



PAS MEMO

Centering Wellbeing in Community Co-Creation: WIATT and C4C

By Senchel Matthews and Kathryn Reynolds

Planners are educated and trained to “create great communities for all.” As the field has moved toward equitable development principles, planners have shifted their roles from “experts” who define and decide how a community will be great to “co-creators” who allow community voices and ideas to lead their processes. This shift is essential to unwind generations of inequitable planning policies and ensure that future planning efforts meet the needs of existing residents.

However, community work is challenging. From the perspective of many in planning and government, engaging a community can be slow, messy, and often adversarial. Likewise, from many disinvested communities’ viewpoints, engaging with the government and planners is slow and antagonistic, and it rarely results in changed opinions or decisions. Even with the best intentions, engagement may lead to the loudest voices gaining the most concessions rather than a plan reflecting what all community members want and need. Additionally, most community engagement efforts generate qualitative data that isn’t systematically gathered or analyzed and is often sidelined in favor of more traditional quantitative measures. These challenges underscore the need for a new approach that puts people’s drive for wellbeing at the center of planning decisions to ensure more equitable development.

Two new tools offer planners innovative methods to harness wellbeing in their processes. The Full Frame Initiative’s [Wellbeing Insights, Assets & Tradeoffs Tool](#) (WIATT) provides a method to help both planners and community residents gain robust insights into how a proposed infrastructure or built environment project will distribute its wellbeing benefits and tradeoffs among different constituencies so that plans can be adjusted and improved. And Urban Institute’s [Capital for Communities Scorecard](#) (C4C) assesses proposed local development projects to understand their social, environmental, and economic impacts, weighting the resulting social impact score by the outcomes that the community prioritizes as most important.

When used separately or together, these tools help to ensure that diverse and often disregarded voices within a community are heard, valued, and influential in shaping equitable development outcomes.

This *PAS Memo* introduces planners to WIATT and C4C and explains how these tools offer organized evidence-based methods to structure community engagement, distribute capital project funds equitably, and advance projects that increase individuals’ and communities’ access to wellbeing.



Figure 1. The Full Frame Initiative’s definition of wellbeing encompasses five domains: social connectedness, stability, safety, mastery, and meaningful access to relevant resources (Full Frame Initiative)

Wellbeing as a Catalyst for Co-Creation

Investments in infrastructure and the built environment have largely failed to distribute their benefits equitably, both economically and in terms of wellbeing. This has resulted in further concentration of harm in historically underserved communities.

Two underlying challenges contribute to this situation. First, city and regional planning decisions have not historically prioritized everyone's access to wellbeing. Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities and other people of color have been disenfranchised politically and left out of community engagement processes for built environment decisions that impacted their neighborhoods. Second, public investments have inflicted deep multigenerational harms upon many communities, eroding trust between residents and local governments through repeated engagements with no tangible change or benefit.

Planners have an opportunity to reestablish trust not only by addressing historical wrongs and broken promises, but also by doing things differently. Community co-creation is one pathway toward that end. When planners engage with communities as true partners, we acknowledge that community members are experts in their own lives. The results in terms of what we design and build are more effective, equitable, and sustainable because community members feel a shared sense of ownership over the process and the results. But planning is complicated, especially when we try to incorporate the voices of diverse communities who might not always agree on what they want and need. So how can planners navigate the conflicts within communities that can cause roadblocks to co-creation and partnership?

Wellbeing provides a universal framework and shared language to bridge divides within communities. A new dialogue emerges when residents are asked to reflect on the things that constitute their wellbeing—their sense of connection and belonging, their ability to exert influence, their safety, their sense of stability, and their access to material resources. This new understanding of how development will impact residents' wellbeing allows planners to create new solutions alongside communities.

For example, a common roadblock to co-created planning processes is conflicts arising from generational differences. Young people and elders may express very different needs, and planners may feel the need to prioritize certain voices over others. But a wellbeing lens invites planners to dig deeper to find more innovative solutions. Residents may disagree on how a development project will impact their sense of safety. Concerned about crime, elders may advocate for law enforcement to be present. Concerned about being unfairly targeted, young people may advocate for the opposite. A wellbeing lens invites people to see that while the ways they access safety may be different, their fundamental drive for safety is universal. This common ground provides the foundation for new conversations about how to approach safety in ways that make people comfortable without feeling targeted.

Both WIATT and C4C provide new methods for changing the relationship between planners and community members

and finding new solutions grounded in people's universal drive for wellbeing.

The Universal Human Need for Wellbeing

Research shows that across our many differences as human beings, we are all hardwired to seek out what the Full Frame Initiative defines as "[wellbeing](#)": a combination and balance across five domains (Figure 1, p. 1):

- **Social connectedness:** feelings of connection and belonging
- **Stability:** predictability and control over personal circumstances
- **Safety:** protection from danger, harm, or loss
- **Mastery:** a sense of purpose and the ability to exert influence
- **Meaningful access to relevant resources:** Self-determination of relevant and important basic needs met with resources that are easy to access without shame, danger, or hardship.

Wellbeing is about being whole, as individuals and communities; our access to wellbeing is vital for health, hope, and resilience.

While the human drive for wellbeing is universal, access to wellbeing is not. This is due to inequities based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other factors. These inequities are often reflected in and reinforced by how the benefits and burdens of public investments are distributed, with harms concentrated and accelerated in historically underserved communities.

