with each other resulted in local organizations gaining increased capacity to apply for and win grants.

Critical Factors for Success

Several factors were identified by all three sites visited and HUD headquarters staff as being essential for making the Promise Zone effort work well. These are listed below and then described in greater detail.

At the federal level, from the vantage point of headquarters staff, the most important program elements included:

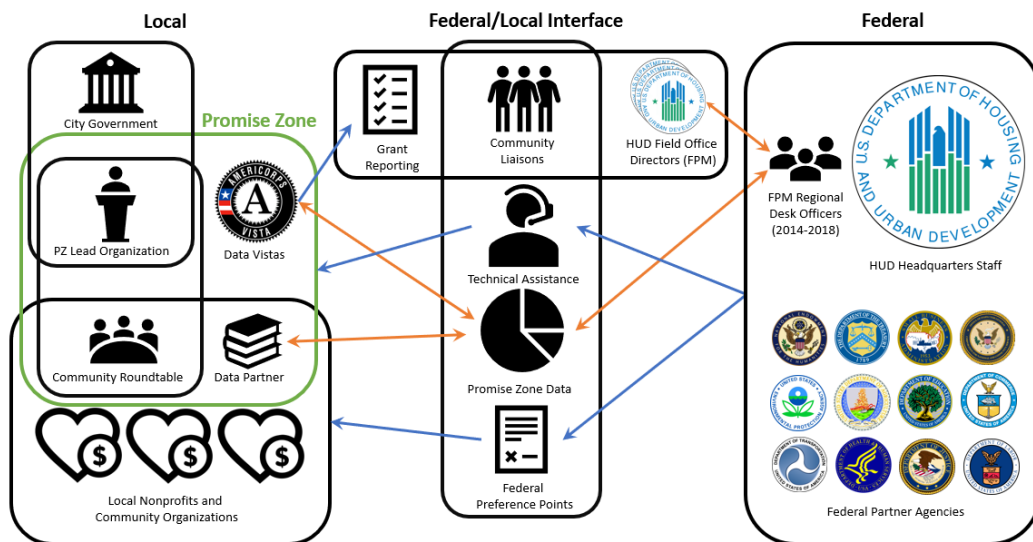
- The interagency steering committee;
- Points of contact for each partnering agency;
- The Community Liaison (to provide a federal perspective to local partners); and
- The Desk Officers at HUD headquarters.

At the local level, the program elements below were frequently cited by interviewees as being crucial for the success of the program:

- The Community Liaison (to provide a local perspective to HUD headquarters);
- Preference points on federal grant applications;
- AmeriCorps VISTAs to coordinate local efforts;
- An existing collaborative framework (required for Round 1 Promise Zones: Promise Neighborhoods, Choice Neighborhood, Byrne Grants); and
- A long-term outlook (10-year term or longer) for the program.

Each of these elements is discussed below, illustrated by the following chart which illustrates the roles and interactions of the main actors.

Organizational Chart of Program



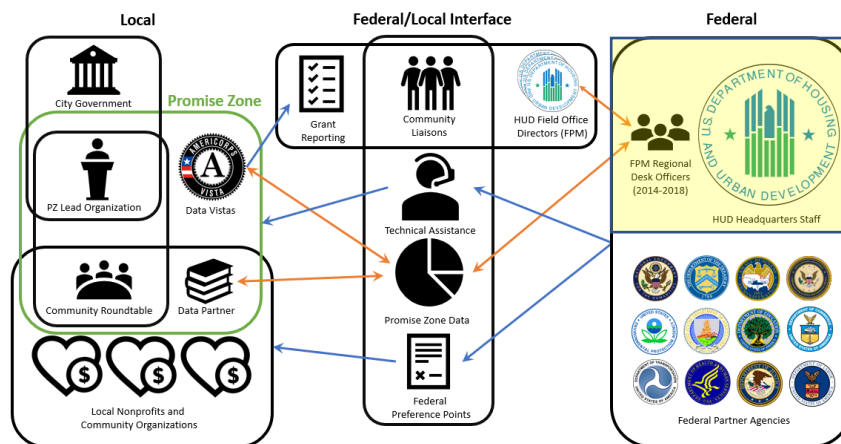
Round-One Promise Zone Staffing Structure

Interagency Steering Committee

The federal interagency steering committee was the forum through which HUD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—the two lead federal agencies for the Promise Zone initiative—could regularly meet with their partner agencies, representatives from the White House Domestic Policy Council, and other stakeholders to launch the initiative and maintain buy-in from partner federal agencies. The steering committee also provided a reliable avenue for communication and coordination between federal agencies. Each participating agency provided a point of contact for the HUD desk officers. The HUD desk officer served as the conduit for helping communities learn about grants and funding opportunities, encouraging federal partners to find ways to include preference points for Promise Zones into appropriate forthcoming notices of funding availability (NOFAs). This role was sustained until at least 2016.

The interagency steering committee created and sustained awareness, shared understanding of the Promise Zone effort, and enabled HUD desk officers to coordinate with partner agencies. A major weakness, however, was the lack of any official or binding agreements between agencies; the steering committee was built on an *“understanding, or gentleman’s handshake.”*⁵ Toward 2016, the interagency steering committee had stopped meeting. This led to breaks in communication between HUD and other agencies, except in cases where individual desk officers maintained their own connections with their counterparts. Revitalizing this type of steering committee, with high-level buy-in, regular communication, and official commitments from other agencies, is critical to the continued success of the Promise Zone initiative and should be strongly considered for similar place-based collaborative efforts in the future.

Desk Officers



Round-One Promise Zone Staffing Structure

In 2014, at the start of the Promise Zone effort, there were few career staff available to serve as designated point persons for the effort. Instead, **Presidential Management Fellows (PMFs)** were assigned to perform the role of desk officer and to design the plan for interagency cooperation and, as several staff members phrased it, essentially “drive the car while building it.”

⁵ See Office of Management and Budget Memo M-16-23 Prioritizing Federal Investments in Promise Zones. OMB Memo M-16-23 Prioritizing Federal Investments in Promise Zones.

According to one PMF desk officer from 2014, “The desk officers were eventually hoped to be the ‘Federal Front Door’ where we could help connect the Promise Zone Community with grants.” To this end, each **HUD desk officer** was assigned a specific Promise Zone as well as specific partner federal agencies with whom to work.

Each federal agency had a **Promise Zone point of contact**, a designated staff member to work with the Promise Zones and attend **steering committee** meetings. HUD desk officers reached out to their assigned agencies’ contacts to encourage and discuss the inclusion of preference points in NOFAs and gather information about forthcoming preference point opportunities. They then relayed this information to relevant **Promise Zone community liaisons**. Desk officers also sought opportunities at the community level for other federal agencies to collaborate and/or contribute resources.

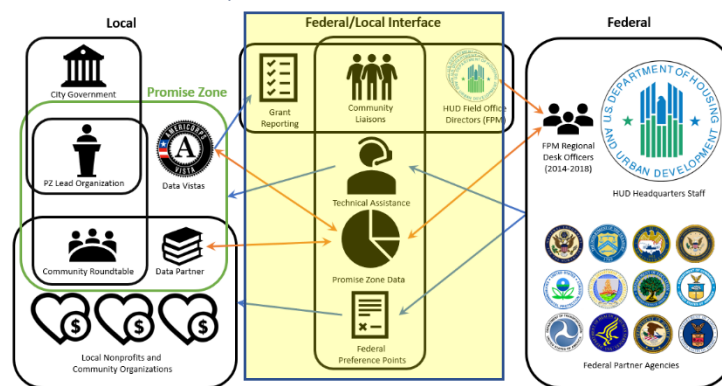
One example of success is illustrated by a former PMF who worked on the initiative:

“One community wanted help with artistic placemaking, so the desk officer set up briefings with NEA [the National Endowment for the Arts] and raised the issue up to [the] federal level to help look for resources. What did the agencies get from it? Several agencies don’t have that field presence. NEA has neighborhood ambassadors, but they’re often not dealing with the same populations [that] HUD does. So really desk officers did the connection making and tried to find ways to not just take from agencies but look to give them back something as well (for example, local-level insight). So the main essence of the desk officer role is as a connector at the federal level.”ⁱⁱ

Challenges:

As mentioned above, originally the **desk officers** were PMFs who, at the end of their 6 month or annual rotations, left their positions, leaving a void of both staff and knowledge. Furthermore, because Promise Zones were a presidential initiative, some of the initial staff left in 2016, leaving few staff members assigned to Promise Zones with a deep working knowledge of the program.

The Important Role of the Community Liaisons



Round-One Promise Zone Staffing Structure

The initial vision for the **community liaison** role was to provide a federal point of contact at the local level—situated at the local field office closest to the Promise Zone site—distinct from the **federal desk officers** based at HUD headquarters who were working at the federal level—to connect local Promise Zones to HUD and the federal government more broadly in Washington, D.C. The theory behind the community liaison role was that having one contact in the field office serving a Promise Zone would allow the desk officers a better stream of information and a more manageable level of requests than if

all the Promise Zone local partners called desk officers at headquarters individually. Community liaisons were intended to be the gateway for channeling the information flow to and from sites wishing to access the federal desk officer's vast array of potential resources and contacts in Washington, D.C.

The community liaison positions at each site are filled by HUD staff who were hired at the federal level but were stationed at the field offices. They serve the local community and the Promise Zone by assisting locals with strategy, setting priorities, and interfacing with the community partners and lead organizations to ensure efforts to maintain a "bottom-up" approach. Many Promise Zone interviewees stated that *having such a person on the ground is crucial to a place-based initiative*. One community liaison expressed that:

"[U]nderstanding issues at the community level is important. Each location has its own issues—Philadelphia has abandoned housing while L.A. has five to a studio, for example, so the types of interventions (in the different Promise Zones) just aren't the same."ⁱⁱⁱ

From the local perspective, many staff members at partner organizations expressed that having a dedicated HUD representative who had the ear of headquarters was a big value addition:

The community liaison is so important, functionally—having someone we can go to who can figure out and navigate federal agencies and departments. You run into a lot of issues when you have a lot of federal grants... Just knowing we had someone to call who would know who to call cleared a lot of roadblocks.^{iv}

- Another partner stated that "[o]ur HUD community liaison [allowed us] to navigate and move quickly on federal funding opportunities [and was] someone to connect us and facilitate relationships."^v

The success of the community liaison depends greatly on the individual's effort. In most cases, Promise Zone lead agency partners and city representatives cited the guidance, energy, and help obtained from the community liaisons as being key to the startup and continuing success of their efforts. Depending on the location, community liaisons were credited with guiding the creation of effective local committees, organizing collective action among local non-profits, training up and providing direction for VISTAs, and communicating to various stakeholders the meaning and benefits of participation in the Promise Zone effort.

