JANUARY 2016

2015
MENINO SURVEY OF MAYORS

A Note on the U.S. Conference of Mayors and Partisanship

The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. Since its founding in 1932, it has prided itself on nonpartisanship. The Conference allows Democratic and Republican mayors groups to meet during its Winter and Annual Meetings, and participates in both major party conventions. According to Conference bylaws, both major political parties are represented among the Conference's Officers.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors does not identify it members by party, and mayors are not required to state their political affiliation. For academic purposes, the Boston University research team identified the political affiliations of the 89 mayors surveyed here. These individual identifications were not shared with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and mayors are never required to state their political party to the Conference.

As cities grow and national governments devolve new powers to local officials, mayors and mayoral leadership have become increasingly important in the U.S. and around the world. The Boston University Initiative on Cities initiated a project in 2014 to survey a representative sample of American mayors from cities of all sizes and affluence to better understand mayoral priorities, as well as their challenges, relationships, and where they gain inspiration.

Shortly after the release of the 2014 Survey report, we lost our mentor and Initiative on Cities co-founder, former Boston Mayor Tom Menino. This project now bears his name, to honor his central role in its first year and commitment to advancing urban leadership.

The 2015 Menino Survey of Mayors builds on the lessons gleaned last year. The Menino Survey seeks to understand and gain insight into a broad spectrum of mayoral challenges and contemporary urban realities, and presents an array of findings on specific issue areas—from infrastructure to policing to inequality.

We are grateful for the willing participation of so many mayors who found time in their hectic schedules to speak with us. We greatly appreciate our new partnership with the United States Conference of Mayors, the nation's leading member network of mayors.

Our team is also thankful for the support provided by Citi, which offered the financial means necessary to conduct a project of this breadth and scale.

Boston University Initiative on Cities

The Initiative on Cities at Boston University seeks to research, promote, and advance the adaptive urban leadership strategies and policies necessary to support cities as dynamic centers of economic growth and positive development in the 21st century. Founded by a proven urban leader, the late former Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and a highly regarded academic, Professor Graham Wilson, the Initiative serves as a bridge between world-class academic research and the real-life practice of city governance.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 Menino Survey of Mayors encompasses insights and perspectives shared by a representative sample of 89 sitting U.S. mayors from cities of all sizes. In 2014, we discovered that America's mayors are chiefly concerned with the physical, fiscal, and social infrastructure of their cities. In year two of the Survey, our team delved deeper into these issues, examining specific views mayors harbor with regard to infrastructure, inequality and poverty, public safety, municipal finance, as well as their relationships with constituents and other local actors, other cities, and higher levels of government.

Our objective was to take mayors' "pulse" on key contemporary challenges and identify where they turn for help in tackling them.

- **INFRASTRUCTURE: Aging and underfunded physical infrastructure weighs most heavily on the mind of mayors, who identify it as the most pressing challenge they face.** Their list of needs is long, but specific "big ticket" priorities include mass transit, roads, and water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure. While mayors most often must partner with state and federal government to address these priorities, they express limited confidence in the ability of either to adequately help them solve their challenges. When asked to name more modestly priced infrastructure priorities, bike and pedestrian infrastructure and parks were the most frequently cited, followed by roads and municipal buildings.

- **BIKING: Mayors express strong support for bike-friendly policies, in addition to naming them as infrastructure funding priorities.** 70 percent of mayors support improved bike accessibility, even at the expense of parking and driving lanes. Democratic and Republican mayors do differ in their level of support, with 44 percent of Republican mayors and 81 percent of Democratic ones endorsing improved accessibility, although this may be a reflection of the characteristics of the cities they govern rather than any ideological differences.

- **POLICING: Mayors broadly support police reforms recently advocated by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and others, but express important reservations about some policies, including those they support in principle.** Mayors overwhelmingly support an array of proposed police reforms, including body cameras, independent investigations for all police related shootings, publicizing arrest and crime statistics by demographics, evaluating police departments based on arrest and crime statistics, and civilian review boards. What's more, this strong support persists across partisan lines with Democratic and Republican mayors evincing no differences in their support for police reform. However, as one mayor noted, "the devil's in the details" and mayors want to ensure that they're protecting individual rights and privacy as well as promoting fairness.

- **POVERTY AND INEQUALITY: Cities, especially big cities, are aggressively pursuing a wide variety of policies targeting the challenges faced by low-income residents**. Programs targeting the lack of job training/workforce

development, high housing costs, limited access to healthy foods, limited access to government social and emergency assistance programs, and limited access to living wage jobs are especially popular. By comparison, fewer cities appear to be tackling challenges related to financial services like limited access to checking and savings accounts and predatory lending. In general, bigger cities are particularly likely to implement policies targeting resident poverty. In the context of so many aggressive efforts to support those in the lowest income brackets, it is also striking to discover that mayors place economic inequality low on their priority list relative to other issues. They believe inequality is an area over which they have limited control and one in which their constituents do not hold them accountable.

- **HOUSING: Mayors are conflicted about affordable housing mandates and exhibit significant partisan differences in their views about these policies.** Mayors were asked about their support for affordable housing requirements, even at the risk of deterring some new development. Democratic mayors were more likely to agree with the implementation of these types of mandates, even if they stymied new development, although their level of support was still modest. Almost 50 percent supported the tradeoff, compared with 20 percent of Republican mayors. Mayors of more affluent cities— where housing needs tend to be a hot button issue—are more inclined than mayors of less prosperous communities to support affordable housing. It is important to note that, in response to a question about support for low income residents, more than half of surveyed mayors report they are "aggressively addressing" high housing costs in their city.

- **MUNICIPAL FINANCE: Mayors say that they are least likely to raise property taxes, privatize city services, and/or eliminate city programs to improve their city's financial health if necessary**. More than half of mayors cite raising property taxes as the *least* likely approach they would pursue. Mayors are less opposed to other remedies, including reducing city staff, raising other taxes and fees, and/or renegotiating union contracts. Interestingly, mayors believe their fiscal management skills are an important driver of constituent approval (along with a variety of other characteristics) and—unlike many other areas—this is one where they believe they possess real control.

- **CONSTRAINTS: Mayors believe they receive too little financial support from state and federal government, and are overly burdened by restrictions from their state government.** Mayors were asked a series of questions relating to their relationships with higher levels of governing and laws and regulations they would like to see changed. At the state level, mayors were especially concerned about and wanted to change laws relating to local revenue-raising options, autonomy, and the distribution of state revenue. The list at the federal level was somewhat different, with mayors highlighting Environmental Protection Agency rules, gun laws, immigration laws, and marijuana legislation as those they would most like to see repealed or changed.

- **ALLIES: Mayors rely on a breadth of partners across many policy areas, but have a particularly close and unhappy relationship with their respective states.** In 2014, mayors shared that their strongest working relationships are with their business community and surrounding local governments, and ranked federal and state government as their least cooperative partners. In this year's Survey, mayors revealed that their much maligned state government is actually their most frequent partner across a wide array of policy arenas, from roads to the environment to economic development. Other local governments, where mayors have reported more positive working relationships, are second in line as the most frequently cited partner.

- **SOURCES OF INSPIRATION: Mayors draw policy ideas from a wide array of cities, with New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Denver, Austin, Salt Lake City, and Boston garnering an especially high number of mentions.** There is impressive breadth, however, in the cities mayors look to for inspiration. Even the most commonly cited cities were named by fewer than 20 percent of mayors, and the list of responses included a range of cities with a variety of traits. In addition, mayors of large cities appear to look to a somewhat different set of cities than do mayors from smaller cities. The prominence of the city may matter less than their reputation for policy innovation as the majority of mayors said they look to cities that are leaders in tackling specific challenges the mayors are facing at home.

METHODOLOGY: 89 MAYORAL INTERVIEWS

The survey focuses on a wide range of policy challenges and issues currently facing mayors in the United States. Using both open-ended and closed-ended questions, we explore mayors' perspectives about policy making, infrastructure, policing, relationships with federal and state government, housing, biking, and financial challenges. The mix of question types and topics enables us to provide insight into mayoral views across a variety of highly topical areas.

Recruitment

We aggressively recruited *all* mayors of cities with populations over 100,000, in order to assemble a nationally representative sample of medium and big city mayors. Our first recruitment wave centered around the June meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM). Prior to the meeting, we identified all mayors of cities over 100,000 who were planning on attending and sent them personalized email invitations from the director of Boston University's Initiative on Cities. We then followed up on all invitations that did not receive an initial response with a phone call. Finally, the USCM both sent an email announcement to all members encouraging them to participate during the conference and made an in-person announcement during one of the conference's major plenary sessions. All interviews that took place at the USCM meeting were conducted in-person directly with the mayor.

We continued with analogous recruitment efforts after the conference to all mayors of cities over 100,000, in order to avoid a sample comprising only conference attendees. Personalized email invitations were sent to all mayors, and followed up with either a phone call or a mailed hard copy version of the survey. Finally, the USCM sent out additional reminder emails to all members. All surveys completed after the USCM meeting were either by phone (most commonly), online, or by mail.

Participating Cities Similar to Cities Nationally

Overall, 89 mayors from 31 different states participated. The vast majority of interviews took place either in-person or by phone. These in-person and phone interviews allow us to collect elaborations, even on responses to closed-ended questions. Of these 89, 63 were members of a target population—cities over 100,000 (of which there are approximately 275 in the U.S.). This corresponds to a 22 percent response rate among these cities. This is very strong, especially for a substantial survey of busy elites.

Given that our target population was mayors of cities over 100,000, readers might wonder why 26 observations in our data come from cities with smaller populations. The answer lies in the USCM conference and email recruitment. These communications went out to *all* USCM member cities or conference attendees, including smaller ones. We have chosen to include these observations as well because recruiting elite samples is so challenging and because these 26 mayors have valuable insights to contribute. Moreover, even though they lead smaller cities, the fact that they attend conferences and/or are active as members of the USCM suggests they see themselves as policy making jurisdictions that have important commonalities with larger cities.