These harms often take the form of "unsustainable tradeoffs." In the context of wellbeing, tradeoffs recognize that progress in one aspect of wellbeing often comes at a cost in another—such as a job promotion that offers more responsibility (mastery) but that cuts down on time with family (social connectedness). Different people may weigh tradeoffs differently; what one person finds "worth it," another may not. Tradeoffs are unsustainable when, for an individual or group, the net change is negative: the gains in one aspect of wellbeing are less than the losses in another. In the case of the built environment, this might take the form of changes to a neighborhood intended to increase safety, but that in the process undercut residents' experience of belonging and their sense of stability of place.

When the physical spaces that support wellbeing are unseen, undervalued, and destroyed through decisions made about the built environment, it is experienced as "wellbeing stripping." This sows lasting community distrust of development projects. As such, decisions about public investments—the amounts invested, and the projects funded—can lead to unsustainable tradeoffs. These disproportionately affect historically underserved communities within the built environment, where decisions can result in long-lasting damages to health and quality of life for generations.

Illuminating the wellbeing benefits and tradeoffs of development can predict and prevent the undermining of people's and communities' access to wellbeing before breaking ground on a project, allowing adjustments for greater wellbeing equity.

The universality of the wellbeing framework provides a shared language that reduces “othering” or pitting traditional planning expertise against lived experience.

WIATT: Prioritizing Wellbeing in Planning

The Wellbeing Insights, Assets & Tradeoffs Tool (WIATT) is both a tool and a process for putting resident wellbeing at the center of planning. Unlike other planning tools and community engagement processes, WIATT fundamentally shifts how governments and residents partner on, undertake, and experience development projects so that government officials and communities share power in the planning process.

The Full Frame Initiative developed WIATT in 2022 at the invitation of the U.S. Census Bureau’s Open Innovation Lab. Responding to the lack of wellbeing indicators used to assess community health and vibrancy, WIATT was designed to shift the focus of planning from economic impact to wellbeing, context, and history. To date, WIATT has been or is being piloted in four cities: Austin, Texas; Kingston, New York; Cleveland; and Boston.

As a tool, WIATT allows planners to gather, analyze, and display tens of thousands of survey responses about how a proposed project will distribute its wellbeing benefits and burdens. The result is a valuable set of data about how the community’s wellbeing could be impacted by a proposed change. WIATT surveys ask residents to reflect on:

- **Social connectedness:** How will the project impact people’s sense of belonging and ability to connect to those who matter to them?

- **Safety:** How will the project impact people’s sense of safety?
- **Stability:** How will the project impact people’s ability to keep their routines and deal with life’s hassles?
- **Mastery:** How will the project impact people’s sense of influence, purpose, and choice in their lives, skills, and confidence?
- **Meaningful access to relevant resources:** How will the project impact people’s ability to get their material needs met without shame or danger?

Through both quantitative and qualitative data, survey responses reveal the assets in a community that are vital for wellbeing but might not always be visible to outsiders. These include the places, businesses, or environmental features that increase people’s access to wellbeing that could be threatened by development. The tool then compares respondents’ demographic data with census and American Community Survey data to identify population groups that were underrepresented in previous outreach and data collection efforts.

Embedded in WIATT is a process to ensure that the wellbeing insights collected reflect the community’s diversity. One reason planners have historically failed to center people’s wellbeing is the reality that some voices are included and heard more than others. Rebuilding trust between residents and local government is key to reaching voices that were unheard during previous data collection efforts.

To do this, WIATT involves residents every step of the way. Departing from the typical approach of outsourcing communi-