HUD staff engagement in the committee meetings provided a bridge for Promise Zone staff to involve community stakeholders, with whom HUD had a working relationship. As lead staff at one Promise Zone site recalled, the HUD field officer would send HUD staff (up to three members) to housing committee meetings, which helped build a working relationship between housing providers and Promise Zone staff. HUD already had a good relationship with housing partners, so HUD staff engagement encouraged housing stakeholders to get involved.^{vi}

Initially, community liaisons were to be linked with a federal liaison desk officer in Washington, D.C. to coordinate questions and requests from the community and organize the stream of communications back and forth. In turn, the desk officer had one main point of contact and could communicate information once and trust it would be disseminated to the correct stakeholders. But when turnover in the desk officer role increased, this communication channel was lost. As one current community liaison stated, "The other end of the telephone line went dead."^{vii} This left community

liaisons with a choice; whether to take up the role of pursuing federal interagency opportunities on their own directly or to let the connection with D.C. fade and focus on strengthening local partnerships among Promise Zone participants locally.

During this period, it was unclear whether place-based activities were still a priority. Therefore, as one field officer put it, the “community liaison laid-low.”^{viii} Without further direction, however, community liaisons continued working with Promise Zone partners providing support to Promise Zone staff and VISTAs. In some cases, partners in the local mayors’ offices took up the role, but this solution was felt to be less than ideal as “one of the biggest value-adds” of participating in the program was having access to a federal navigator to help find funding opportunities. Without either help or funds, some Promise Zone leads expressed frustration at the increasing requests from HUD for data, feeling the “deal was becoming too one-sided,” and with time a limited commodity, it didn’t make sense to dedicate as much attention to the Promise Zone effort.

The Value of Preference Points

The availability of **preference points** for grant applicants certified as Promise Zone partners was the “hook” local lead organizations used to gain cooperation and coordination from the many local partners. Some Promise Zone lead organizations would only certify one application from the zone for each grant opportunity offering preference points. This encouraged the formation of partnerships and collaboration among and between the local partners working in similar spaces. It forced collaboration between private, public, and philanthropic organizations, making it essentially non-negotiable to work together. As one staff member from a lead organization stated:

“If we had two applications for the same grant, we could say, ‘Hey, why don’t you join with this other group and submit it together?’ so we were no longer competing against ourselves.”^{ix}

Staff at each of the three sites agreed that the Promise Zone initiative encouraged communities and agencies to work together to advance the goals of the initiative—to create jobs, increase economic opportunity, improve educational outcomes, reduce serious and violent crime, and leverage private capital.^x As the Promise Zone partnerships have matured, lead agencies, partnering organizations, and data partners have realized the unanticipated benefits of being designated Promise Zone sites. Staff at partner organizations expressed an expectation that the benefits will likely outlast the 10-year designation. For example, non-profits in Promise Zones were given preference points to increase the competitiveness of their federal grant funding applications; however, it turns out the designation and place-based collaborations provided advantages for state, local, private, and philanthropic grant applications as well. In Philadelphia, a partner stated that “[f]unders were more likely to fund efforts in West Philly because they knew they had the infrastructure in place thanks to Promise Zone efforts.”

The Promise Zone designation requires collaboration across traditional social services agencies, local government, and other stakeholders. This collaboration has encouraged agencies to work together to ensure that the most qualified among them receives the preference points, with funding, when awarded, sharing proportionally and transforming competitive relationships into trusting ones.

Table 1. In fiscal year 2017, the Round 1 Promise Zones had 24 grants awarded for a total of almost \$97 million in federal funding.

| Promise Zone | # Applications | # Grants Awarded | # Grants Awarded with Preference | \$ Funding Awarded |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Los Angeles | 24 | 11 | 5 | \$47,859,998 |
| Philadelphia | 51 | 10 | 9 | \$43,017,337 |
| San Antonio | 3 | 3 | 2 | \$6,070,413 |
| Total | 78 | 24 | 16 | \$96,947,748 |

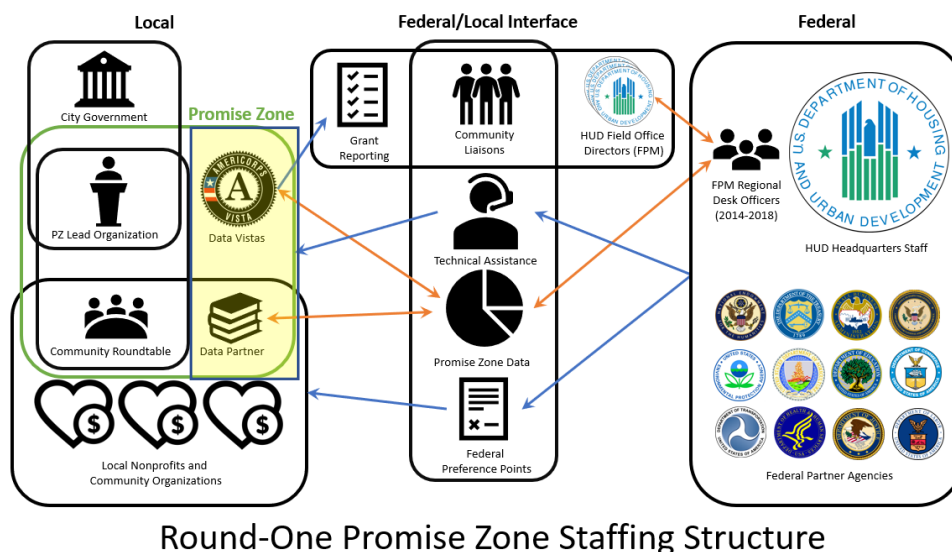
Table 2. In fiscal year 2018 Quarter 1–Quarter 3, the Round 1 Promise Zones had 14 grants awarded for a total of \$14 million in federal funding.

| Promise Zone | # Applications | # Grants Awarded | # Grants Awarded with Preference | \$ Funding Awarded |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Los Angeles | 16 | 4 | 1 | \$13,373,452 |
| Philadelphia | 13 | 2 | 1 | \$930,000 |
| San Antonio | 5 | 0 | 0 | \$0 |
| Total | 34 | 6 | 2 | \$14,303,452 |

Source: Office of Field Policy and Management, October 2018.

The collaborative dynamic also led to capacity building; as more established lead organizations would train and mentor smaller, local non-profits to create partnerships that were beneficial to all. Stakeholders not normally engaged were brought to the table, and in return, the collaborative efforts brought wider attention to community organizations within the Promise Zones. Small organizations, especially those in Philadelphia and Los Angeles, would likely not have been able to obtain grants on their own according to multiple interviewees from non-profit partners and lead organizations in all three sites. With the “hook” of preference points, however, lead organizations and more established partners, such as the Los Angeles Youth Policy Institute (YPI), could suggest that small community organizations focusing on similar issues partner together to apply for a grant. In addition, the Los Angeles YPI could offer back-office management support and facilitate a grant via the Annie E. Casey Foundation to train local organizations on working collaboratively for community development progress. In joining with a large organization, like Drexel University in Philadelphia or YPI in Los Angeles, these smaller organizations received training in proposal writing and grants management from and were able to access the administrative infrastructures of the lead partners.

The Essential Work Performed by AmeriCorps VISTAs



Round-One Promise Zone Staffing Structure

The biggest surprise to all the sites researchers talked with was the usefulness and the essential nature of the work performed by the AmeriCorps **VISTAs**. One local Promise Zone partner stated that “[the VISTAs’] work was critical, particularly given there’s no funding for staffing.”^{xii}

Funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) on an annual basis, the VISTAs have performed a crucial role for partner organizations in the Promise Zones. Five VISTAs—four volunteers and one lead—were assigned in 2014 to report to the lead agency in each Promise Zone. The AmeriCorps VISTAs were tasked with conducting community outreach, recruiting volunteers, organizing fundraising events, and organizing task forces and coalitions, with the broader goal of building capacity and start-up operations within the Promise Zones.^{xii} VISTAs convene neighborhood committees, perform administrative work and follow-up steps, reach out to new partners, and produce communications materials. Each site also has a “Data VISTA” who specializes in data collection and reporting tasks for the program.

In Los Angeles,

“VISTA members are the ‘op[eration]s team’ for the Promise Zone partnership and provide critical support for its working groups. One... VISTA member manages internal and external communication, one supports data and evaluation, and two work as community planners and do some program development work. The... VISTA leader helps to manage the team and supports the Promise Zone’s Leadership Council.”^{xiii}

In San Antonio, where there are currently three VISTA members and a lead volunteer, one VISTA handles communications, one works on data and evaluation and the third is in charge of community engagement. In Philadelphia, where there are also currently three VISTA members, the roles are data and evaluation, housing and public safety, and health and wellness. According to one VISTA, “We are like the wheels of the car... [We] make it possible for committees to run since they otherwise wouldn’t have enough staff time.”^{xiv}

Worth noting is that in all three locations, staff from partner organizations and HUD pointed out that much of what makes the VISTAs so successful in their roles is their energy and enthusiasm for thinking up and implementing new and innovative ideas.

Local Promise Zone lead organizations often reiterated that the work provided by VISTAs was essential. “If you didn’t have the community liaison and the VISTAs, without any funding it would be too hard to keep this type of effort working,”^{xv} said one city staffer. Despite this, none of the three initial urban sites have been able to consistently employ a full contingent of five VISTAs at a time. They indicated that onboarding VISTAs required a lot of effort and time, that some VISTAs left to pursue other opportunities, and that the timing of hiring windows was a complicating factor. Still, the value of pursuing them as a resource is well worth the effort.

City Leadership Buy-In

Round 1 Promise Zone applicants were unique in that they had to already have a Promise Neighborhood, a HUD Choice Neighborhood, or Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation grant. Having one or more of these grants already in place ensured that the site had existing frameworks set up to do collaborative work with partner organizations and to apply for and manage large federal grants. San Antonio had received all three prerequisite grants, which meant local partners had already been identified and convened and could help with the collective impact work from the start.

Because so many of a city’s constituents were involved, because the program offered a real chance for increasing the capacity to obtain federal grants to address long-term problems associated with poverty, and because this effort offered a chance to participate in a “glamorous,” high-visibility signature administration initiative, the mayors’ offices we talked with in all three sites employed **dedicated staff** to support the Promise Zone effort. Also, because the geographic areas were so defined and the goals specific, the attention of mayors’ offices would often be drawn to the Promise Zone, and the city would contribute additional resources to those areas on their own. For example, the city of San Antonio constructed new sidewalks and streetlights to San Antonio’s East Side Promise Zone, Los Angeles provided school supports and street repairs in its Promise Zone area, and all three sites received dedicated staff and office space in city offices. Though **mayors and city managers** sometimes came under fire for “favoring one part of their city over the others,” the real improvements in poverty and education improvement goals, as well as increased city investment, were ultimately a win for the entire area.

Importance of the 10-Year Term

Another important aspect of the Promise Zone initiative has been the program’s **10-year term**. Generally, most program staff interviewed felt that 2 to 5 years would have been too short and would not have allowed for time to build the collaborative relationships needed to see results from the initiative. Many partners felt it would not be possible to establish cause or effect in any shorter timeframe given that the initial Promise Zone goals were to show real changes along the axes of poverty, education, or crime.