[1]*We replicated all of the analyses excluding these cities. The findings and conclusions do not change. In nearly every case, the figures with and without these cities are indistinguishable. The only notable small differences are that 1) The difference between cities with high and low property values on the affordable housing tradeoff below shrinks and 2) Relatively fewer mayors mentioned EPA rules as the federal law they would change, but this was still the most commonly cited option (other than "nothing comes to mind").*

Perhaps most importantly, the results below do not depend on including the cities with fewer than 100,000 residents.[1] In fact, small and large cities share many important similarities. **Table 1** juxtaposes the participating cities' traits with those of all U.S. cities over 100,000 (middle column). We break down these traits to display characteristics for both the total sample (cities over and under 100,000 population combined, first column) and cities in the sample with populations over 100,000 (third column). In both cases, the average of the set of participating cities (even when including smaller ones) is remarkably similar to the country as a whole across a range of traits. Indeed, its population density, racial demographics, and economic characteristics all closely resemble the nation's cities over 100,000 as a whole. Geographically (using the four main census regions) the distribution of participating cities almost perfectly matches the distribution of cities in the country. Finally, while we cannot provide data to rule out every type of selection bias, it is important to note that when they signed up, the mayors were signing up for a general survey of "mayors and mayoral priorities." They therefore did not, for example, select in or out on the basis of the survey's focus or questions.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON

	In Sample	**All Cities** in U.S. Over 100,000	In Sample and Over 100,000 (primary sampling frame)
Population	293,617	298,885	395,544
Population Density	4,152	4,224	4,338
Percent White	54%	49%	50%
Percent Black	16%	17%	16%
Percent Hispanic	20%	24%	23%
Median Income	$52,272	$52,898	$50,620
Median Housing Value	$251,548	$232,755	$231,178
Poverty Rate	18.3%	17.8%	18.7%
Percent Unemployed	6.8%	6.8%	6.8%
Northeast	12%	9%	8%
South	35%	35%	35%
Midwest	18%	17%	16%
West	35%	40%	41%
N	89	288	63

The only area in which we see any discrepancy is in the size of the cities in our set of cities over 100,000 people. Here, the population in our sample is somewhat larger than it is in the country as a whole. We suspect that our sample skews toward larger cities for several reasons. First, the mayors of larger cities appear more likely to have a staff person specifically devoted to scheduling. This, perhaps surprisingly, made it easier to set up interviews with these big city mayors. Second, social scientific

research has shown that the mayors of larger cities are, on average, more likely to confront more policy issues than their counterparts in smaller communities. Therefore, it is unsurprising that a survey concerning local policy issues might be more appealing to mayors of larger cities. Finally, we note that a small skew in city size should not be terribly worrisome given the balance on demographic and economic variables. These variables, rather than the number of people in a jurisdiction, are more closely related to the key issues facing cities and to the questions asked of mayors. Moreover, the 2014 Menino Survey of Mayors found that big cities and smaller ones gave similar responses to many questions.[2]

We also collected data on mayors' partisan affiliation, irrespective of whether their cities hold nonpartisan elections, to supplement the survey responses and matched census data.[3] Our sample is 74 percent Democrats and 26 percent Republicans. This distribution reflects the reality that cities are usually more Democratic than suburban and rural areas. It is similar to the partisan breakdown of big city mayors that Hopkins and Gerber report in their study of executive partisanship and city policy.[4] Finally, we note that, consistent with our focus on mayors, the report includes mayors' partisanship instead of their constituents'. Naturally, a mayor's partisan leanings often reflect those of the city s/he leads. When we report results by partisanship, we cannot say whether the responses are the direct result of the mayors' partisanship or an indirect reflection of the voters'.

[2]*http://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2015/05/Survey-of-Mayors-Report_2014.pdf*
[3]*For most of the sample, information on mayoral partisanship was available on mayors' websites or explicit on other online sources. When partisanship was not available on official city platforms, we used reputable media sources and information on things such as attendance at party fundraisers to obtain mayors' partisan identification.*
[4]*Elizabeth R. Gerber and Daniel J. Hopkins. "When Mayors Matter: Estimating the Impact of Mayoral Partisanship on City Policy," American Journal of Political Science, 2011, 55(2):326-339*

I.   INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT: AN URGENT PRIORITY

Mayors overwhelmingly believe that physical infrastructure is one of the greatest challenges facing their city. Mayors were asked to identify the greatest challenge they face which falls outside their control—in other words, a challenge that is typically the purview of *other* levels of government. "Think about the next five years and beyond. What ONE trend or issue that you primarily think should be a state and/or federal matter will pose the biggest challenge to your city?" Importantly, this question did not query mayors about challenges to their cities generally, which was explored in last year's report.

Almost *half of mayors* selected infrastructure, which is a striking level of accord for an open-ended question. Nearly all of those who referenced infrastructure focused on a lack of funding for upkeep and improvements. As one mayor noted *"The lack of spending on infrastructure is a failure at the local, state, and federal levels.*"[5] **Figure 1** displays the proportion of responses that fell into each category.

Still, many mayors had other priorities. Thus, although a large portion of mayors believe that infrastructure is the chief state/federal issue to fall onto their desks, a sizable number of other issues also worry them.

Figure 1: Thinking about the next five years and beyond. What ONE trend or issue that you primarily think should be a state and/or federal matter will pose the biggest challenge to your city? Or do no such issues stand out?

Biggest Local Challenge From a State or National Issue

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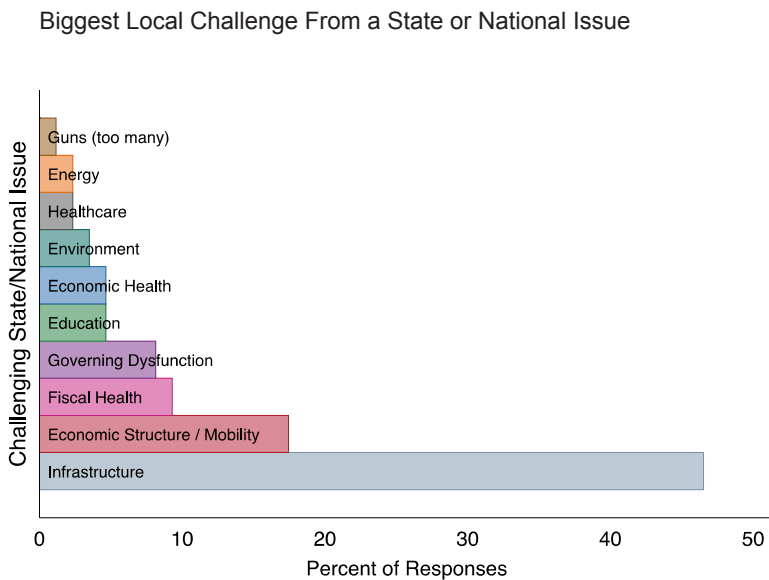
[5]*These sentiments generally reflect a 2014 analysis by Pew (Intergovernmental Challenges In Surface Transportation Funding http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2014/09/intergovernmental-challenges-in-surface-transportation-funding) that showed that only about a third of infrastructure spending comes from local government. Between 2007 and 2011 40 percent of road and transit spending came from state government with another 25% from the federal government. Moreover, between 2002 and 2011 total funding decreased by 12% (inflation adjusted) with state funding decreasing by 20%. (We note this report focused only on highway and road funding which is much narrower than many of the mayors' conception of infrastructure.)*

Mayors don't expect other levels of government to come to their rescue. When asked to rate their confidence in their state and federal governments' ability to mitigate the challenge they chose, mayors almost universally lack confidence in them. On a scale from "not at all confident" to "very confident," mayors' mean response indicated they're "not confident" in either entity.[6] Skepticism about state and federal government is equally prevalent among Democrats and Republicans. Irrespective of party, mayors' average responses were the same. This consistency holds for those who chose infrastructure and those who selected other challenges.

Mayors believe they're judged by constituents on the quality of local infrastructure, suggesting this is as much of a political issue as an economic and quality of life concern. Mayors were asked to rate a number of concerns that drive constituents' approval of their performance as mayor. Infrastructure was, on average, at the top of the list alongside city services and crime. (Full results and further discussion are in and around **Figure 19.**)

In contrast to their lack of faith in others, mayors are cautiously confident in their own city's ability, believing they're "somewhat equipped" to tackle the problems they named. As former Washington, DC Mayor Anthony Williams once remarked in a discussion on ailing urban infrastructure,

"*If the stagecoach isn't coming, you've got to start walking. Mayors can't wait.*"[7] Indeed, infrastructure was an area over which the average mayor believed that s/he exercises a great deal of control. (**Figure 20**)

Similarly, mayors appear to be somewhat optimistic about the "extent [to which] local public-private partnerships [can] substitute for state and/or federal support" with the mean response indicating that these partnerships can substitute "some."[8] But as one big city mayor noted, they're no panacea. "*Public private-partnerships are great if you want something built with somebody else's up front capital. But you still have to pay the bill.... There are limited areas in which public-private partnerships can work, but they're not a solution to everything.*"

Specific "Big Ticket" Infrastructure Priorities

Mayors list roads, mass transit, and water, wastewater, and stormwater as their top three priorities for new infrastructure investment. In his address to mayors at the 2015 USCM meeting, President Obama observed, "*There's not a mayor here who can't reel off 10 infrastructure projects right now that you'd love to get funding for, and that would put people to work right away and improve your competitiveness, and help businesses move their products and help people get to their jobs.*"[9] This survey provides those lists, identifying mayors' infrastructure priorities both large and small.

"Without the federal government re-engaging on these issues, local governments are going to be in a very difficult place in future years."

"Mayors have been pleading with the state to invest in transportation funding. Fewer and fewer dollars are being funneled down to the local level for infrastructure."