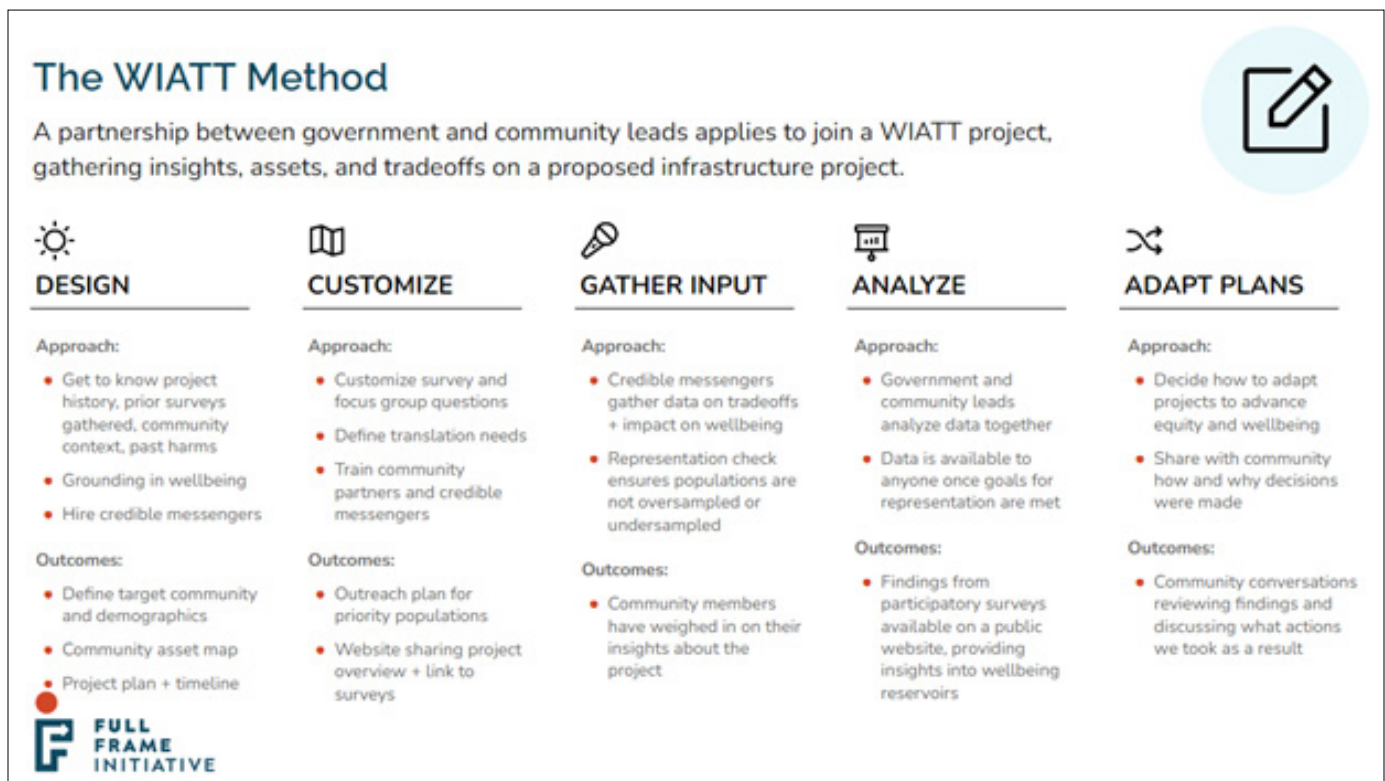


Figure 2. The five-step WIATT process: design, customize, gather input, analyze, and adapt plans (Full Frame Initiative)

ty input, resident leaders known as “credible messengers” help to gather and interpret data from their neighbors. These credible messengers also inform survey design and implementation, as well as sensemaking sessions in which survey respondents have the opportunity to see the data and verify its accuracy with government officials. Finally, credible messengers have a seat at the table with government officials and planners as they discuss how to adapt and improve development plans based on the data collected.

The WIATT Process

The WIATT process offers a comprehensive approach to community development that involves both the government and the community (Figure 2, p. 3).

A local government initiates the use of WIATT through a partnership with the Full Frame Initiative when a significant public good project is proposed. Serving as the community lead, a trusted community organization with a proven track record of effective collaboration works closely with the government and the Full Frame Initiative. This organization also identifies credible messengers—trusted and respected community leaders who serve as a liaison between their community and the government during the WIATT process—to help gather and interpret WIATT data from residents.

After credible messengers are selected, a phase of planning, partnering, and tool customization commences. During this phase, the Full Frame Initiative trains credible messengers in the core concepts of wellbeing and tradeoffs, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to effectively gather insights from their neighbors. They also play a crucial role in customizing the WIATT tool and process to ensure that

the survey questions are easily understandable to residents and that the engagement strategy effectively reaches the identified target population.

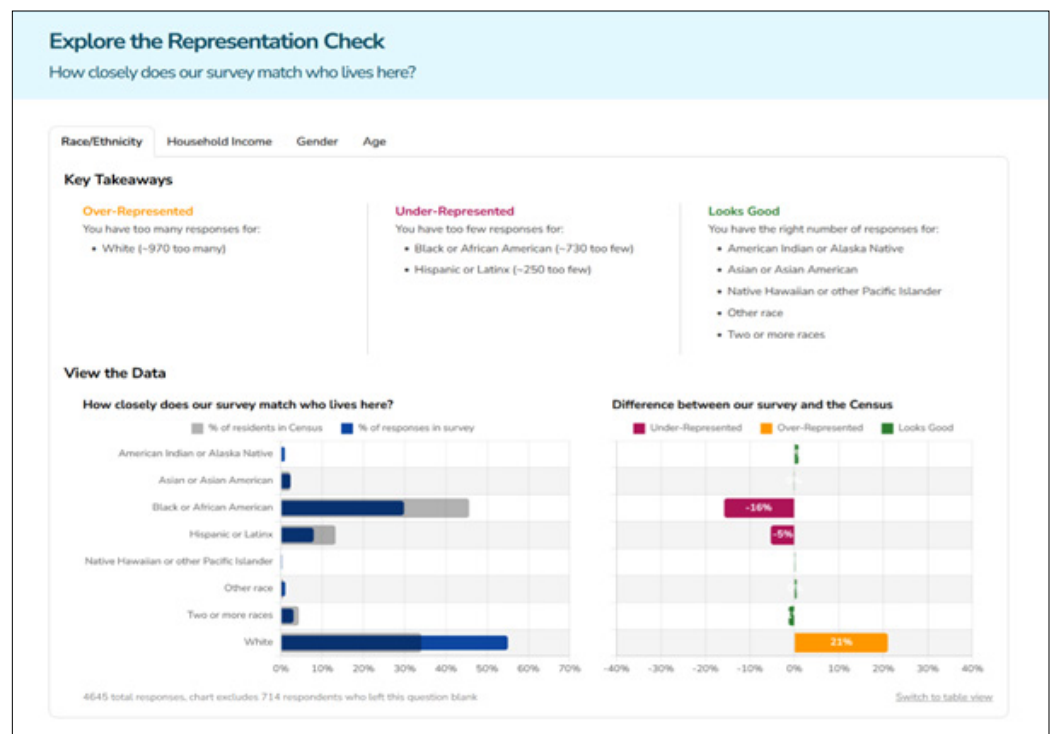
Subsequently, the government lead, community lead, and credible messengers, along with the Full Frame Initiative, collaborate to design a survey and outreach plan to gather quantitative and qualitative data from the community. Credible messengers and the community lead handle data collection accurately and comprehensively. The entire team then verifies the data, cross-checks it with other sources, and conducts quality checks.