There are two caveats to the positive response to the 10-year term: The first was that partners at each site—but Philadelphia in particular—would have liked the ability to produce “quick wins” for their communities. That the Promise Zone designations were announced with great fanfare and then disappeared to all but those working on them discouraged citizens in each of the communities.

Second, HUD's commitment to the Promise Zones for the full 10-year term was in doubt and appeared more dubious as time went on. By 2016, communication from HUD headquarters greatly decreased, and the availability of preference points was declining. One staffer from a lead organization pointed out that "[o]ver time, as partner agencies start to realize there aren't resources forthcoming, they eventually stop participating (in meetings, et cetera)."^{xvi}

A city staffer said, regarding the need for dedicated resources to maintain collaborative systems, "People don't appreciate the cost of keeping the network healthy. It takes a lot of time to check in with partners when you're engaged in collective action. The five VISTAs, HUD liaison, and city Promise Zone manager represent a lot of that connective tissue. At that minimal level, that's already seven people."^{xvii}

The current state of the Promise Zone program is unclear. In the FY18 (fiscal year 2018) Appropriations Bill, the 10-year designation agreements for all urban Promise Zones were honored, and HUD is continuing to support the Promise Zones within the Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM). Whether other federal agencies will continue to offer TA (technical assistance), and most importantly preference points or bonus points on grants, is not known. Under FPM, a new focus has been brought to the work of HUD, and new resources, such as the evaluation and data analysis function, are being launched. This report examined only the first-round urban promise zones; thus, it is unclear how closely their experiences match those of the communities who joined in the next two rounds. Still, there were recommendations that seem likely to benefit all.

V. Recommendations from the Field

As researchers interviewed key staff from the lead and partner agencies in San Antonio, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, some common themes emerged as key recommendations for similar place-based initiatives in the future.

Make It Sustainable

Many staffers observed that the Promise Zones initiative flagged a bit over time, and markedly so at the change in administrations when ongoing priorities for HUD and other federal agencies had not yet become clear. In Los Angeles, there was concern that interest at the federal level was waning in the initiative as many of their inquiries and concerns went unaddressed by federal agencies formerly active in the Promise Zones initiative. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) or interagency agreement (IAA) among partnering federal agencies put in place at the point of the designation would likely be helpful in ensuring continuity over terms beyond administrations, an important component of any place-based project with longer-term goals.

Ensure that There Is High-Level Buy-In (Local and Federal)

At the local level, buy-in from city mayors proved to be a key factor in building and sustaining work in the first-round Promise Zones. In Los Angeles, where the city served as the lead implementation agency, the involvement of the mayor's office was crucial in lending credibility to the initiative and drawing participation from community agencies across the area. Support from the mayor's office in San Antonio was also essential to building community interest and cooperation from potential partner agencies.

At the federal level, too, **buy-in** was mentioned as a critical component. In the first 2 years, the Promise Zone interagency steering committee provided direction and guidance for the initiative and

offered points of contact and coordination at each partner agency. Once the steering committee disbanded, however, levels of support from the partnering agencies began to subside, and partner organizations in the Promise Zones noticed less and less engagement and fewer opportunities for preference points in applying for federal grants. Had the Promise Zone steering committee continued, or even re-formed after the administration change in 2016, the initiative would likely have retained its momentum at a point when the implementing agencies were starting to gain their footing with regard to capacity building and working toward community improvement in their areas.

Have a Dedicated Project Director at Headquarters

Frequent turnover in HUD headquarters staff devoted to working on Promise Zones has led to a lack of clarity in roles. In Philadelphia and Los Angeles, the community liaisons (CLs) have been able to help navigate this bureaucracy, but in San Antonio, the CL role has been less effective in that capacity. Having **a dedicated project director at HUD headquarters** would help to streamline communications and clarity, particularly if partners on the ground had a direct line to access that project director.

Keep Sites and Stakeholders Involved

Many people who spoke with us discussed the need for ongoing communication, both from federal headquarters to the partner agencies and between Promise Zone designees. Field office staff noted that while partner agencies produced reports for HUD headquarters on their work as designees and short-term outcomes from grant funding, HUD could have done much more to tell the story of the work being done in the Promise Zones and the results being achieved there in order to maintain interest and support for the initiative.

Convenings for Promise Zone designees were also mentioned as a strong recommendation for fostering ongoing involvement as well as sharing best practices, peer-to-peer resources, and cross-training.

Have a Clear Organizational Structure

Many interviewees observed that a clarification early on of roles and communication lines—for example, who reports to whom, what the roles are of the field office, headquarters staff, et cetera—would be important, as the lack of this kind of clarification proved difficult in Promise Zones implementation. While the community liaisons through HUD have provided varying levels of effectiveness in the three initial designee cities, all of the sites expressed the need for one central “backbone agency” at the federal level to provide leadership in logistics, convenings, communications, and evaluation metrics. Another staff member noted that a “Promise Zones champion at the federal level would be invaluable.”

Provide Technical Assistance for On-the-Ground Partners

Technical assistance was mentioned repeatedly as a need that has largely gone unmet in the Promise Zones initiative but that would be valuable in any new place-based initiative. Three areas, in particular, stood out as important mentions:

- **A matrix of data to be collected for evaluation.** Partner organizations described difficulty in trying to figure out what indicators should be used in evaluating Promise Zone work in the absence of guidance from HUD or other federal agencies. In Los Angeles, the partner agencies worked on establishing their own strategic goals and determining indicators related to those

goals. In all three cities, *partners indicated that data collection would have been much more deliberative if they had been given an evaluation framework from the federal agencies.*

- **“Mini-grants” to organizations for collective impact training.** One idea that was presented was for lower dollar amount grants to be made to partner agencies to pay for staff training in collective impact work. Many community service organizations are effective in their specific areas but become siloed in their specificity, and partnering with agencies that focus on different areas does not come naturally. In the Promise Zones, partners expressed that working across different areas—for instance, education-focused nonprofits partnering with homeless service providers and substance abuse treatment organizations—took a lot of practice and trust and represented a large shift in how these agencies work.
- **A media kit for guidance in communications.** Staff in all three locations discussed how guidance and training in communications and media relations regarding explaining the Promise Zone initiative would have been helpful. All three sites described having had difficulty explaining what the Promise Zone designation meant—and just as importantly, what it did *not* mean—to residents, potential partner organizations, and residents in the broader area. In San Antonio, the designation was initially not communicated accurately by the mayor, resulting in some very public controversies around funding and how it was being spent. A media kit provided by the lead federal agency would provide direction in how to discuss and describe any designation in future initiatives.

VI. Conclusions

This assessment focused on the initial set-up, execution, and resultant program structure of the first round of the first three urban Promise Zones sites. Several common factors were identified by all three sites and headquarters as essential for making the Promise Zones work.

Participants in the Promise Zones shared recommendations for future place-based initiatives.

As we interviewed key staff from the lead and partner agencies in San Antonio, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles, some common recommendations emerged as to what is most important to ensuring the success of this effort and the success of efforts like it.

Most importantly, a dedicated project director at HUD Headquarters is needed. There has to be a known point person who is seen and knowledgeable about the program and who can be approached for information and direction. Also essential, according to the sites we talked to, is supporting and maintaining the links and resources needed to keep sites and stakeholders involved with partner agencies in Washington, D.C. These include a HUD community liaison on the ground, interacting regularly with the communities in person, and an infrastructure in Washington, which will keep them connected to HUD and federal partners. One of the most valuable things lead agencies felt they had to offer was a connection to Washington, D.C., and with a navigator to help communities find and obtain resources, these programs will remain strong.

When rolling out new initiatives or continuing with this one, communities asked for a media kit for guidance in communication with partners and the community. They wanted help to better communicate what the value was for the partners when the benefits are neither immediate or tangible at the outset.

Other things the Promise Zone leads felt would be valuable would be a chance to offer more technical assistance for on-the-ground partners or to give mini-grants to help train local small partners for collective impact and provide “quick wins.”

Finally, all staff we talked to requested there be one matrix of data requirements or report templates to be used for the collection of evaluations and reporting, preferably one that matches other reports or data sites already collected. The multiple asks require using very limited staff or VISTA time which could better be used toward the goals of furthering positive collective impact in their communities.