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[6]*This result remains the same when we only looked at mayors who offered "infrastructure" as their chief policy challenge.*
[7]*Boston University Initiative on Cities Conference, "Fiscal Leadership and the Modern City." April 27-28, 2015. Boston, MA.*
[8]*The mayors who chose infrastructure as their key challenge and those who did not, expressed nearly identical levels of confidence that their cities were equipped to deal with the issue on their own (2.78 and 2.72 out of 4, respectively). But, the mayors who selected infrastructure were a bit less optimistic that public private partnerships could help mitigate the challenge (2.48 vs. 2.74).*
[9]*https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/06/19/remarks-president-us-conference-mayors*

Mayors were asked three constrained questions about their infrastructure priorities, in an effort to force them to make tough choices comparable to those they must make in real life.

Mayors were asked a closed-ended question about infrastructure priorities: "Thinking about infrastructure in and around your city, what are the top three areas you would prioritize if you could allocate a significant amount of new money?" Potential responses included an extensive list of possibilities, including roads; bridges; mass transit; water, wastewater, and stormwater; energy; bicycle friendliness; broadband; waste; facilities and city buildings; parks; airports; and other. **Figure 2** displays the proportion of mayors naming each of these policy areas as a top three priority for new infrastructure spending.

Figure 2: Thinking about infrastructure in and around your city, what are the top three areas you would prioritize if you could allocate a significant amount of new money?

Percent of Mayors Naming Each as a Top Three Area
for New Infrastructure Spending
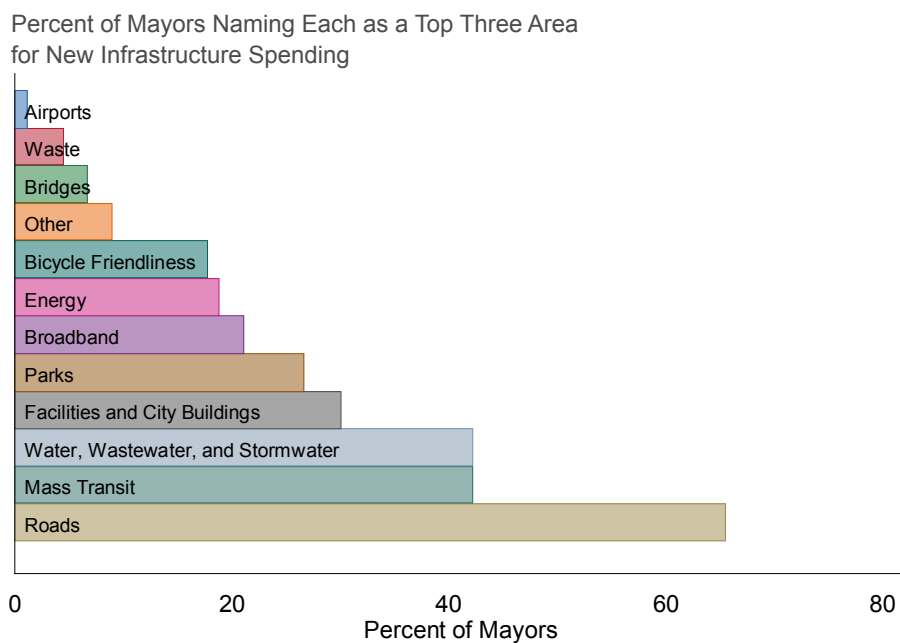
Perhaps not surprisingly, "roads" was the most common answer. About two-thirds of mayors noted it as one of their top three priorities. In addition, more than 40 percent of mayors named water, wastewater, and stormwater, and mass transit as top priorities. Between 20 and 40 percent listed bicycle friendliness, energy, broadband, parks, and/or facilities and city buildings. While there appears to be some clustering in mayoral preferences, mayors are generally concerned with a wide array of infrastructure needs. One implication of these findings is that narrowly defined infrastructure funding (e.g., roads and bridges) will fit some cities' needs well while missing many others' top priorities.

Prioritization shifts slightly when mayors are asked to select just one big project where they would invest a large unrestricted grant, with mass transit garnering the most mentions. Mayors were asked to prioritize a specific project in which they would invest, if given a "large" unrestricted infrastructure grant with "costs equal to a large portion of your city's annual capital budget." The top three categories were identical to those listed in the previous close-ended question, but here mass transit moved up in mayors' priority list. (**Figure 3)** As one mayor noted, *"We can't expand the roads—the city is built already. I would put all the money on mass transit."*

Figure 3: Please think about "large" infrastructure projects. That is, projects with costs equal to a large portion of your city's annual capital budget. If your city were given an unrestricted grant to pay for any ONE such "large" infrastructure project, what would you spend it on?

The One Big Infrastructure Project Each Mayor Would Fund With an Unrestricted Grant
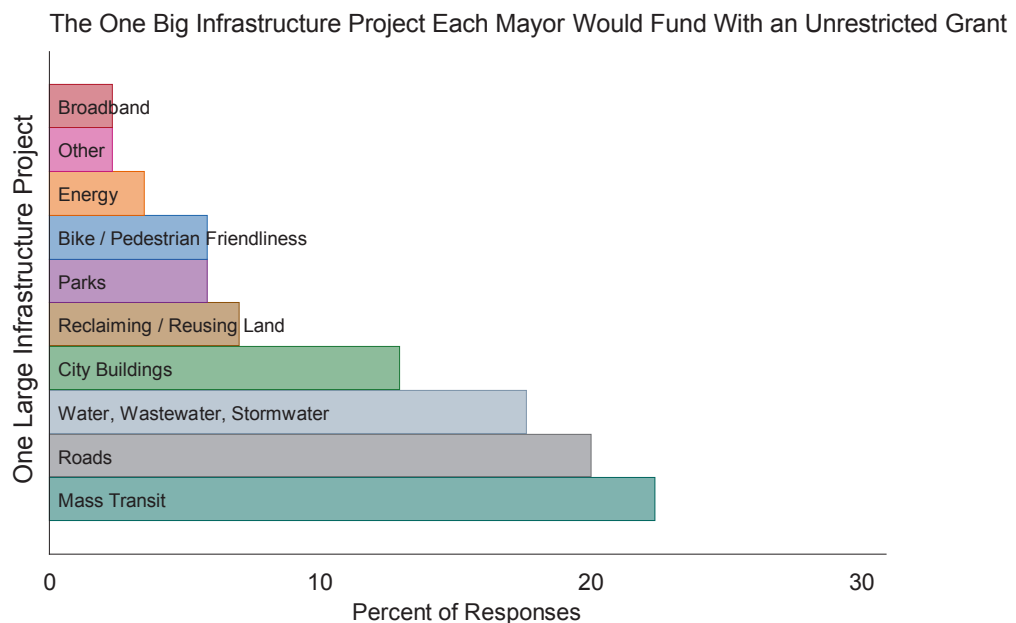
Project priorities also vary significantly with city size, with big cities overwhelmingly prioritizing mass transit, and roads and city buildings topping the list of priorities for small city mayors. Figure 4 juxtaposes the responses of mayors from large cities (population greater than 300,000) and small/medium cities (population less than 300,000). While mass transit features prominently as a priority for 40 percent of big city mayors, only 15 percent of small/medium city mayors list it as their biggest infrastructure priority. Instead, 20 percent name roads and another 20 percent list city buildings.

Figure 4: By city size - Please think about "large" infrastructure projects. That is, projects with costs equal to a large portion of your city's annual capital budget. If your city were given an unrestricted grant to pay for any ONE such "large" infrastructure project, what would you spend it on?

The One Big Infrastructure Project Each Mayor Would Fund With an Unrestricted Grant (Big Cities)
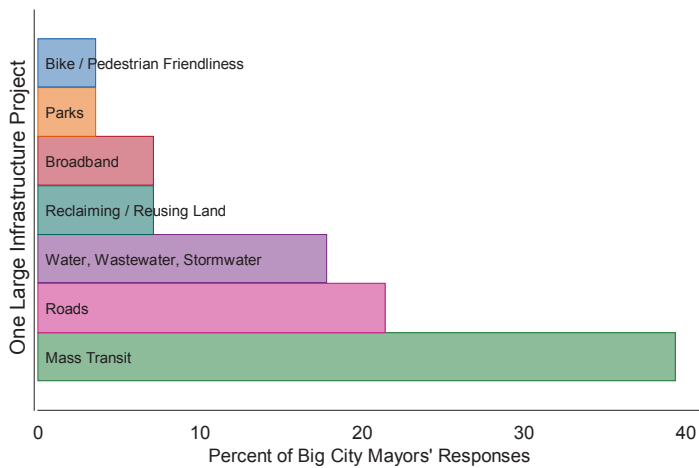
The One Big Infrastructure Project Each Mayor Would Fund With an Unrestricted Grant (Other Cities)
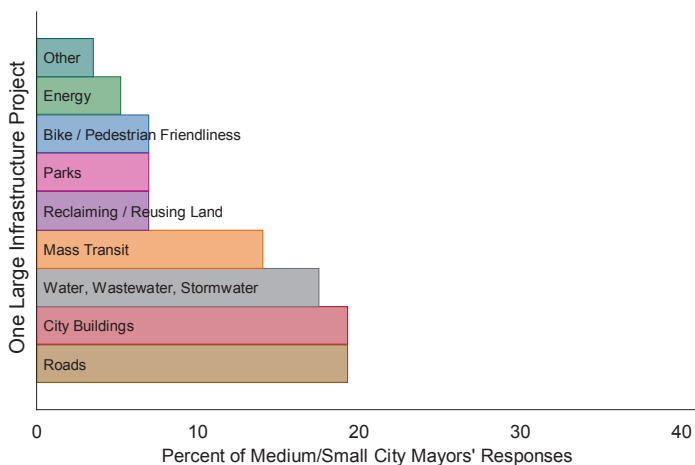
Modest Infrastructure Priorities

Mayors rate bicycle and pedestrian friendliness, parks, and roads as chief small infrastructure investments. Not all important infrastructure needs are "large." Some areas—like parks and bike paths—might be salient to mayors, but not require the kinds of major infrastructure investments primed by the previous question. Mayors were asked to consider how they might allocate an "unrestricted grant" to pay for a "small" infrastructure project with "costs equal to a small portion of your city's annual capital budget." The responses to this question are summarized in **Figure 5.**

Figure 5: Please think about "small" infrastructure projects. That is, projects with costs equal to a small portion of your city's annual capital budget. If your city were given an unrestricted grant to pay for any ONE such "small" infrastructure project, what would you spend it on?