During the representation check, the team compares survey respondents’ demographic data with census and American Community Survey data to ensure certain populations are not over- or undersampled (Figure 3). To encourage government officials and planners to use data representing the full diversity of the community, survey results are not visible for review until representation is achieved. If the data does not meet the agreed target demographic percentages, multiple rounds of community outreach are conducted to ensure the data is representative and reliable.

The next phase is a collective effort in analysis and meaning-making. All partners work together to interpret the collected data, identify key themes and patterns, and facilitate sensemaking sessions in the target population community. This collaborative approach ensures that the community’s voice is heard and influences the project.

Finally, the credible messengers and community lead advocate for the community’s wellbeing in discussions with the local government to ensure that the project aligns with the community’s needs and interests, using the insights

Figure 3. WIATT’s representation check function compares survey respondents’ demographic data with census and American Community Survey data to ensure that certain populations are not over- or undersampled (Full Frame Initiative)



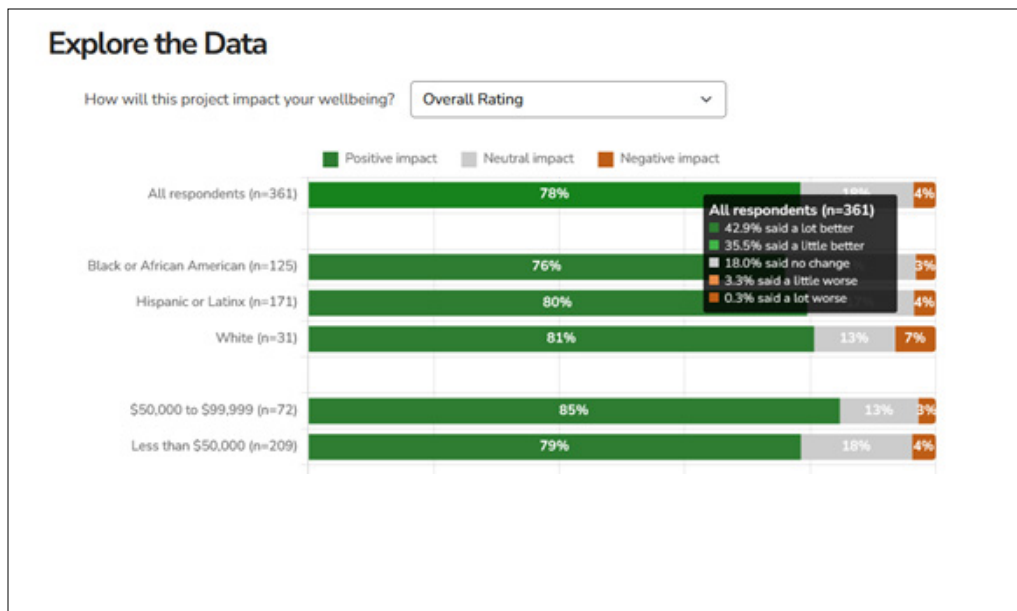


Figure 4. WIATT displays survey results on a public dashboard that offers options to explore insights broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, income, and other demographics (Full Frame Initiative)

gained from the WIATT process to support their arguments. Government staff can then work to adjust the project plans based on insights gained about the distribution of benefits and tradeoff impacts on different population groups (Figure 4). For instance, if the data shows that a certain group is disproportionately affected by the project, staff can direct the project developer to modify the plans to address this imbalance.

As a cloud-based tool accessible via the Internet on various devices, WIATT is highly adaptable. It can be tailored to different contexts or scenarios based on community needs, whether

as a means for community members to gather information about a specific issue or for local planners to engage with the community and gather feedback on a proposed plan. Specific components of WIATT can also be used independently from the full WIATT process, such as the representation check that prevents undersampling of key demographic groups or the credible messenger model to engage residents. By understanding when and how to use WIATT, planners and community members can confidently collaborate to create more equitable community plans, knowing that the tool is flexible and effective in any situation.

WIATT: More Than a Tool

Putting wellbeing at the center of decisions in the built environment won't happen because of one tool, or one process. It requires a wholesale shift in the normative practices not only of planning, but also of the ecosystem of for-profit, nonprofit, and community partners who work with government agencies to envision and implement projects. WIATT works in multiple ways to create that shift.

- As a **mindset**, WIATT aspires to revolutionize community planning by prioritizing wellbeing over budgets, ensuring the work is done by and with the community, and using an understanding of context and history to facilitate healing and repair. It provides accurate community representation by gathering input from those typically left out or harmed in the past.
- As a **method**, WIATT involves a partnership between government and community leads who apply to join a WIATT project. This process gathers insights, identifies assets, and considers tradeoffs on a proposed infrastructure project,

focusing on distributing wellbeing benefits and tradeoffs. The method enables planners and communities to make informed decisions about how, when, whether, and what to build.

- As a **movement**, WIATT collaborates with changemakers nationwide committed to shifting how we design and build in our country. By joining WIATT, partners become part of a national cohort of leaders working together to create broader systems change.

The primary goals of the WIATT process are to prevent the worsening of inequities and restore and regenerate communities through thoughtful planning. The WIATT process ensures genuine community representation by focusing on wellbeing, not just financial considerations, and working with the community rather than imposing decisions upon them. Understanding context and history allows planners and communities to incorporate healing and repair into their work, leading to more meaningful and equitable community development.