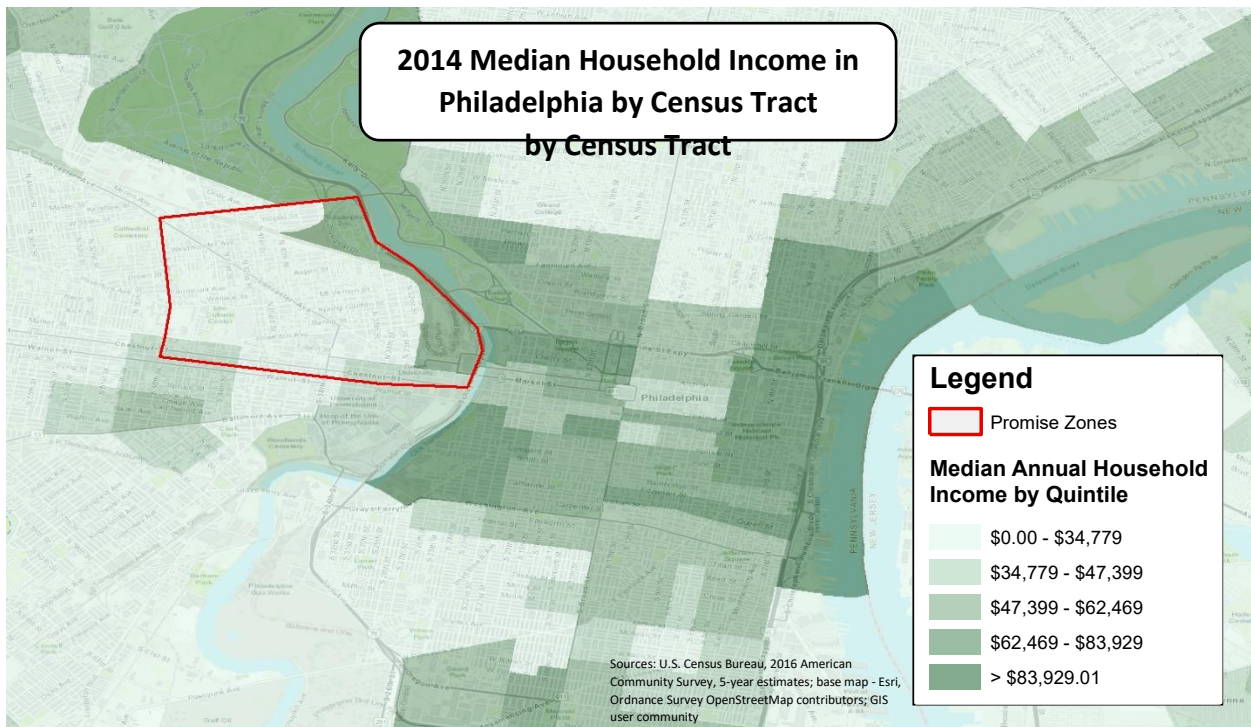
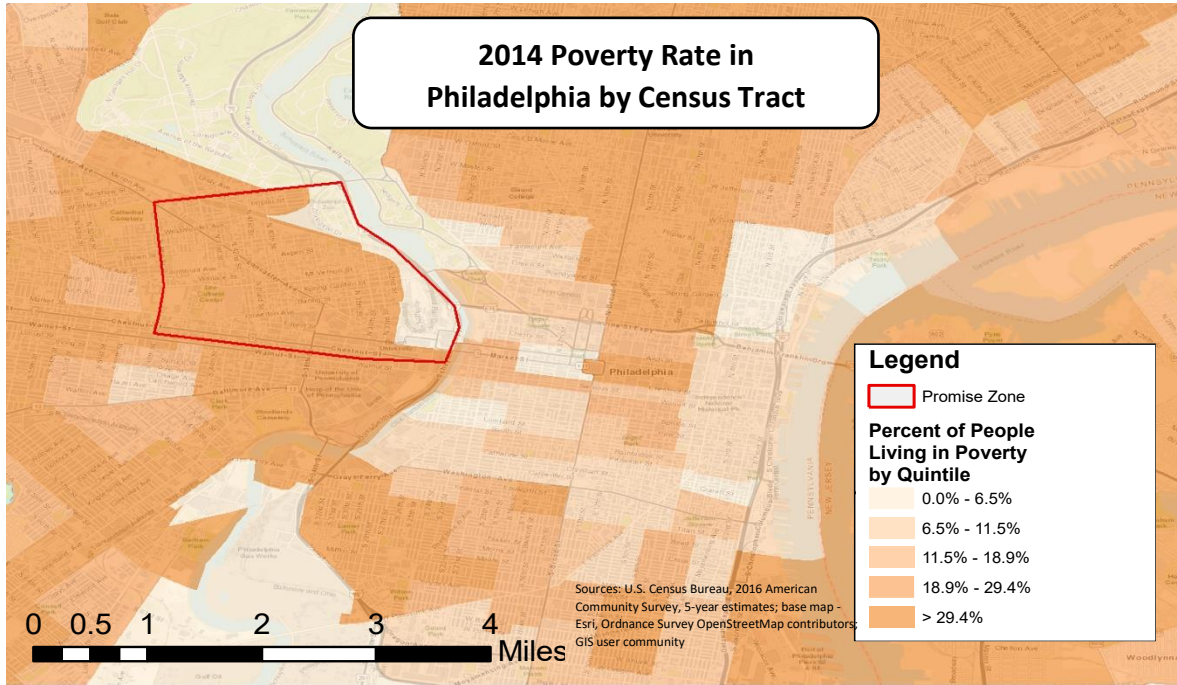
In sum, an effort like Promise Zones can be effective in catalyzing action at the local level despite low initial inputs if valuable intangibles are given such as:

- Recognition from state and federal government officials. This conveys credibility and legitimacy to the local lead organization who dedicate the most time and effort to the work of the programs and help gain the cooperation of other local partners.
- Help in navigating the “black box” of the federal government. HUD contacts at the local level give Promise Zone partners someone to talk to in person who understands local issues and who has responsive connections to HUD and other federal resources to help find and provide information on how to apply for and get resources for their communities.
- Support for local HUD community liaisons from HUD headquarters. A known, named head of the Promise Zone effort communicates that Promise Zones are a real program and that they have someone looking out for them at the federal level.

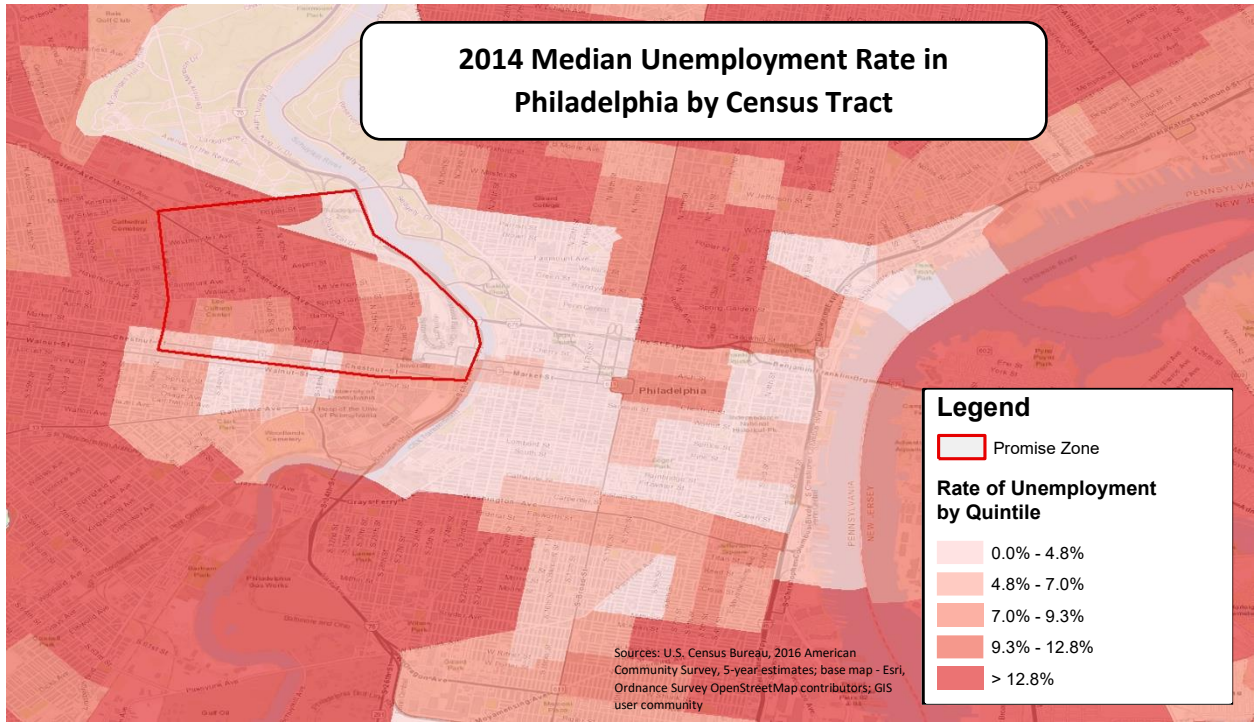
Lastly, there has to be a promise of tangible resources at the end of this process. Federal grant dollars, training, VISTAs, and staff attention have to appear during the process or else the very busy partners will drift away. The Stone Soup approach can work up to a point, but eventually, someone has to come up with the carrots, onions, beef, and salt, or you are just left with a well-boiled pot of water that nourishes no one.

Appendix A: Promise Zone Maps and Figures

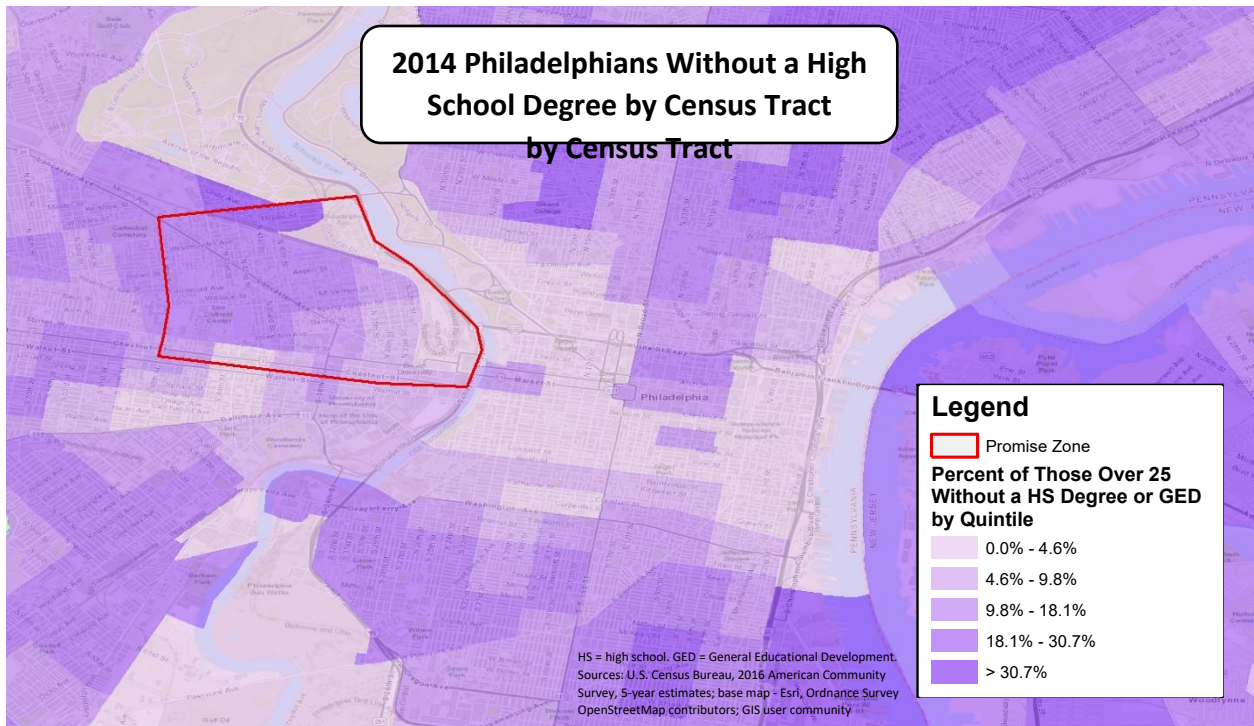
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