The One Small Infrastructure Project Each Mayor
Would Fund With an Unrestricted Grant
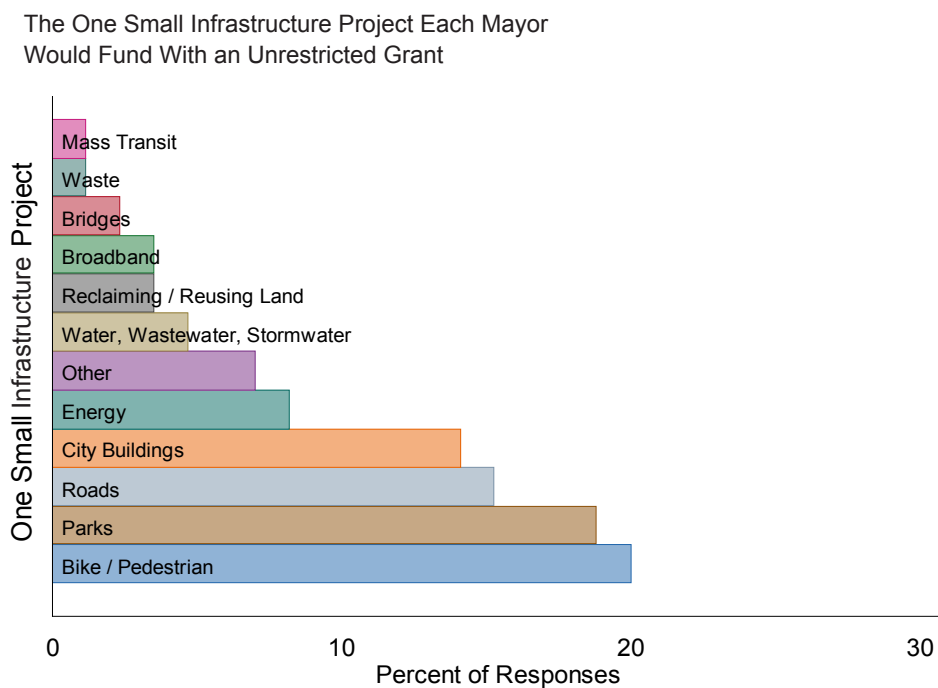
Here, unsurprisingly, the list is markedly different. The top three responses were: bike/pedestrian improvements, parks, and roads. Mayors thus have significantly different infrastructure priorities when allocating small grants as compared to larger funding opportunities. Interestingly, responses did not vary significantly by city size.

Cycling infrastructure emerged as a strong priority for mayors, garnering strong support overall and support—albeit in varying degrees—from mayors of both parties. Mayors were asked about their willingness to pursue bicycle friendly infrastructure, *even* if doing so adversely affects driving and parking. The specific tradeoff asked mayors to consider whether: "Cities should make their roads more accessible to bicycles even if it means sacrificing driving lanes and/or parking." **Figure 6** summarizes the results.

Figure 6: Cities should make their roads more accessible to bicycles even if it means sacrificing driving lanes and/or parking.
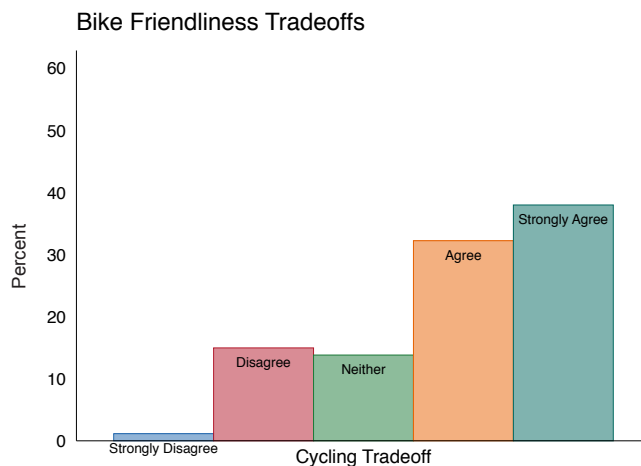

A striking 70 percent of mayors either strongly agreed or agreed with improving bike accessibility, even at the expense of parking or driving lanes. A mere 15 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Despite the overall support, mayors exhibit partisan variation on bicycle friendliness (**Figure 7**), although some of that variation may be attributable to distinctions in the types of communities they govern. Democrats were nearly universally supportive of the tradeoff, while Republicans were decidedly mixed. This resulted in a more than 30 percentage point gap in support that is highly significant ($p<0.005$). However, with nearly half of Republican mayors endorsing bike friendly infrastructure, their support is still strong. Moreover, mayoral partisanship likely covaries with a number of city traits—particularly density. These realities make it difficult to fully separate the effects of partisanship from other traits that correlate with it. Therefore, while there is an interesting relationship with mayoral partisanship, potential causes such as density, demographics, or mass partisanship cannot be parsed out.

"Everyone understands [that] if you want to attract millennials, you have to have biking infrastructure. If you have bike infrastructure, you are going to [upset] people."

Figure 7: By partisanship - Cities should make their roads more accessible to bicycles even if it means sacrificing driving lanes and/or parking.

Bike Friendliness Tradeoffs: By Partisanship
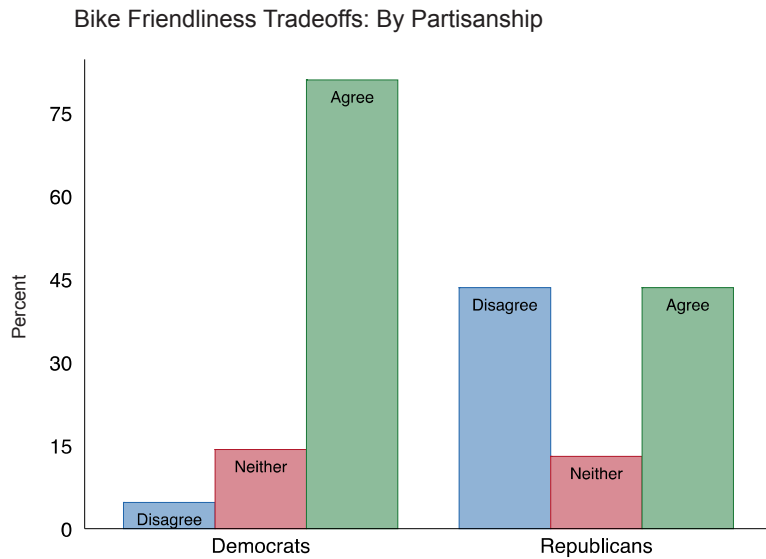
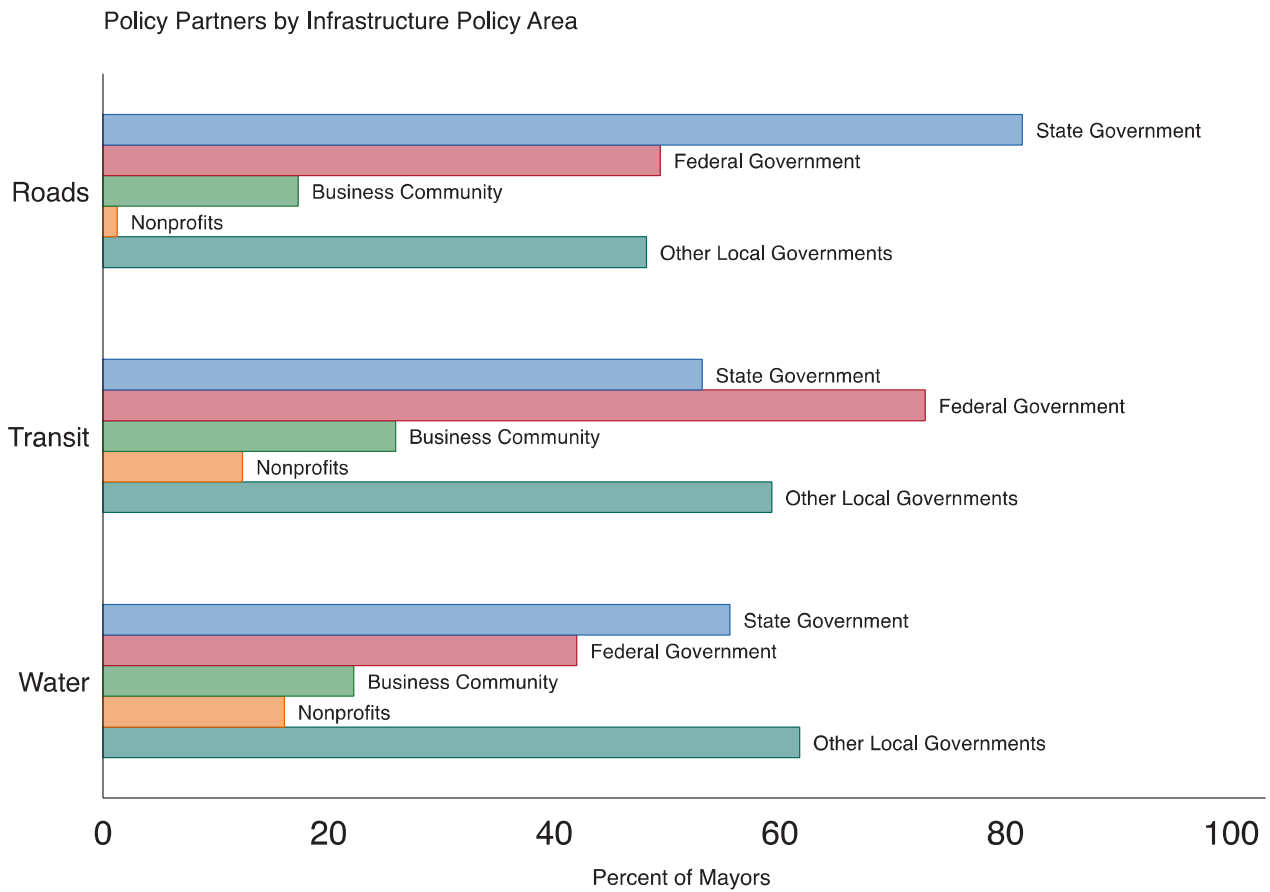## Partners in Infrastructure Policy