WIATT in Action: Transforming Urban Development in Cleveland through a Wellbeing Orientation

Historically, the gains promised by urban development projects haven't been shared equitably—and neither have the harms. From urban renewal that destroyed vibrant communities to inequitable resource distribution that continues to impact communities of color, systemic racism has led to some voices being amplified while others are excluded, undercut, and unheard. Decisions have considered financial benefits and burdens of development more than people's wellbeing.

Cleveland's North Coast on Lake Erie is no exception. The area has been marred by a history of exclusion, especially for Black residents. Highways, railroads, and a 65-foot bluff make it nearly impossible to walk and bike to Lake Erie's shore safely. So, when city decision-makers put forth a vision for a North Coast that everyone could enjoy, previously excluded residents had every reason for distrust. Why contribute if you have never been listened to before?

A new approach was needed to shift how city officials and residents partner, undertake, and experience development projects. The City needed a way to move beyond traditional community engagement questions and open comment opportunities to uncover what truly matters to people: how these projects will affect wellbeing. Crucially, officials needed a better way to ensure that key voices across the city were included. WIATT offered a process and a technology to help the City and its many communities navigate the tradeoffs of change.

Planners have historically failed to prioritize people's wellbeing because some voices are included and heard more than others. Cleveland was undergoing significant change with a new mayor committed to putting people and neighborhoods first, delivering high-quality city services, and leading bold change. With new appointees across every department, the City wanted to move forward with a framework that centered communities and equitable development. Cleveland city staff learned about the Full Frame Initiative's wellbeing framework and new WIATT pilot through word of mouth. After a series of conversations, the Full Frame Initiative selected Cleveland as

a pilot city due to the alignment in values between the two soon-to-be partners.

As with the other cities chosen to be WIATT pilot sites, Cleveland went through a thorough vetting process and committed to the following partnership terms:

- **Statement of interest:** The local government must complete a statement of interest form to join the WIATT pilot, assessing the project, the community it will impact, and the historical context of governmental interactions with that community.
- **Project identification:** The local government must identify the infrastructure or housing project early enough to allow residents to co-create the engagement strategy and provide feedback during each phase.
- **Site visit:** The local government must allow the Full Frame Initiative to conduct a site visit to understand the local context and engage with stakeholders.
- **Community-centered approach:** The local government must agree to center the community throughout the process, working collaboratively with credible messengers and a community lead (NGOs, faith-based institutions, etc.) from the project's inception.
- **Data ownership:** The local government must make all data collected accessible to the community on a public platform.
- **Compensation for messengers:** The local government must pay credible messengers for their time and expertise. If the municipality lacks funds, it must work with Full Frame Initiative to find philanthropic partners to cover the cost.
- **Data use:** The local government must use the data from the WIATT tool to mitigate harm and ensure that tradeoffs are fairly distributed, preventing the burden from falling disproportionately on vulnerable communities.

The Full Frame Initiative launched the WIATT process in partnership with the City of Cleveland in July 2023. Staff were especially excited about using WIATT's representation check



Figure 5. Credible messengers reviewing residents' feedback at a sensemaking session (Senchel Matthews)



Figure 6. Cleveland's principal planner Dan Shinkle presenting WIATT results to residents (Senchel Matthews)

function. As described above, the representation check matches demographic data with federal data to ensure the data sample mirrors the community, with survey results withheld until representation is achieved. This feature allowed staff to identify and engage key demographic groups historically underrepresented in development projects.

Using the representation check on existing data from previous lakefront engagement efforts revealed significant underrepresentation of Black or African American residents, Hispanic or Latino residents, youth, elders, and residents with incomes less than \$50,000. The Full Frame Initiative partnered with residents, city planners, the mayor's office, civic organizations, and philanthropic leaders to engage in hundreds of conversations with these residents over six months to understand how the proposed North Coast project would impact their access to wellbeing (Figures 5 and 6, p. 6).

This partnership between government and community resulted in three transformative outcomes. First, the WIATT process **increased civic engagement and influence over local decisions**. During the WIATT process, credible messengers prioritized data collection in Wards 5 and 14, two neighborhoods that have historically faced disinvestment and low rates of voter participation. This resulted in higher response rates from Black, Hispanic, and low-income populations than previously achieved with community engagement consultants in the 12 months prior. Credible messengers also partnered with the city to interpret the data, explore tradeoffs, and develop recommendations for adapting the North Coast plans. Cleveland residents and government officials are resetting decades of distrust so a new vision of the North Coast can emerge that centers resident expertise and wellbeing.

Second, **as new perspectives emerged, the project transformed to prioritize equity and wellbeing**. Because the WIATT survey questions are rooted in the Five Domains of Wellbeing framework, residents' responses illuminated the tradeoffs and benefits to wellbeing that the North Coast project would bring about. In response to the WIATT process, the City made significant changes to its design approach, including gathering more data from vulnerable populations, extending the original timeline to facilitate more community dialogue, and working closely with residents to address the key findings. Consequently, WIATT effectively showcased that the community is diverse, with varying needs and priorities, rather than a homogenous entity. The community-generated recommendations identified new perspectives to bring into the development process, including:

- *Concerns around safety*, which led to the exploration of ways to approach resident safety that make people feel comfortable visiting the lakefront without feeling targeted by security or police.
- *Residents' distrust of the project* and how the city could provide more communication about the project and what is happening with residents' input.
- *Concerns about belonging*, which led to insights on how the City could pair lakefront investments with

neighborhood investments to illustrate how the project benefits residents across the city.

This information is shaping the City's planning decisions and investment priorities, creating a waterfront that is physically accessible and welcoming to all.