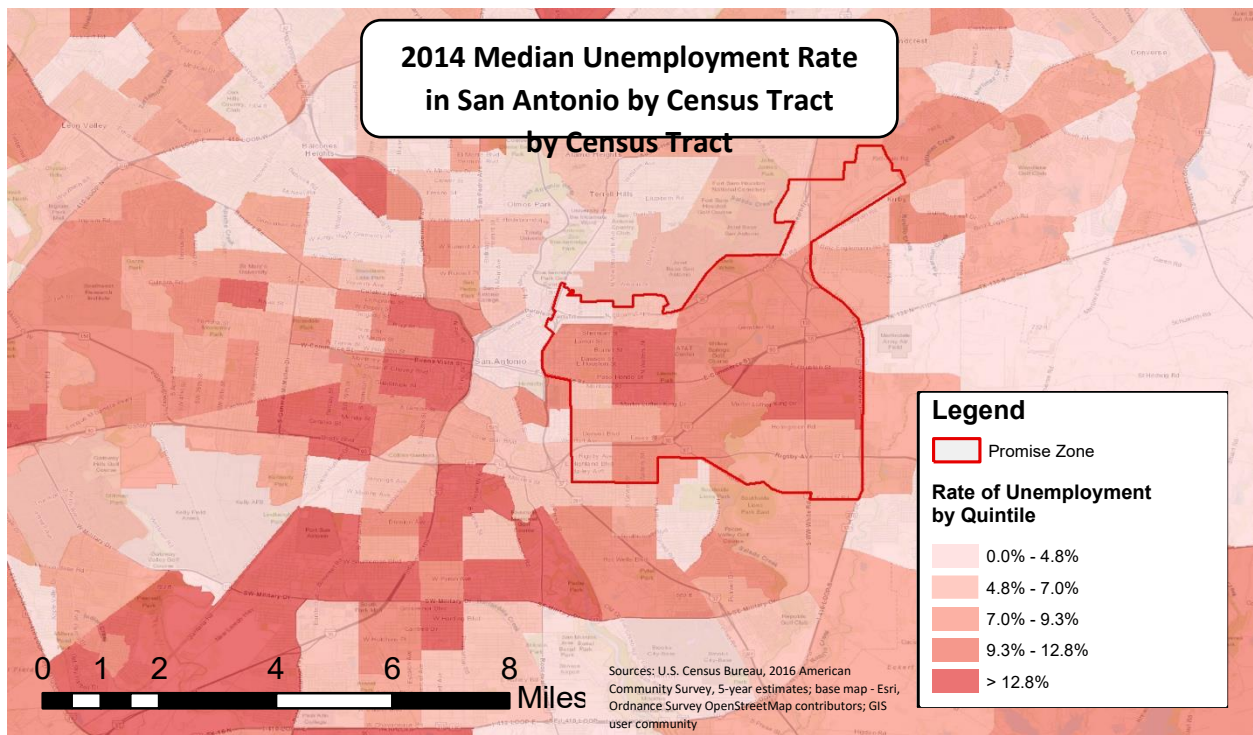
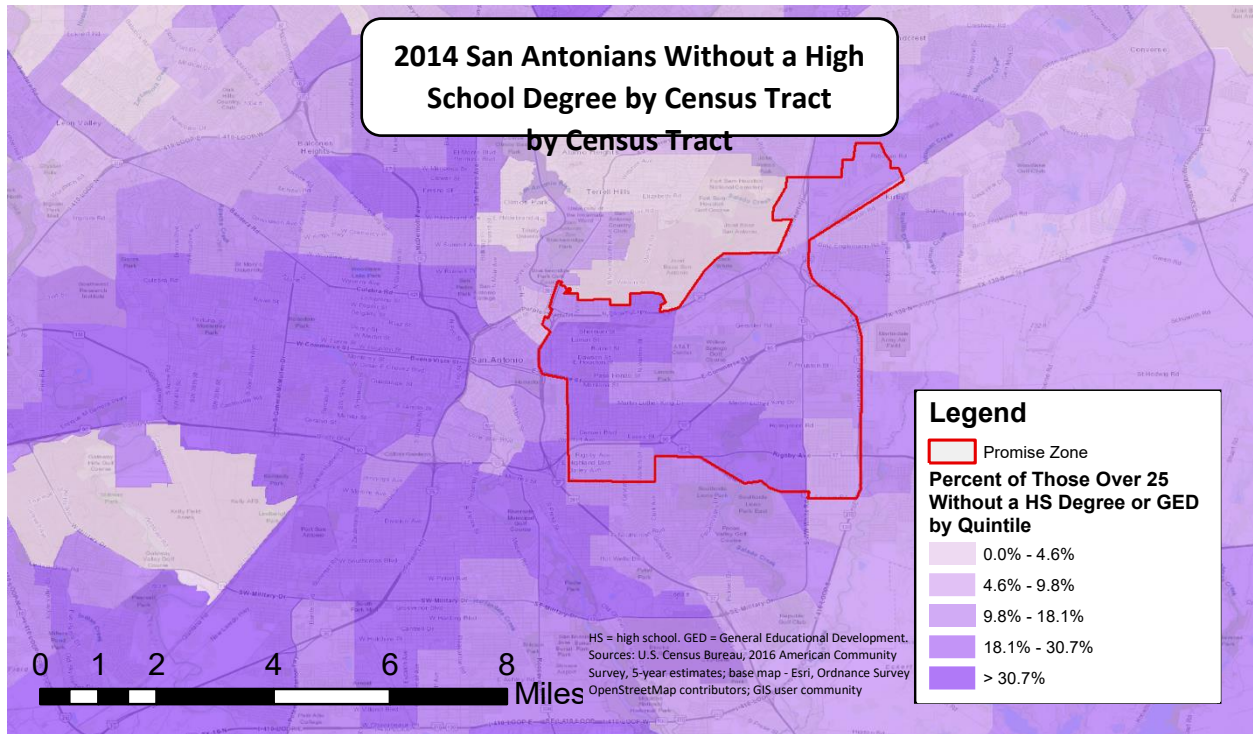
2014 Median Unemployment Rate in Philadelphia by Census Tract

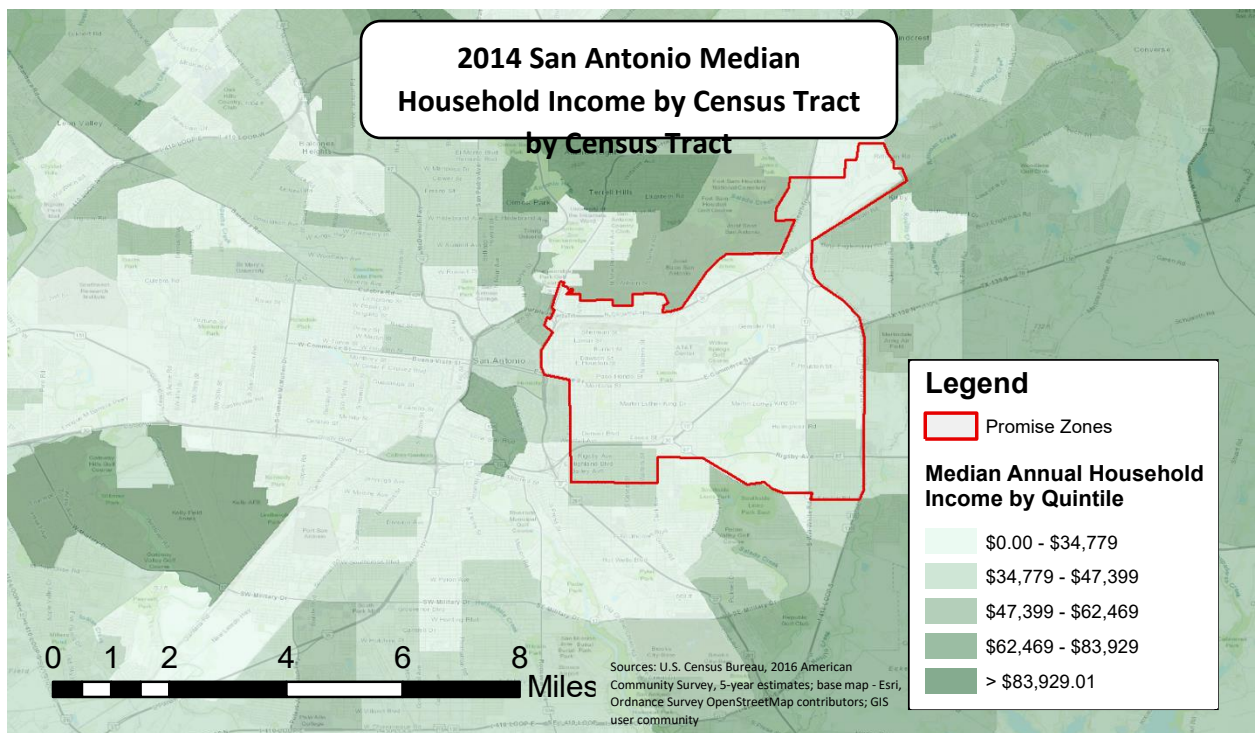
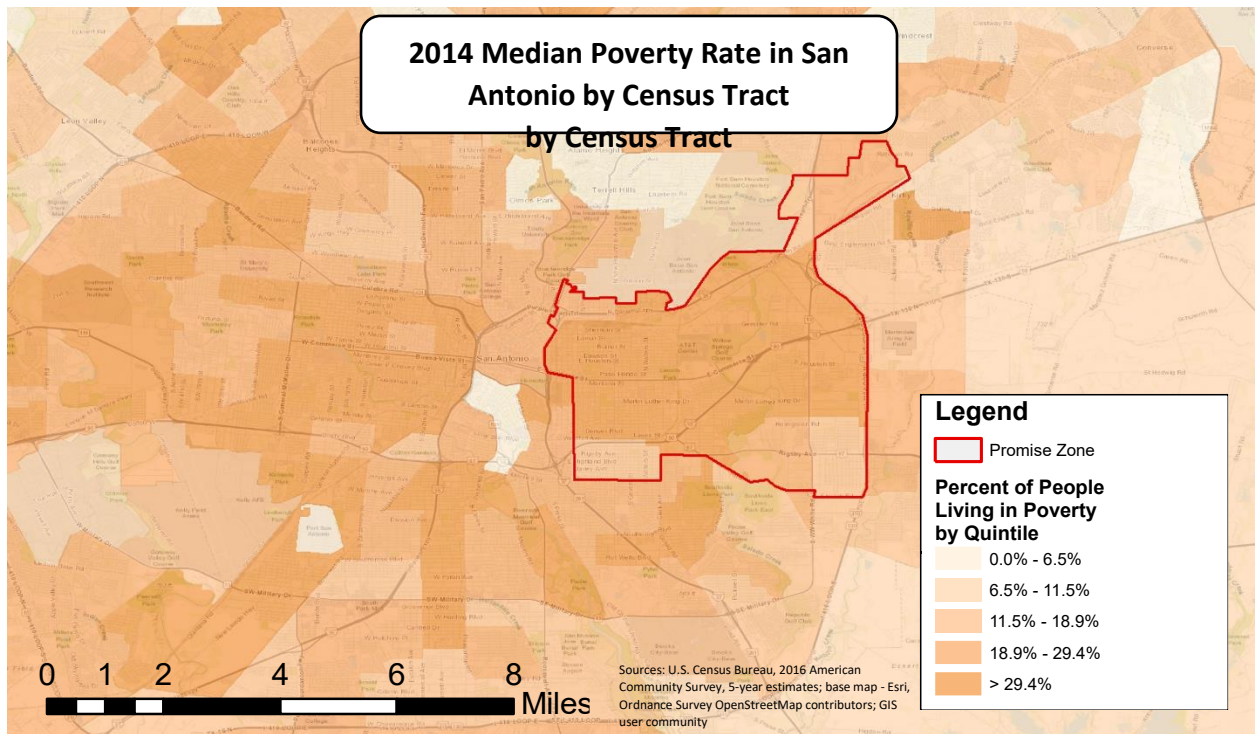