Infrastructure partners include a breadth of government allies, encompassing federal, state, and regional officials. Mayors primarily partner with other governments, rather than businesses, organizations and nonprofits, when dealing with infrastructure issues. Among the three key infrastructure areas that mayors prioritize, including roads, transit, and water, their chief allies are state, federal, and surrounding local governments, respectively. (**Figure 8**) [The full set of responses to this question are in the Appendix. (**Figure 29**)]

Importantly, mayors were not asked whom they *like* partnering with; rather, they were asked to indicate *actual* governing partners. Thus, at least some of the answers were driven by the realities of state and federal regulations and funding sources. These data, combined with low levels of mayoral confidence in higher levels of government, suggest that mayors frequently have to partner with entities in whom they have little faith.

State government is the most common partner for roads, with over 80 percent of mayors citing it, exceeding the figures for other local governments and the federal government. While the federal government is a frequent partner in roads, it is an especially common partner in mass transit. Finally, the prevalence of surrounding local governments indicates the prominence of regionalism in infrastructure policy. In two of the three areas—mass transit and water—mayors selected surrounding local governments more often than state government.

"Where we're most likely to be successful is partnering around land use and transportation issues that have regional impact."

Figure 8: Responses for infrastructure items only: Which of the following entities are you most likely to partner with in each of the following areas? Check all that apply.


Policy Partners by Infrastructure Policy Area

Roads
- State Government
- Federal Government
- Business Community
- Nonprofits
- Other Local Governments

Transit
- State Government
- Federal Government
- Business Community
- Nonprofits
- Other Local Governments

Water
- State Government
- Federal Government
- Business Community
- Nonprofits
- Other Local Governments

Percent of Mayors

II.   POLICE REFORMS: EVIDENCE OF STRONG SUPPORT

Across party lines mayors consistently, but incompletely, support recently proposed police reforms. Mayors were asked to evaluate five police reform proposals that have, at least in part, been discussed and/or promoted by the White House through the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing[10], the media, or others. The five proposals they were asked to consider were body cameras, civilian review boards, evaluating the police department based on crime statistics, independent investigations for all police-related shootings, and the publication of arrest and crime statistics aggregated by demographics. For each question, mayors were asked to rate their views on the policy proposal, from strongly opposed to strongly supportive.

As skilled practitioners of public policy, mayors rightly noted a number of potential legal, ethical, and social complications along with financial costs. Importantly, the mayors were simply evaluating the policy proposals in the abstract and giving their overall reactions to them. In general, the mayors expressed very high levels of support for the reforms. However, as their comments suggest, in many cases mayors have nuanced and conditional opinions. In other words, in spite of their purported support, mayors are proceeding with caution.

On average, mayors showed the strongest support for body cameras. **(Figure 9)** Over 50 percent described themselves as "strongly supportive" and over 30 percent as "supportive." Fewer than 10 percent of the nation's mayors oppose body cameras. Nonetheless, even those mayors who described themselves as supportive or neutral worried about privacy issues associated with the implementation of body cameras. The mayor of a large Midwestern city provided an illustrative argument: *"There are some issues that need to be addressed before it would be viable—some personal-security issues for people. You're walking into their home. You've got the cameras. [There is] this whole issue of public records that could be asked for and privacy for individuals who may be in the middle of an event but are not guilty."* Others, such as the mayor of a smaller city, were "supportive" but feared that others were too enthusiastic about cameras. *"I just feel like it's a little bit of a panacea. 'Let's get new body cameras. It'll take care of everything.' That's the caveat."*

Figure 9: Please indicate your support for implementing or maintaining the following policing policies in your community.

Support for Police Reforms
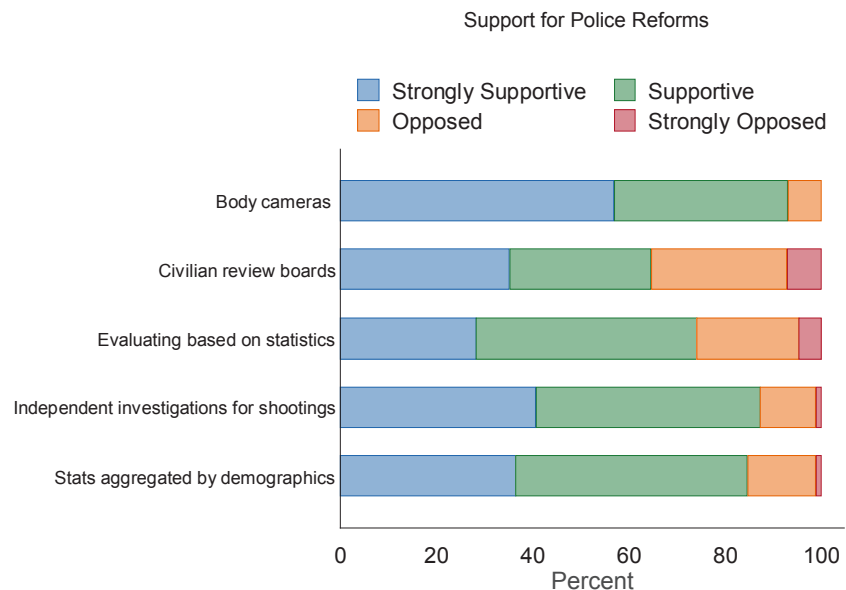
Mayoral views on civilian review boards were still supportive, but decidedly more mixed. Almost 70 percent of mayors were either strongly supportive or supportive of these boards. On the other hand, 30 percent opposed the idea. As one mayor of a large Southern city noted, *"The devil's in the details."* Another mayor from a larger city said, *"If it's well crafted, it can be great. If it's not, it could be disastrous."* In particular, many mayors worried about the composition of these review boards, and whether the boards would attract the kinds of nuanced and unbiased observers they desired for frequently complex investigations.

Mayors widely support evaluating departments based on arrest and crime statistics, with almost 80 percent of mayors expressing either support or strong support. Some mayors, however, expressed important reservations about placing too much of an emphasis on statistics. One mayor of a large Western city noted, *"I don't think that we should be rating our police effectiveness based on the number of arrests that we make…. I think it's much more about building trust in the community and that's not about arrests."* Another mayor worried about what crimes went into arrest and crime statistics: *"If you're talking about murder, you want a high clearance rate. If you're talking about burglary of a motor vehicle, your clearance rate is going to be abysmal. You put two together, and it's meaningless."*

Independent investigations for police-related shootings were also popular, with fewer than 15 percent of mayors opposing the initiative. As with civilian review boards, mayors' concerns with this policy proposal stemmed primarily from details about who would comprise the independent investigators.

Finally, 85 percent of mayors were either strongly supportive or supportive of publicizing arrest and crime statistics aggregated by demographics. While support for this policy was generally high, some mayors worried that releasing arrest and crime statistics data by racial background in particular might reinforce stereotyping. One mayor of a large Western city argued, *"In terms of publicizing information, I think that perpetuates bigotry in the community."* Another mayor of a large Southern city expressed similar reservations: *"What also makes me hesitate is that I don't want to….fan the flame of racial profiling."* The mayor of another large city expressed concerns, concluding by saying: *"I don't know if [reporting statistics by race] necessarily tells you the full story."*

Interestingly, while mayors are generally supportive of these various police reforms, support for one reform does not appear especially predictive of support for another, with one exception. Mayors who supported civilian review boards were substantially more likely to endorse independent investigations of police-related shootings.[11] By contrast, using a correlation matrix, no strong associations in mayoral attitudes towards the other police reforms emerged.[12] In other words, the results above are not due to some mayors strongly supporting all of the reforms and others strongly opposing them. Most mayors offered a mixed set of responses to the five issues.

There are no significant partisan differences in mayoral support for police reforms. In **Figure 10**, support levels are indicated by mayoral political affiliation. The similarity across party lines is striking. A strong majority of Democratic and Republican mayors support a wide variety of police reforms. The lowest recorded support comes from Democrats on civilian review boards (still over 60 percent). For both Democrats and Republicans, body cameras was the most supported item and civilian review boards the least.

[11]*The correlation coefficient was .545.*
[12]*The second highest correlation coefficient in our matrix was .330.*

Figure 10. Support for the five police reform proposals by mayoral partisanship.