Third, **a new power dynamic is emerging between residents and public servants, with ripples extending beyond the lakefront**. With community members taking a more active role in decision-making and priority setting in WIATT, the City is exploring how to establish credible messengers as a mainstay of its practice in other development projects. Residents report feeling a sense of pride and mastery from their experience—from developing new relationships with the City and having their insights heard to influencing decision-making and seeing their wellbeing reflected in planning. Early indicators show increases in civic engagement beyond WIATT and responsiveness from the City in designing projects that reflect the community's wants and needs. City officials and residents alike see the potential for transformation when wellbeing equity is the basis for decision-making for Cleveland's North Coast and beyond.

Challenges of WIATT

WIATT presents a transformative approach to community engagement in planning. However, it's crucial to recognize the challenges and limitations associated with its implementation. Planning in communities with a history of neglect, betrayal, and devastation can be particularly challenging, often leaving both the community and planners drained and frustrated. Planners frequently enter these communities unaware of the trauma and repeated disappointments residents have endured. Additionally, residents are often not informed about budget constraints, timelines, department capacities, and other limitations that can impede more authentic engagement strategies.

Genuine engagement with a process like WIATT can unearth deep-seated issues, such as community anger and distrust stemming from past inequities. It can also reveal conflicting community values and desires that planners must navigate. This complexity requires planners to be responsive and sensitive to the community's historical context and current dynamics, ensuring that the planning process acknowledges and addresses these underlying challenges.

Another potential barrier is the mandate that credible messengers receive compensation for their time, which could pose financial challenges for local governments with limited funds. Moreover, the WIATT process is unsuitable for any use case that does not allow for flexibility or a slower timeline that allows for reparative interactions, trust building, and meeting residents where they are—even if it impacts strict timelines that many planners have to balance during community development projects. The WIATT process can take six to eight months. Demanding more than just a check-the-box approach to engagement and feedback, it necessitates a fundamental shift in mindset, rejecting rigid timelines and

budgets in favor of a more holistic and inclusive approach centered around community engagement, feedback, and project adaptation. However, the WIATT team is optimistic about the future of this approach, believing that investing in genuine community involvement will yield more sustainable and equitable outcomes.

Thanks to generous philanthropic support, the Full Frame Initiative is piloting WIATT in the four cities mentioned above at no cost to the participants. Though the technology is not yet ready for widespread use, the Full Frame Initiative is currently exploring future implementation opportunities once the pilot phase is complete. If you are interested in any aspect of the WIATT process or technology, please [reach out](#) to the Full Frame Initiative to begin the conversation.

C4C: Turning Community Feedback into Decision-Making

The WIATT process identifies community members' local needs and priorities using a method that checks for representation and inclusivity. Another tool, the [Capital for Communities Scorecard](#) (C4C) developed by the Urban Institute, is helpful to employ at the next stage in the development process to determine whether proposed development projects have the potential to meet those community needs.

C4C is a web-based survey that uses information entered by any party interested in analyzing the prospective social benefits of many different project types based on community needs and priorities. The web-based platform is free and open use, allowing a range of users—from investors to city officials to planners—to enter information about a project and assess potential project outputs against communities' priorities.

To evaluate the potential social impact generated by development projects, C4C uses standard criteria across six impact domains:

- Affordable and accessible housing
- Community wealth building
- Social services and amenities
- Transportation and connectivity
- Environment
- High-quality jobs

What makes C4C unique compared to other project evaluation tools is that the final social impact score is weighted based on the communities' priorities across those impact areas. Community priorities are entered into the tool by the user, who is asked to do so by actively engaging the community and using lessons from this engagement and/or referencing existing neighborhood plans. In this way, C4C is a natural next step after a community provides feedback through WIATT to truly test whether the resulting development will match their needs.

How C4C Works

C4C is a tool used to assess the potential social impact of a development project when the project is in the pre-development or planning phases. C4C can be used by a variety of

stakeholders to assess the social impact of a local development project, and therefore the use cases vary as well. Because questions ask for detailed project information, the tool is most easily completed by city officials, planners, project sponsors, investors, or some combination of these stakeholders who have access to a pro forma or deeply understand the contours of the planned project. Community members can also benefit from the tool indirectly.

Users can [access the tool](#) on Urban Institute's public website. They enter their email address to receive a unique project link for their project (Figure 7). This link can be shared with multiple users who can all contribute to filling out the scorecard simultaneously.

When users access the tool, they first enter the project type—real estate, small business, industrial, commercial, or mixed use—and the web survey loads impact questions that are tailored to that project type.

The tool's first set of questions is on community goals and priorities. In this section, the user enters detailed information about how they have engaged the community; whether they provided supports to ensure that input was collected from vulnerable community members, such as those with disabilities or limited English proficiency; and if they consulted any local plans or elected officials. This section asks the user to rank each of the six impact areas by their assessment of the community's priorities (Figure 8, p. 9).

Users then enter information about the project in each of the six impact areas. As users enter information, the survey adapts. For example, at the beginning of the affordable and accessible housing section, users are asked about the type of housing being built (rental, owner-occupied, or a mix). The subsequent questions presented in this section depend on the answer to this initial question.

The tool takes all project scores across the six social impact domains and creates an overall social impact score to indicate

Capital for Communities Scorecard

Welcome to the Capital for Communities Scorecard!

Thank you for your interest in assessing the potential impact of your project or business on the surrounding community.

To proceed to the Assessment Tool, please enter your email address in the box below. A survey link will be sent to this email.