2014 Philadelphians Without a High School Degree by Census Tract

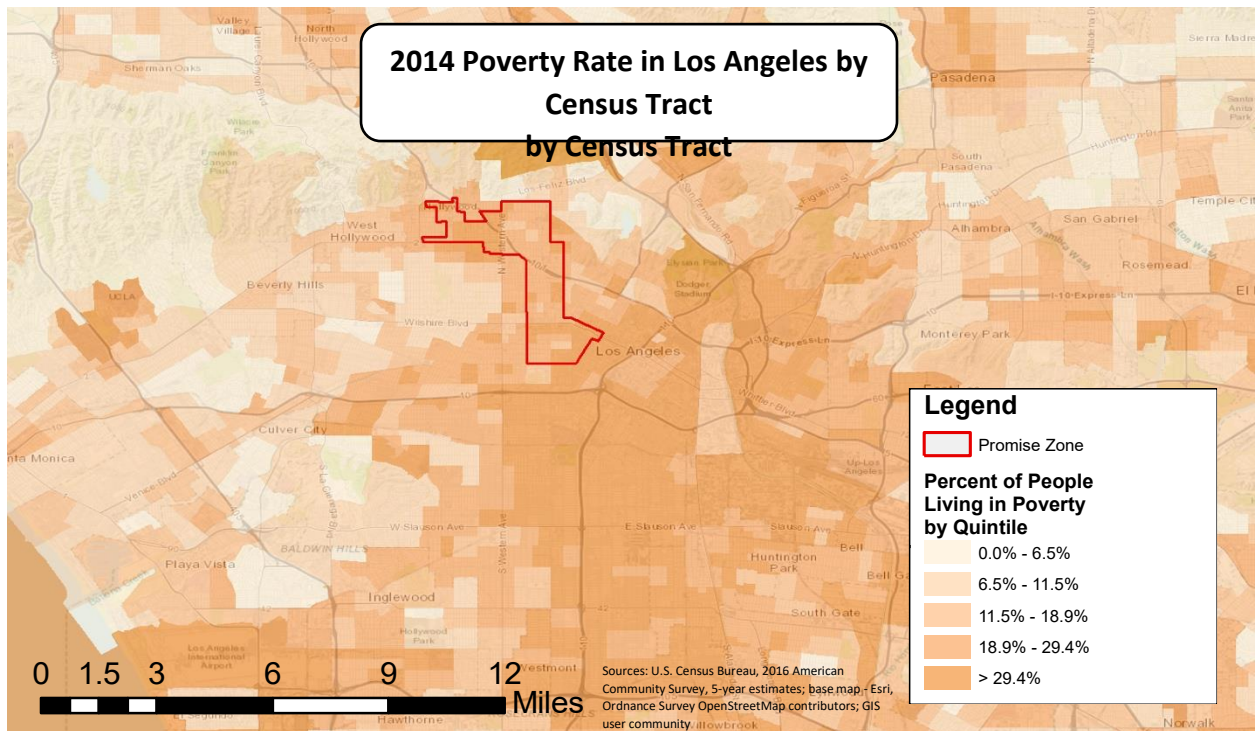
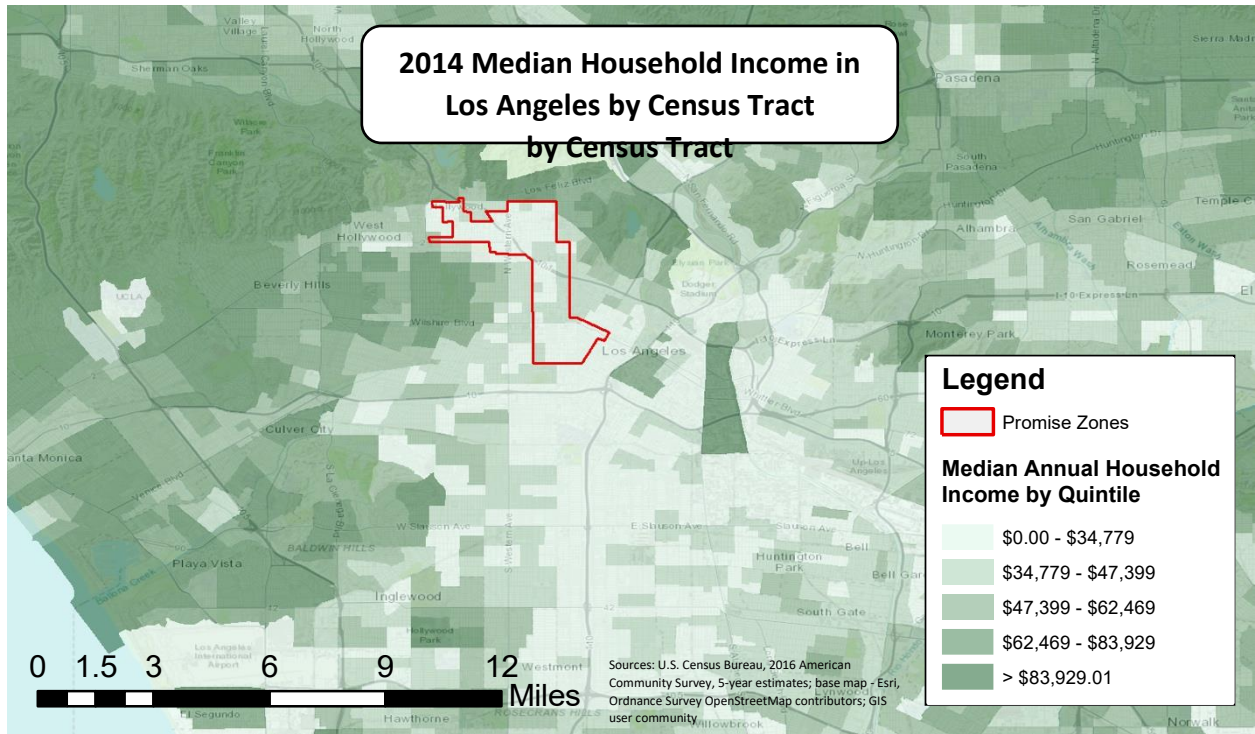


San Antonio, Texas





Los Angeles, California



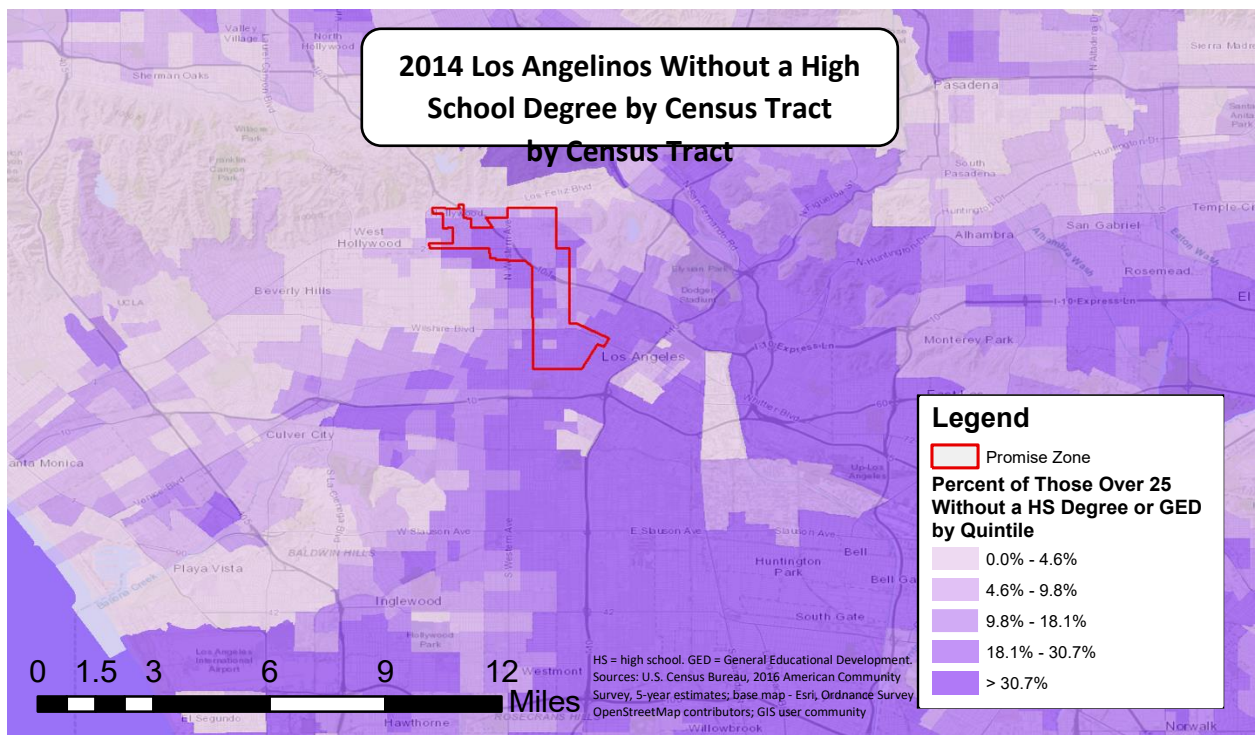
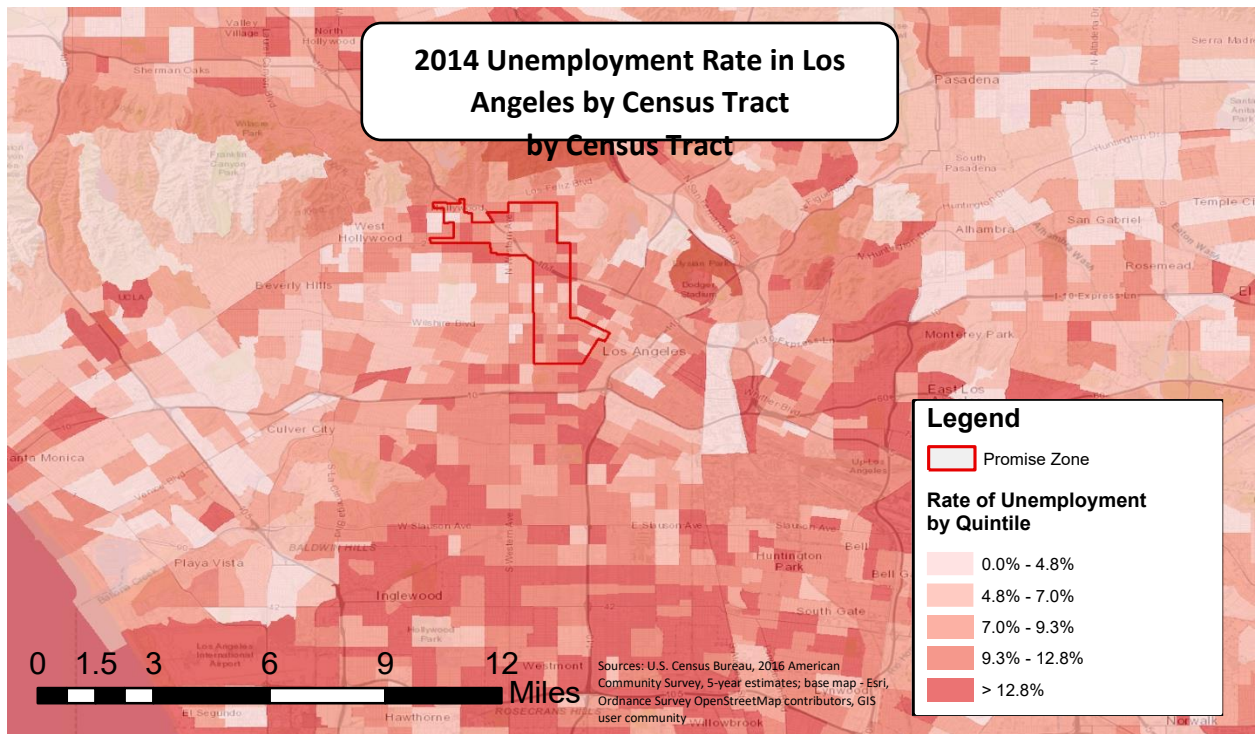
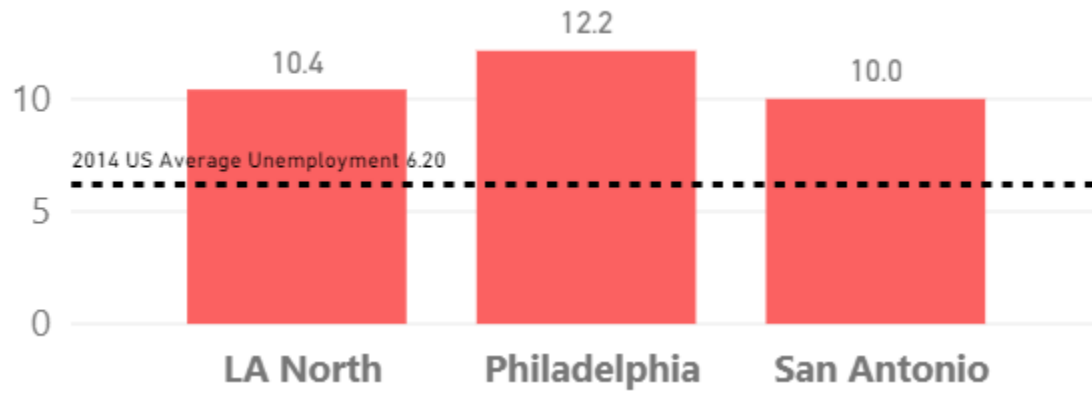
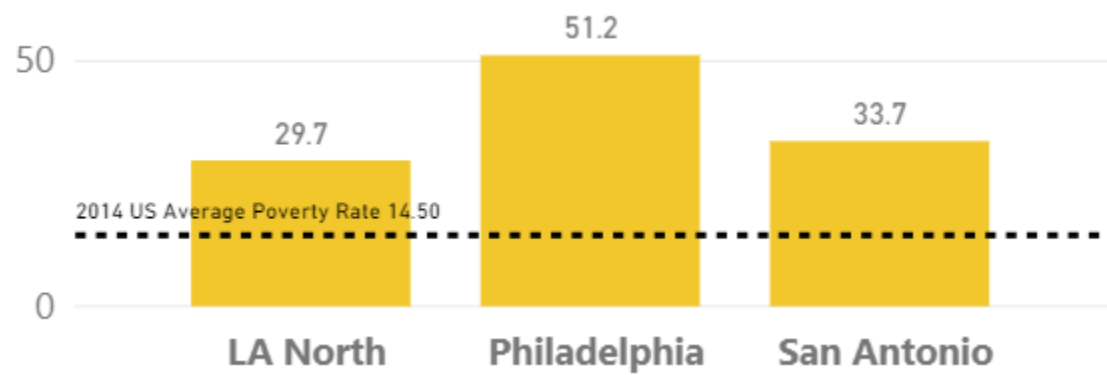