Support for Police Reforms by Party
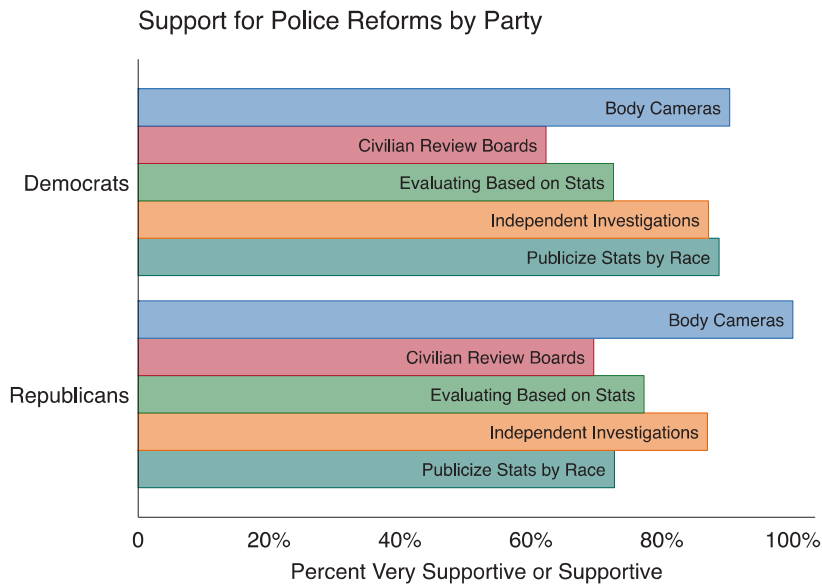
Mayors also provided insight into their most likely partners in promoting public safety, as well as the role public safety plays in constituent approval. When forging public safety policies, mayors are most likely to work with their surrounding local governments, as well as state and federal government. (See **Figure 29** for full results.) Non-governmental entities, including their local business community or nonprofits, were less frequently cited as partners. This suggests that this is one arena that continues to be the purview of government actors rather than the full breadth of community partners.

Mayors gauged the extent to which they believe that they are judged by and can control public safety. It is one area where mayors perceive a gap between their level of control (relatively low) and the degree that the issue affects public approval of his or her performance (relatively high). (See **Figures 19, 20** and **21** for graphical results for public safety and other policies.)

While mayors were not asked to explain why they feel they have limited control over public safety, their answers to questions related to state and federal regulations and laws may provide some insight. A number of mayors cited state and federal gun laws as specific regulations they would like to see amended, suggesting there are areas—such as the flow of guns—over which they have limited control. (See pages 32 and 33 for a full set of mayors' responses related to restrictive state and federal laws.)

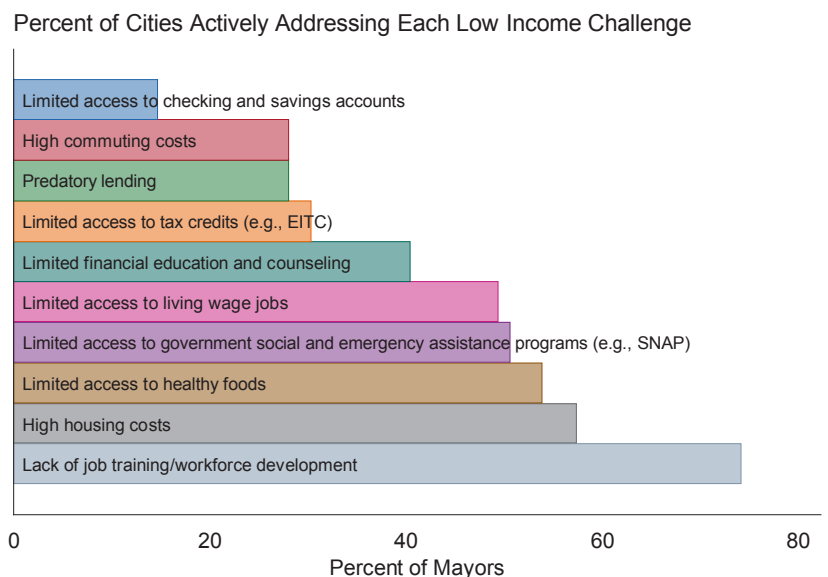# III. CITIES, POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY: CONCRETE ACTIONS

Mayors are using a wide variety of policy tools to support low income residents, but do not perceive economic inequality to be a key priority for their constituents. In the 2014 Menino Survey, many mayors cited "socioeconomic issues" (poverty, affordable housing, income disparities, etc.) as one of their top two policy priorities, suggesting that issues of equity are on cities' agendas, even if they are not always at the top.[13] The 2015 survey examines these issues in greater depth, examining the specific steps mayors are taking to support their low income residents, promote shared prosperity, or alleviate poverty.

This willingness to cite socioeconomic issues as a policy priority is especially surprising in light of the fact that mayors do not believe constituents judge them on economic inequality. Indeed, among nine categories against which they may be judged by constituents, mayors rated economic inequality as the least likely driver of constituent approval, with average ratings 1 to 1.5 points lower than most other items on a four point scale. (**Figure 19**) One East Coast mayor succinctly summarized why many mayors rated income inequality so low: "*I don't think people focus on that yet,*" and suggested that those who are affected by inequality "*don't self-advocate or self-identify.*" In other words, there isn't a natural constituent base advocating for change at the local level. In short, a large portion of mayors believe that constituents are generally unaware of trends in local income inequality, however well-versed they may be in it as a national issue.

Supporting Low Income Residents and Promoting Wealth

Mayors are aggressively tackling a broad array of challenges faced by low-income residents in their cities. Mayors were asked to share which challenges affecting low income residents they are "aggressively addressing" with dedicated programs or policies. (**Figure 11**) They were provided with a list of potential issues and asked to select all responses that apply, resulting in a census of poverty symptoms and causes that have become central priorities for mayors' administrations.

Figure 11: A number of financial challenges may affect low income residents in your city. Which of these challenges (if any) is your city aggressively addressing with dedicated programs and/or policies?

Percent of Cities Actively Addressing Each Low Income Challenge

[13]http://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2015/05/Survey-of-Mayors-Report_2014.pdf

Boston University Initiative on Cities

A majority of mayors are "aggressively addressing" the following challenges with dedicated programs (in descending order): lack of job training/workforce development, high housing costs, limited access to government social and emergency assistance programs, and limited access to living wage jobs. In contrast, 40 percent or fewer say that they have policies related to limited access to financial education and counseling, limited access to tax credits, predatory lending, high commuting costs, and limited access to checking and savings accounts. According to many Survey interviewees, mayors have selected which problems to address in part based on what other government agencies and/or private sector entities are doing. Some of the challenges that cities are not actively addressing are, according to mayors, in the purview of other units of government, businesses, or nonprofits.

Most cities have programs to address challenges faced by low-income residents, suggesting that these issues have broad resonance. **Figure 12** tabulates the number of initiatives each city is implementing. A plurality of cities is pursuing three of the listed initiatives followed closely by those pursuing four and five initiatives. Very few cities are taking on fewer than three of these challenges. Similarly, a moderate number are taking on most of them. One-quarter of mayors selected at least six of the nine challenges. Democrats listed an average of 4.9 challenges, while Republicans listed an average of 3.5. These differences are statistically significant and remain so even when controlling for city size and poverty rate. Importantly, however, while the number of challenges addressed differs by political party, the relative frequency with which particular challenges were named was quite similar across party lines. Job training, housing costs, and access to government benefits were high on Democrats' and Republicans' lists.

Figure 12: <u>By number of "yes" answers</u> - A number of financial challenges may affect low income residents in your city. Which of these challenges (if any) is your city aggressively addressing with dedicated programs and/or policies?

Number (nine maximum) of Queried Low Income Challenges a City Is Aggressively Addressing
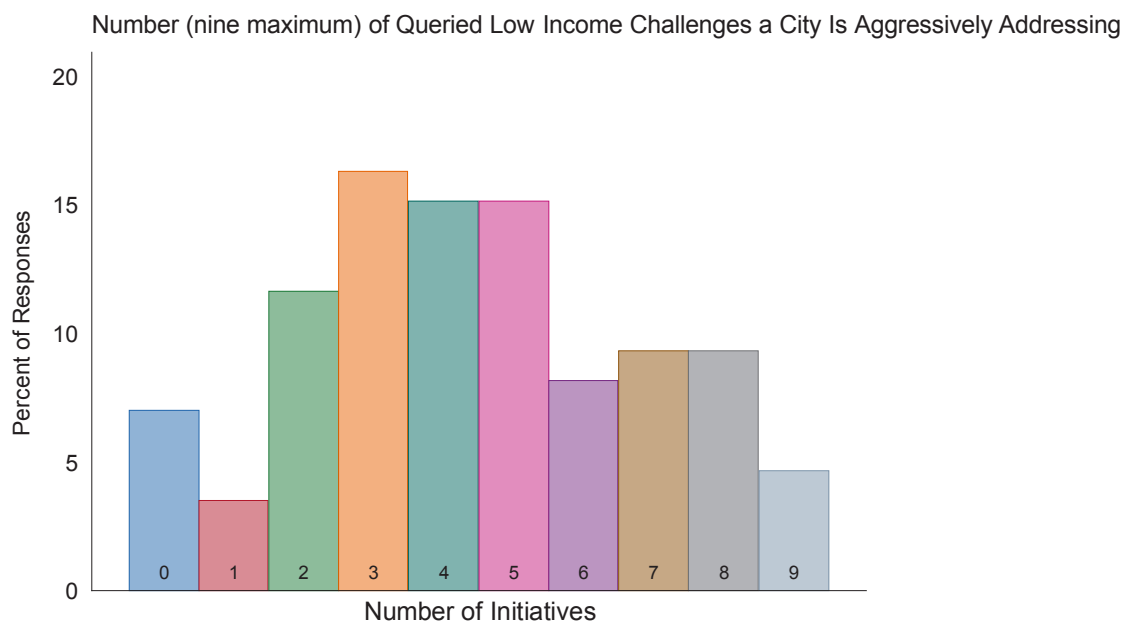
Similarly, there are significant differences between mayors of large and small cities. Mayors of large cities (population greater than 300,000) are implementing an average of 5.5 initiatives, while their counterparts governing smaller communities are aggressively pursuing 3.8 initiatives (statistically significant, $p<0.005$). While big city mayors have more policies in place, the list of most common initiatives in large cities is similar to that in smaller ones.