The link you will receive is a **unique project link**. This means you can share it with others on your team and with partners in your community to work together to respond to the questions about this project. However, you cannot use this link to assess other projects. If you would like to assess a different project, you must enter your email address again to receive a new link.

If you misplaced your link or are having difficulty accessing the tool, please contact the Capital for Communities Scorecard team at C4CScorecard@urban.org.

Submit

Figure 7. The landing page for C4C (Urban Institute)

Based on the priorities and needs identified through community engagement or consulted plans, rank the following six priorities for community residents in order of 1 to 6, with 1 being the highest priority and 6 being the lowest priority.

4	Accessible, high-quality jobs
6	Community wealth building
1	Affordable and accessible housing
5	Environment and open spaces
3	Health, social services, and cultural amenities
2	Transportation and connectivity

Figure 8. The first section of C4C asks users to rank their community's priorities in six areas (Urban Institute)

the potential social impact a project could achieve based on the users' answers to the questions. The final, overall project score weights each impact area score by its overall importance to the community. For example, if affordable housing was identified as the highest priority to the community, then this impact area will have a higher weight in determining the overall score than an area ranked as less important. These weights mean that a project that would provide social impact—but not in areas highly valued by the community—would receive a lower score than a project that scores well in the

community's highest priority—in this case, affordable housing. Overall scores fall into four categories, ranging from "low" to "very high" levels of benefit for expected community impact (Figure 9).

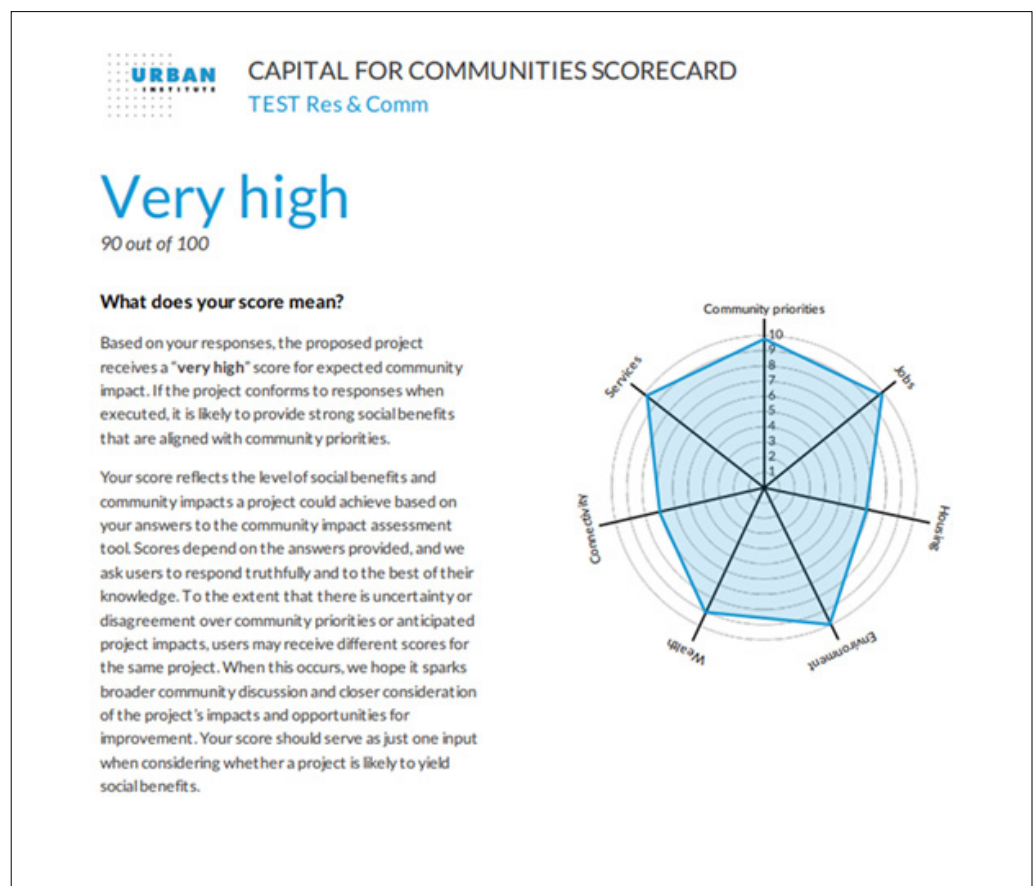
After completing the full survey, users receive a project's social impact score, guidance on interpreting that score, and a full list of their responses. This is also sent to the user in a PDF for their recordkeeping. Urban Institute does not make this data publicly available.

Finally, the tool offers a "retake link" that allows users to update the original scorecard information and compare the updated results to earlier results. Users can tweak the survey for the same project over time as the project plans evolve, creating new versions of the score for the same project.

Because Urban Institute designed C4C to be helpful to anyone interested in assessing the social impact of a proposed development project, it can be used in several contexts. The way that results are practically applied depends on the user and their goals.

In the best case, C4C is integrated into an existing process; for example, it could be formalized as a step in the development process. Local governments could request that developers submit a completed scorecard as a required step in development review or as a condition of awarding financing or grant dollars. For example, [San Francisco's Office of Economic and Workforce Development \(OEWD\)](#) used C4C when

Figure 9. Example of an overall C4C project score (Urban Institute)



awarding funding for nonprofit business development projects (Hermans and Reynolds 2023).