Figure 1. 2014 Unemployment Rates by Promise Zone



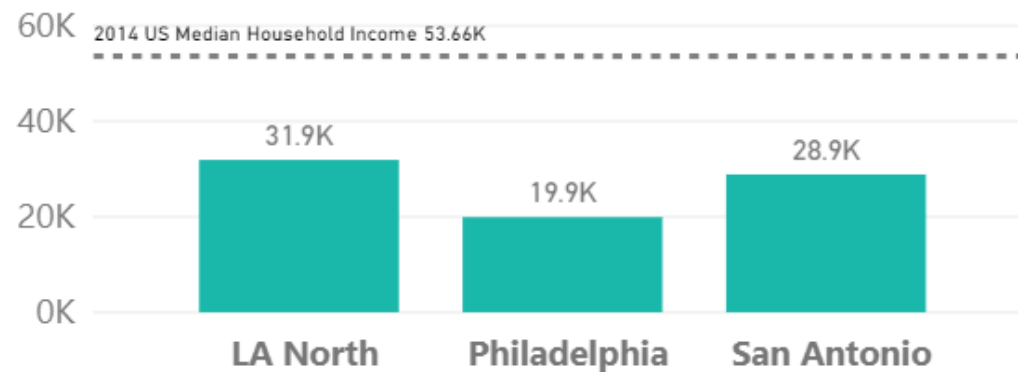
LA = Los Angeles.

Figure 2. 2014 Poverty Rates by Promise Zone



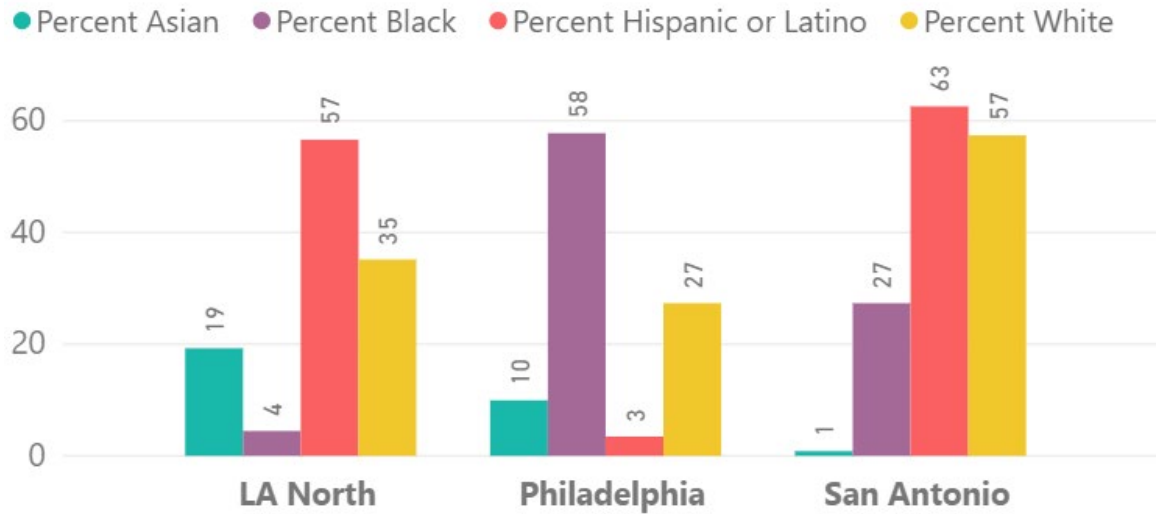
LA = Los Angeles.

Figure 3. 2014 Median Household Income by Promise Zone



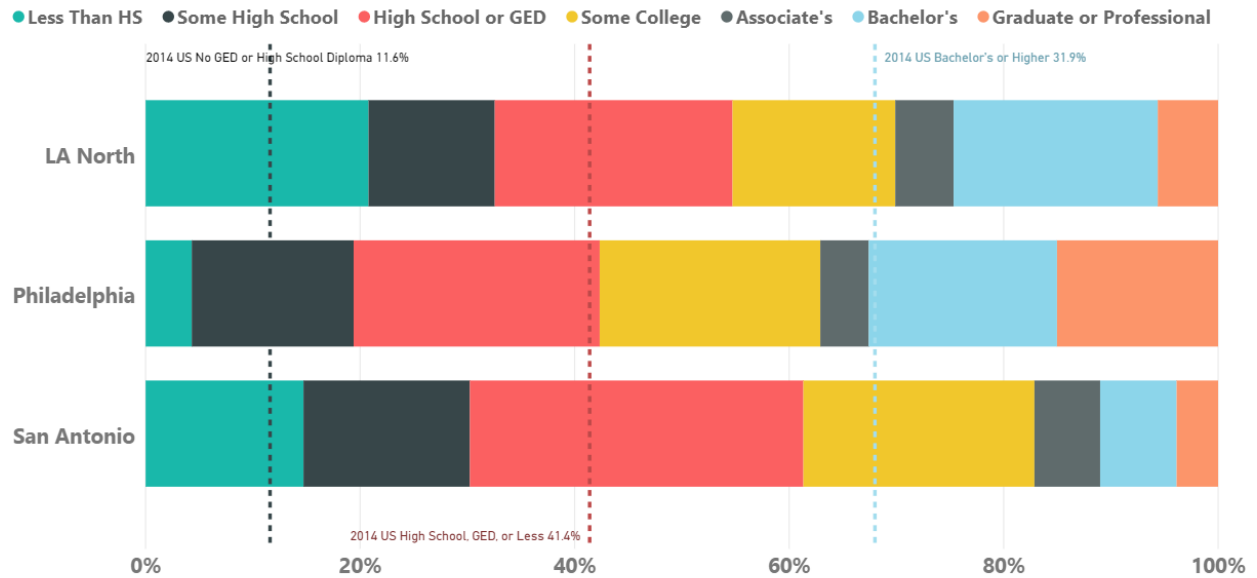
LA = Los Angeles.

Figure 4. 2014 Racial and Ethnic Demographics by Promise Zone



LA = Los Angeles.

Figure 5. 2014 Educational Attainment by Promise Zone



HS = high school. GED = General Educational Development. LA = Los Angeles.

Appendix B: Interagency Meeting Minutes

Promise Zones Stakeholder Meeting

Thursday, June 12, 2014

PolicyLink's Washington D.C. Office

1200 18th Street, NW Suite 200

Welcome and Introductions

Judith Bell, PolicyLink, and Brian Smedley, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Brief Remarks from the White House

Roy Austin, Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity, Domestic Policy Council

- Austin shared highlights from the work underway in the first 5 communities designated as Promise Zones, and he expressed excitement about the additional 15 Promise Zones that will be announced over the next 3 years. He highlighted the increase in the graduation rate in the San Antonio Promise Neighborhood, which is now part of Promise Zone, from 46 to 84 percent. Austin also shared that the administration is taking lessons learned from the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative and Promise Zones as it implements the My Brother's Keeper Initiative.