Mayors believe well-paying jobs are key to the effective promotion of long-term resident wealth. Mayors were also asked how they could most effectively promote their citizens' financial well-being, specifically by helping them build long-term wealth. Mayors could then choose one of an array of options, including homeownership, well-paying jobs, entrepreneurship, higher/continuing education, retirement security, household savings, or other. **Figure 13** displays mayors' responses. Almost half of mayors selected well-paying jobs as the area in which they could most affect long-term wealth, by far the most popular response. Roughly 20 percent of mayors cite higher/continuing education, and 15 percent highlight homeownership. None of the other responses garnered more than 10 percent of mayors.

Figure 13: In which area can you have the most impact on helping all of your residents build long-term wealth?

Where Can Mayors Most Affect Long-Term Wealth?
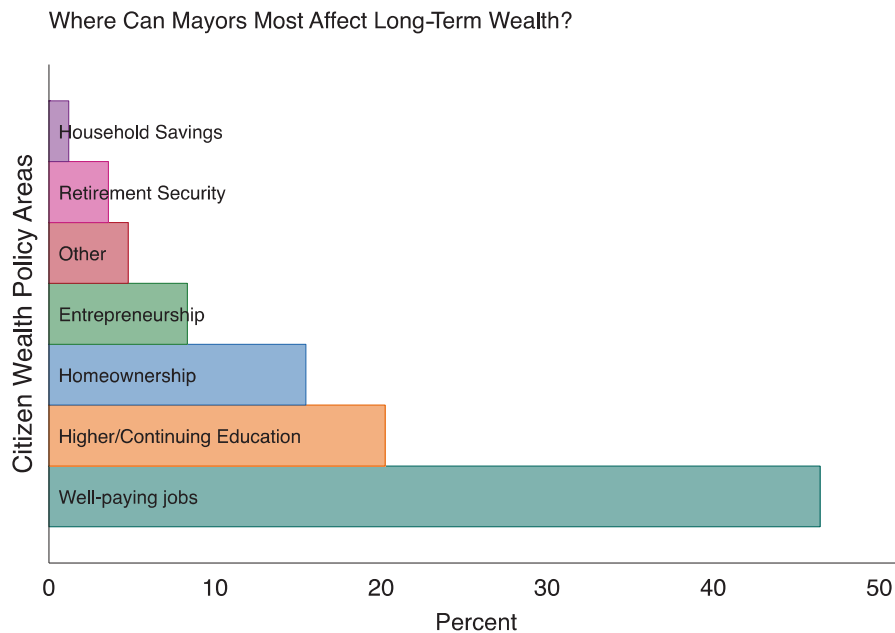
Affordable Housing Mandates: Mixed Emotions

Mayors were torn about a potential tradeoff between affordable housing mandates and economic development. Affordable housing is a salient issue that affects low-income residents and relates to income inequality and poverty. It is also an issue that is often associated with difficult tradeoffs, and one on which mayors' views vary considerably. Mayors were asked how much they agreed/disagreed with the following statement: "Cities should require developers to include more affordable housing in new projects even if doing so deters some new development." **Figure 14** displays the results.

Figure 14: Cities should require developers to include more affordable housing in new projects even if doing so deters some new development.
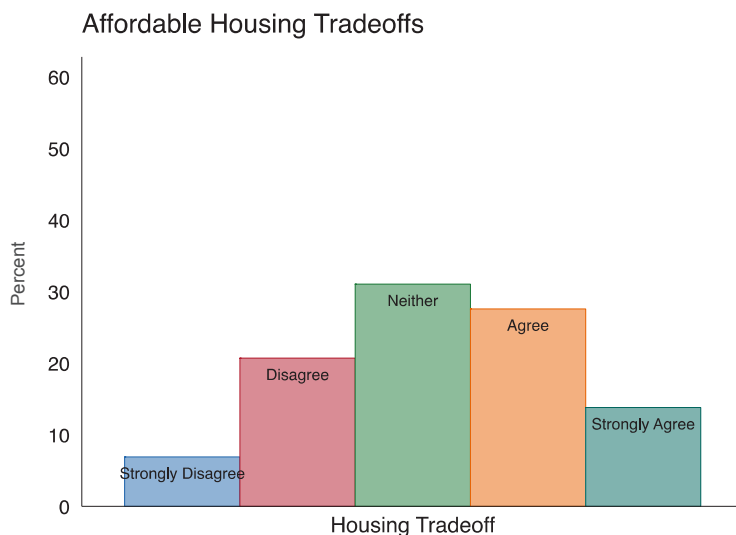

Mayors appear decidedly mixed on whether to support affordable housing requirements at the potential expense of new development. The responses are essentially normally distributed around the middle option. A plurality (just over 30 percent) selected the "neither disagree nor agree" category. 30 percent of mayors disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposed tradeoff, while the remaining 40 percent either agreed or strongly agreed. Many mayors cited the geographic variation in the relevance of these policies. As one big city Northern mayor noted, *"You have certain areas where it can happen, and others where it can't."*

Unsurprisingly, there are some modest differences in the preferences of mayors of cities with high property values (median house price in the top third of the national distribution of cities over 100,000 people) **and low property values** (cities in the bottom third of the same distribution).[14] **Figure 15** juxtaposes the views of these two sets of mayors. The mayors of more affluent cities are somewhat more likely to agree with making the tradeoff. More than half endorsed affordable housing requirements even at the expense of new development. Only one-third of their counterparts governing less affluent cities supported the tradeoff. The differences in these two distributions are marginally significant by conventional standards (p=.07).

"[It's] so situational....If I were in a city where development was a problem, I would have answered it differently. But, I'm in a city where every other block is a crane and there are entire neighborhoods I [no longer] recognize."

Figure 15: <u>By median housing value</u> - Cities should require developers to include more affordable housing in new projects even if doing so deters some new development.

Affordable Housing Tradeoffs: By Median House Price
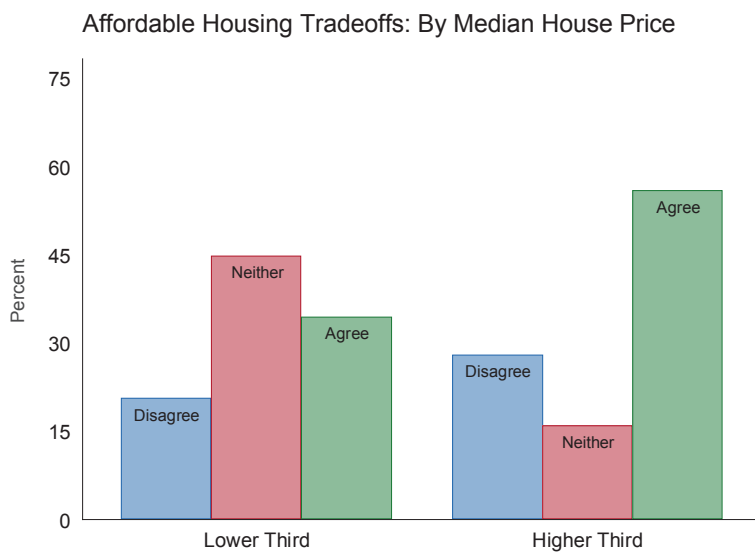
There is even more striking variation between Democratic and Republican mayors. **Figure 16** displays those two sets of mayors. While half of Democratic mayors supported the tradeoffs, only 20 percent of their Republican counterparts similarly agreed. These differences were highly significant (p<0.005). It is important to remember, as previously noted, that mayoral partisanship likely covaries with a number of city traits, making it difficult to separate the effects of partisanship from other correlated traits.

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[14]*Interestingly, mayors of big cities and small cities did not exhibit statistically significant differences on this question (p=.29).*

Figure 16: <u>By partisanship</u> - Cities should require developers to include more affordable housing in new projects even if doing so deters some new development.

Affordable Housing Tradeoffs: By Partisanship
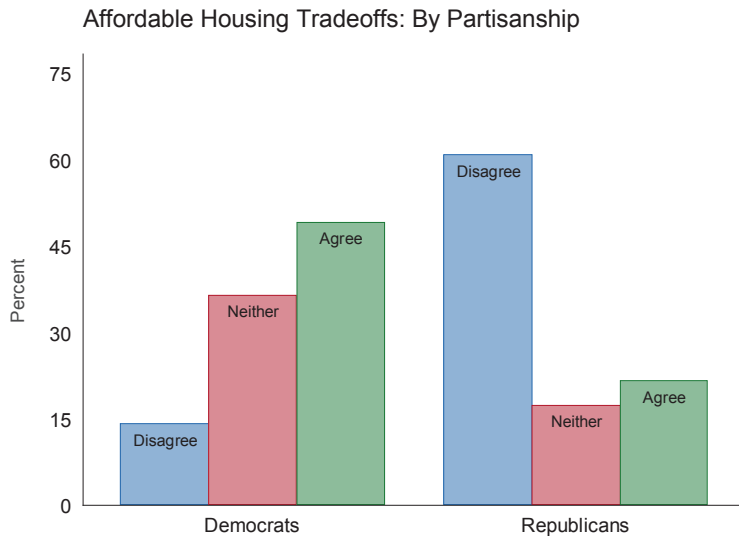
Affordable housing: a standout issue for working with nonprofits. Mayors regularly partner with nonprofits in their efforts to promote affordable housing in their communities. In response to a broader question about partnerships in a variety of areas (full results in **Figure 29**), mayors frequently cited nonprofits as partners on housing issues. Indeed, nearly two-thirds of mayors listed nonprofits as a partner in housing policy—nearly identical to the proportion that mentioned the federal government, the other top response. The next closest response was state government at just over 40 percent. The entity least cited as a partner was other local governments, suggesting that housing continues to be a home-town problem rather than an issue that gets addressed regionally.

# IV. CITY FISCAL HEALTH: NO SINGLE OR SIMPLE PATH

The 2014 Menino Survey revealed the considerable challenges mayors face ensuring the fiscal stability of their cities. Municipal finance was the chief topic they wished they had a greater understanding of and a core issue toward which they were devoting their energies and resources. The 2015 Survey sought to identify specific steps mayors may be willing to consider to address municipal fiscal health, if conditions necessitated it.