Community residents and community-based organizations (CBOs) could also use the tool to confirm that community needs are being met through proposed development projects. For example, after a planning department has engaged communities through a powerful process like WIATT, CBOs could work with the project sponsor to complete the scorecard collaboratively, using it to workshop the project and identify improvements. They could also request completed scorecards as a condition of providing community support for a project or use C4C to negotiate a community benefits agreement with the project sponsor. Additionally, CBOs could call on local officials and potential project investors to require project sponsors to complete the scorecard and to share responses before making decisions about funding or other incentives.

C4C Outcomes

Using C4C offers the following benefits:

- **Provides a standard for comparing the benefits of local projects.** Using community priorities as the benchmark, C4C creates a set of standards by which local development projects can be compared against each other. For example, if an affordable housing project is being proposed in a neighborhood where there is already a concentration of affordable units and community members need quality jobs, then a project that provides many long-term jobs that align with community members' skills would receive a higher score, though both projects are providing a social good.
- **Creates a starting point for community benefit negotiations.** The tool can also be used when there are several constituent groups with different interests for a site. For example, a CBO representing residents' interests and a developer who complete the C4C scorecard for the same project are likely to receive different scores. Comparing the results would allow them to identify the specific areas where they disagree about the benefits of a project, thus creating conditions for more targeted negotiations.
- **Allows planners to test the benefits of new project features.** C4C's versioning feature allows the user to compare scorecard results throughout a project's planning and development. For example, as planners and project sponsors gain more information from community members—such as through the WIATT process—they may wish to complete the tool with a new prioritization of community priorities to assess the project again and demonstrate that they are responsive to community feedback.

C4C also has its limitations. It is but one tool to help decision-makers and community members understand the potential social impacts of new development. It is best used in conjunction with a robust community engagement process, such as WIATT. C4C also focuses exclusively on social benefits

that a project might bring and does not assess project feasibility, which would need to be assessed using other metrics.

Prioritizing Wellbeing: Guiding Questions for Planners

Whether using the WIATT tool and process, the C4C tool, or other impact assessments, planners must adopt a thoughtful and strategic approach to co-creation and ensuring equitable community development. Here are some key principles and guiding questions to aid planners in advancing wellbeing equity through participatory planning, collaborative partnerships, and co-creation:

1. Start with what matters to people: wellbeing.

- How do you tap into people's inherent drive for belonging and connection, safety, stability, purpose and choice, and meaningful access to resources?
- How can you uncover and build on how a community defines wellbeing for itself?

2. Design and implement with, not for.

- How do you partner with communities to envision and frame issues, rather than engaging communities for feedback around solutions designed by others?
- How do you ensure that those who are most impacted dictate what matters to them, rather than externally determining what "should" matter?
- How are you allowing communities to be complex and nonmonolithic?

3. Heal and regenerate.

- How are you furthering your understanding of a community's history and the perspectives of those who bear the burdens of that history?
- What restorative and transformative practices can you use to address past harms?
- How are you pushing against concentrating harms in communities already facing the greatest adversity?

4. Foster social connections and social capital.

- How can you build on and not undermine people's social connectedness, belonging, and social capital in their community?
- How can you support people helping one another, including removing obstacles to family and community members helping each other?

5. Span boundaries.

- What uncommon partners and solutions can you seek out?
- How are you integrating with and advocating across other systems to overcome barriers?

6. Build (on) assets and innovation.

- How can you identify and preserve what is already working well in the community?

- How can you uncover and preserve innovations sparked by hardship or calamities?

These guiding questions are meant to be a starting point for evaluating efforts and moving towards a wellbeing lens in planning and design. More information can be found in the Full Frame Initiative's resource [Designing for a Fair Shot at Wellbeing](#).

Conclusion

The planning field has undergone a significant shift towards equitable development principles, with planners transitioning from "experts" to "co-creators" who prioritize community voices and ideas. This shift is crucial in addressing generations of inequitable planning policies and ensuring that future planning efforts meet the needs of all residents. However, community engagement in planning is challenging, often resulting in the loudest voices gaining the most concessions rather than truly representative plans.

New processes and tools offered by the Full Frame Initiative and Urban Institute can help planners through such difficulties. WIATT provides a methodological and inclusive approach to gathering community input on wellbeing. C4C can help ensure that this input shows up in the eventual development project. These tools offer evidence-based and organized methods to structure community engagement, distribute capital project funds equitably, and advance projects that meet the needs and desires expressed by the community, without simultaneously undermining existing community assets. Using these resources, planners can create a built environment that centers universal access to wellbeing for residents and communities across the country.

About the Authors

Senchel Matthews was the Associate Director for the Built Environment at the Full Frame Initiative, where she led efforts to center planning around wellbeing equity. Prior to FFI, she worked from coast to coast, managing planning projects focused on innovative program design, collective impact, social determinants of health, and community development. She managed the GO Neighborhoods program in Harris County, Texas, a comprehensive, equitable community development initiative. Her work in Texas helped sharpen her skills in regional planning, social enterprise development, leadership development training, mental health, holistic wrap-around services, and community engagement.

Kathryn (Kate) Reynolds is a principal policy associate with the Research to Action Lab at the Urban Institute. Her work focuses on affordable rental housing, housing stability, and equitable community and economic development. Since March 2020, she has led Urban's efforts to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the rental housing market. Previously, she served on the White House Council for Strong Cities, Strong Communities, a council founded by President Obama to help achieve economic recovery in U.S. cities across the country.

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PAS Memo is a publication of APA's Planning Advisory Service. Joel Albizo, FASAE, CAE, Chief Executive Officer; Petra Hurtado, PhD, Chief Knowledge & Foresight Officer; Ann F. Dilleuth, AICP, PAS Editor. Learn more at planning.org/pas.

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