Policy Updates

Luke Tate, Senior Policy Advisor, White House Domestic Policy Council

- Tate highlighted upcoming policy and personnel changes, including the nomination of Secretary Shaun Donovan for the Office of Management and Budget Director and Julián Castro as HUD Secretary. Castro will bring experience with performance-based neighborhood redevelopment thanks to his work with the multiple place-based initiatives in San Antonio which are now all a part of the Promise Zone.
- Tate expressed that the administration is looking at opportunities to strengthen Promise Zones by adding to the list of federal resources available to Promise Zones. Tate also suggested that the federal government needs to take on humility in understanding its role in revitalizing neighborhoods.
- Tate announced that senators will lift up the Promise Zones model in the coming weeks, and that non-profit representatives should reach out to their senators to encourage them to participate.

Updates Regarding Efforts of Current Promise Zones Designees

Paul Monteiro, Director of AmeriCorps VISTA

- Paul shared details about the AmeriCorps VISTA model, which focuses on capacity building rather than direct service. AmeriCorps VISTA is celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

- The five current Promise Zones have a total of 20 VISTAs and 5 VISTA leaders currently deployed. As more Promise Zones are designated, AmeriCorps hopes to convene all Promise Zone VISTAs at the same pre-service training.

Nora Gilbert, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Gilbert shared the following updates:

- **Kentucky Highlands** has focused on building out Promise Zone infrastructure. Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation (KHIC) completed listening sessions in all eight Promise Zone counties, which received some press coverage. Kentucky recently launched a Promise Zones website: <http://www.kypromisezone.com/partners>. Based on the listening sessions and other input, the stakeholders are putting together a Promise Zone strategic plan. The Promise Zone is staying coordinated with Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), which developed in close coordination with Congressman Hal Rogers and is being led by Governor Beshear.
- **Choctaw Nation:** USDA had a productive visit to the Choctaw Nation about a month ago. Doug O'Brien, Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development, and Leslie Wheelock, Director of the Office of Tribal Relations, went to the Nation with Promise Zone Coordinator Sally Smyth and regional staff. They met many Choctaw Nation leaders from different program areas as well as some non-profit partners. The Choctaw Nation has a new chief—Gary Batton. Former Chief Pyle had served for 13 years as assistant chief and 17 years as chief, so this is a big change for the Nation. The new leadership is embracing the Promise Zone work, but as expected, there has been some restructuring and opportunities to bring new team members up to speed. Like Kentucky, Choctaw Nation is holding public meetings. In addition, at the recent National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) meeting, the Choctaw Nation successfully passed a resolution in favor of the president's 2015 budget proposal for Promise Zone tax credits. Language can be found here: <http://www.ncai.org/resolutions/2014-mid-year-resolutions>.

Sylvia Bolivar, HUD

Bolivar shared the following updates:

- **Philadelphia:** On June 2nd, the Promise Zone met with the Regional Administrators of the federal agencies based in Philadelphia. The federal agencies committed to providing resources and information regarding technical assistance and funding opportunities. The Philadelphia Promise Zone established five committees that meet on a regular basis to refine the work plan. The five committees consist of: Education, Public Safety, Housing, Economic Opportunity, and Health and Wellness. There is a commitment from the federal partners to attend the committee meetings as needed. The HUD regional office is working with the Promise Zone to organize a Housing Resources Event for the residents. At this event, there will be information provided regarding rental assistance, homeownership, foreclosure prevention, and rehabilitation counseling.
- **Los Angeles:** Last week the mayor announced the GREAT STREETS Initiative. A stretch of Hollywood Boulevard that runs through the Choice Neighborhood and Promise Zone will

be one of the first 15 Great Streets in Los Angeles. The goal of the Great Streets Initiative is to provide economic revitalization, increase public safety, enhance local culture, and transform communities. A working group has been established consisting of nine agencies to coordinate resources and strategies for this initiative, including Department of Transportation, Department of City Planning, Department of Cultural Affairs, Department of Street Services, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Street Services, Bureau of Engineering, Bureau of Street Lighting, Bureau of Sanitation, and the Department of Water and Power and Economic and Workforce Development.

- **San Antonio:** San Antonio is the only city in the nation that has received the three signature grants of the Initiative: Choice Neighborhood Initiative Grant, Promise Neighborhood Initiative Grant, and the Byrne Criminal Justice Grant. In order to deepen their collaborative activities, they have submitted 10 grant applications and are currently working on 5 grants. These five grants are in the writing stage. They have expanded the service boundary to include the entire Promise Zone. In addition, the city of San Antonio has committed \$19.5 million for public infrastructure, housing gap financing, and neighborhood improvements. To date, the city council has already allocated \$8.8 million to the Wheatley Courts redevelopment project.

Reports on Initial Meetings of Stakeholder Committees

Lisa Cylar Miller, PolicyLink

- Cylar Miller encouraged stakeholders to join one of the four subcommittees—Outreach, Communications, Policy, and Research. The Research team is working with the interagency team to consider evaluation options. The Outreach team is building greater public and political will for Promise Zones. The Communications team is doing messaging work with public affairs staff. The Policy team is focused on ensuring that policy language contributes to the intended goals of Promise Zones.
- *Luke Tate, White House Domestic Policy Council*, shared that research about the Initiative’s impact will likely be driven by academics unaffiliated with the Administration and funded by foundations.

Overview and Update on 2014 Competition

Sylvia Bolivar, HUD

- Bolivar reminded attendees that the public comments period is closing on June 16th.

Questions and Closing Comments

- Lisa Cylar Miller, PolicyLink, shared that the next subcommittee meetings will occur in early July.
- Tracey Ross, Center for American Progress, shared updates on their recent event related to the launch of a new publication regarding Promise Zones, *A Renewed Promise—How Promise Zones Can Help Reshape the Federal Place-Based Agenda*.

<http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/PromiseZones-report2.pdf>).

- Ursula Wright, U.S. Department of Education, announced a potential connection with the president's ConnectED initiative.
- Valerie Piper, HUD, expressed excitement about the local-hire provision for AmeriCorps VISTAs working in Promise Zones.
- Rob Cox, AmeriCorps VISTA program, shared that the application process for VISTAs is fully aligned with the second round of Promise Zone site applications.
- Valerie Piper, HUD, shared that while it's too early to know if Promise Zones are winning federal grants, Promise Zones are certainly applying for federal grants. Luke Tate, White House Domestic Policy Council, added that some Promise Zones are focused on strategic planning at this point and will apply for federal grants later.
- Valerie Piper, HUD, said that HUD expected to map federal programs supporting and preferencing Promise Zones annually and that this list will likely change from year to year.
- Lisa Cylar Miller, PolicyLink, encouraged attendance at the annual Promise Neighborhoods National Network Conference, which will be held June 23–25. The Conference will be co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and the Promise Neighborhoods Institute at PolicyLink. <http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/>.
- Diana Zarzuelo, Neighborhood Centers Inc., asked about what has not gone as planned with Promise Zones.
 - Rob Cox, AmeriCorps VISTA, shared that VISTAs will probably not focus on evaluation.
 - Luke Tate, White House Domestic Policy Council, reminded that exogenous events happen, such as Julián Castro's departure from San Antonio and the rise in opiate usage in Kentucky.
 - Judith Bell, PolicyLink, said that the Promise Zone designation in Los Angeles generated great local engagement, resources, and leadership, but that the rest of Los Angeles was not pleased by the special attention focused on one area when many of the city's neighborhoods need additional support.
 - Luke Tate, White House Domestic Policy Council, shared feedback that the act of applying was itself very useful in building coalitions and power at the local level.
- Judith Bell, PolicyLink, thanked everyone for their commitment and engagement.

--- END ---

Appendix C: Sample Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Urban Promise Zone Lead Agency Points of Contact - San Antonio

Introductions:

The purpose is to learn from you and determine how we can design and support effective partnerships like Promise Zones in the future. More specifically, we'd like to (1) gain a better understanding of how your Promise Zone was launched; (2) understand if participation in the program created any perceived effects on the behavior of participants, local partners and others; and (3) finally, we'd like to get your input on what you feel are the most important components if you were designing a similar program to launch today.

[Reiterate this is not an evaluation.]

[Request permission to record the session.]

[Verify note-taker is ready and answer any concerns of the respondent.]

Q. What did it mean to be a Promise Zone the first year or two after it was announced? Did the official designation agreements, which went out in 2016, change that, and how?

Q. What role did the potential of preference points for federal agency grants have in determining what actions your Promise Zone focused on first?

Q. What were the first goals or objectives your Promise Zones worked toward? (See original Promise Zone application.)

Q. How have the 2016 official designation agreements with HUD affected your Promise Zone's focus and actions?

Q. What do you feel is the most effective resource a program like this could provide to help (your locality) achieve its goals?

Q. How do you use the Promise Zone designation to promote your mission? For example, do you use it to seek funds from the federal government or do you use it to attract business?

Q. What was the single most useful resource you gained access to because of your participation in the Promise Zone program?

(Were there perceived effects on the federal resources flowing into the area?)

Q: Does your Promise Zone have AmeriCorps VISTAs onboard? (Checking info from Responses from 2017 Promise Zone Data Team Interviews.) If yes, can you say a little about what they do?

Q. Does your Promise Zone make use of your Federal Liaison?

Q. Have you applied to more grants that offer preferences or taken advantage of technical assistance?

Q. Has participation in the program created perceived effects on the behavior of local partners? On how local entities view and organize partnerships?

Q. In what ways, if any, did the application for and the receipt of the Promise Zone designation affect what projects and priorities your area sought to address?

Q. In your experience, has participation in the Promise Zone program had any effects on the efficiency or coordination of efforts to address your zone priorities?

(If yes:) Q. Can you tell me about those?

Q. Lastly, what would you recommend programs like this in the future do to support the work that you do?

[Thank for time.]

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- ⁱ Interview, HQ Staff. August 2018.
- ⁱⁱ Interview notes: July 13, 2018 with former PMF.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Interview notes: August 1, 2018, current community liaison.”
- ^{iv} Interview, lead organization representative, July 2018.
- ^v Interview, Lead Organization, August 2018.
- ^{vi} Interview, VISTA Volunteer, July 2018
- ^{vii} Interview, Community Liaison, July 2018.”
- ^{viii} Interview, Field Officer, July 2018
- ^{ix} Interview, San Antonio Lead Organization Representative, 2018. Similar sentiments expressed in Philadelphia and LA.
- ^x “Promise Zones: Supporting Community Change, *An Interview with Margeaux Akazawa.*” *PD&R Edge* (2015). U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-trending-121415.html>
- ^{xi} Interview, Philadelphia, July 2018.
- ^{xii} CNCS presentation, 2014.
- ^{xiii} Notes from Promise Zone Peer Exchange, 2015.
- ^{xiv} Interview, Philadelphia Vista volunteer. July 2018.
- ^{xv} Interview, Philadelphia City Office of Economic Opportunity, July 2018.
- ^{xvi} Interview, YPI, Los Angeles Lead Agency. August 2018.
- ^{xvii} Interview, Philadelphia City Office, July 2018.

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