Mayors largely agree that municipal fiscal health is an arena in which they are judged by their constituents and over which they have significant control, although they differ in how to improve it. "Budget/financial management" rated high as a driver of constituent approval, roughly equal to crime and the economy. Moreover, mayors similarly concurred that they had a great deal of control over their city's fiscal health.

Where mayors disagree is how to improve their cities' fiscal health and stability in challenging times. Mayors were asked about the two approaches they "would be LEAST likely [to] pursue" if they "needed to improve [their] city's financial health." This question then confronted mayors with a number of potentially unappetizing options: renegotiating union contracts, raising property taxes, raising other taxes and fees, privatizing city services, eliminating city programs, and/or reducing city staff. **Figure 17** provides the number of mayors who mentioned each option as one of their two choices.

"I would be least likely to raise property taxes. I've done just about everything else."
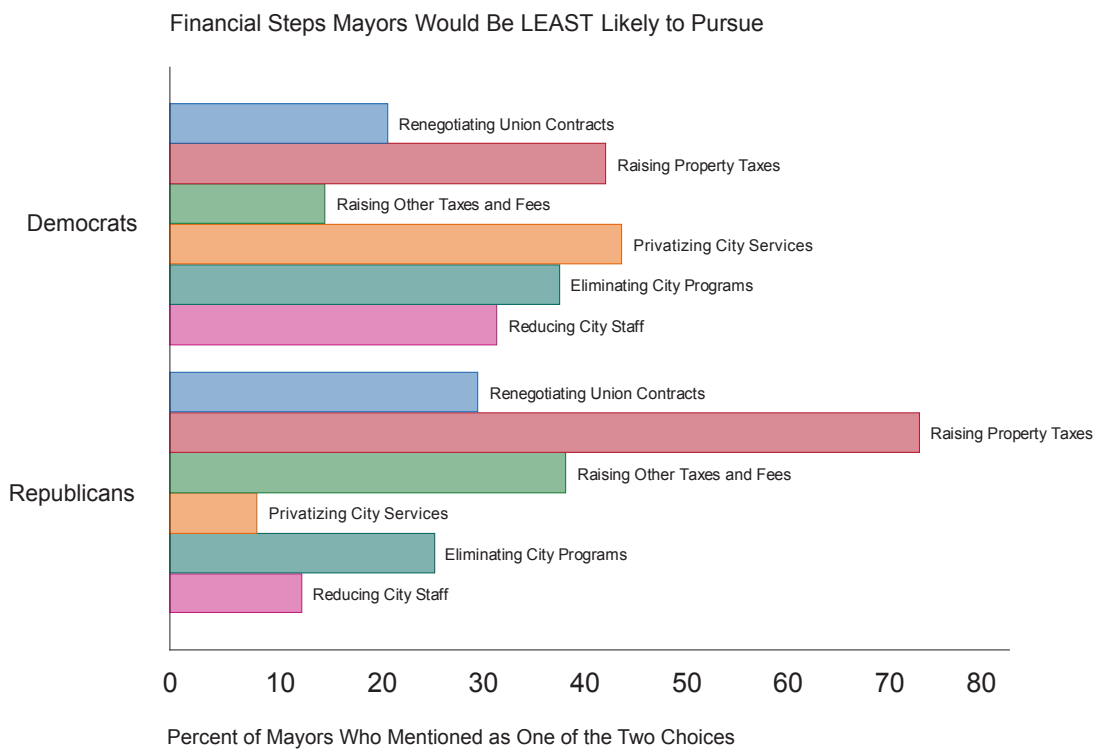
Figure 17: If you needed to improve your city's financial health in the next year, which TWO of the following approaches would you LEAST likely pursue?

Financial Steps Mayors Would Be LEAST Likely to Pursue

Percent of Mayors Who Mentioned as One of the Two Choices
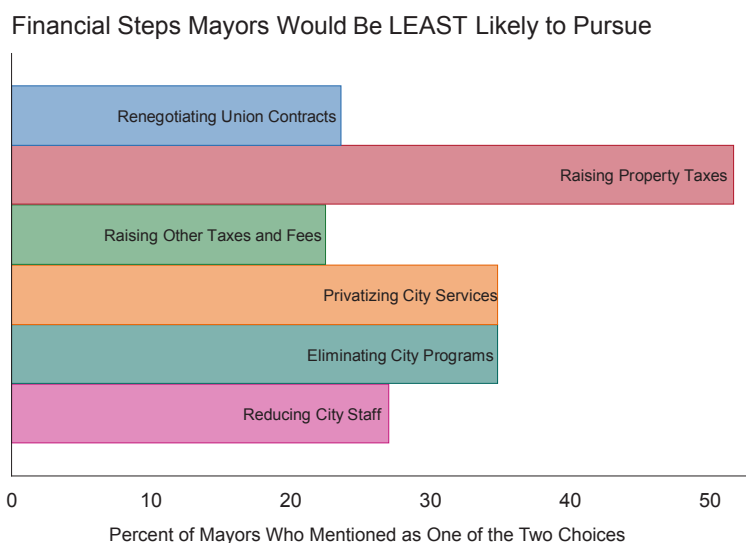
Mayors exhibit notable variation in their responses. While the largest number of mayors selected raising property taxes as one of their least appealing options, each of the others was selected by at least one-fifth of the mayors. There is no one item that mayors would universally resist, nor are there any that rarely made a mayor's top two.

Republican and Democratic mayors expressed different views on what approaches were least attractive. Almost 80 percent of Republican mayors cited raising property taxes as one of their two least attractive options, compared with just under half of Democrats. Meanwhile, almost half of Democrats listed privatizing city services as one of the two least attractive options, with less than 10 percent of Republican mayors agreeing. (**Figure 18**)

Figure 18: <u>By partisanship</u> - If you needed to improve your city's financial health in the next year, which TWO of the following approaches would you LEAST likely pursue?

Financial Steps Mayors Would Be LEAST Likely to Pursue

Percent of Mayors Who Mentioned as One of the Two Choices

V. MAYORAL LEADERSHIP

The 2014 Menino Survey of Mayors devoted considerable time to understanding mayoral leadership and power. It showed that mayors are confident in their ability to work cooperatively with a wide variety of allies and that they rely on a broad array of sources for information and ideas.[15]

This year's survey focused on a related set of questions that provide fresh perspective on how mayors lead. Questions were designed to hone in on specific themes: What do mayors control? Where do they feel constrained? And where do they turn for help and ideas?

Mayoral Accountability

Mayors believe their constituents care about a number of issues, but they also believe that some affect how citizens evaluate them more than others. Moreover, mayors have more control over some of these important city attributes than others. Combined, these realities mean that mayors feel they have to take on a number of challenges and deliver a number of good outcomes to satisfy their constituents and make their cities work.

Mayors are held accountable for a tremendous array of services and issues that affect the quality of life and livability of their cities. To assess mayors' beliefs about constituent accountability, they were asked: "How much do the following drive your constituents' approval of your performance as mayor?" (Some of these results are referenced earlier in this report as they pertain to specific issues discussed.) Mayors possess formal governing powers in some areas, while in others they must exercise influence via soft power. Regardless of the source or nature of their power, they are judged—for better or worse—in many of these arenas by their constituents**.** The average results for each item are displayed in **Figure 19**.

Figure 19: How much do the following drive your constituents' approval of your performance as mayor?

How Much Does Each Drive Constituent Approval of the Mayor?
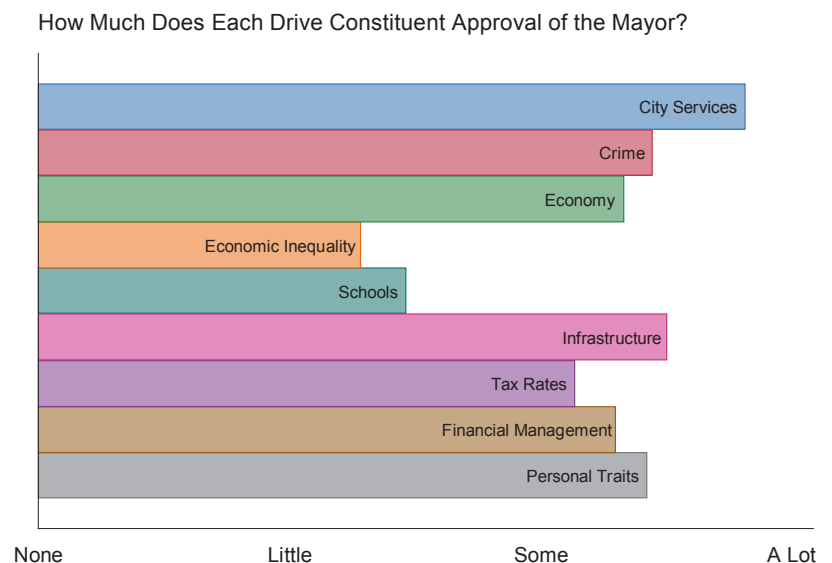
[15] http://www.bu.edu/ioc/files/2015/05/Survey-of-Mayors-Report_2014.pdf

There is significant variation in mayors' beliefs about accountability and the factors that drive citizen satisfaction. While mayors perceive city services, infrastructure, crime, the economy, tax rates, and financial management as having between "some" and "a lot" of influence on constituent approval, they view economic inequality and schools as having comparatively little impact.

For these same policy areas, mayors were asked how much control they have over each. Mean results are illustrated in **Figure 20.** Mayors largely believe that they have control over the same areas that they perceive as central to constituent approval. They rate themselves as having "a lot" of control over city services and financial management, "some" control over infrastructure, tax rates, and the economy, and "little" control over economic inequality and schools.

Figure 20: As mayor, how much control do you have over each of the following areas?

How Much Control Does the Mayor Have Over Each
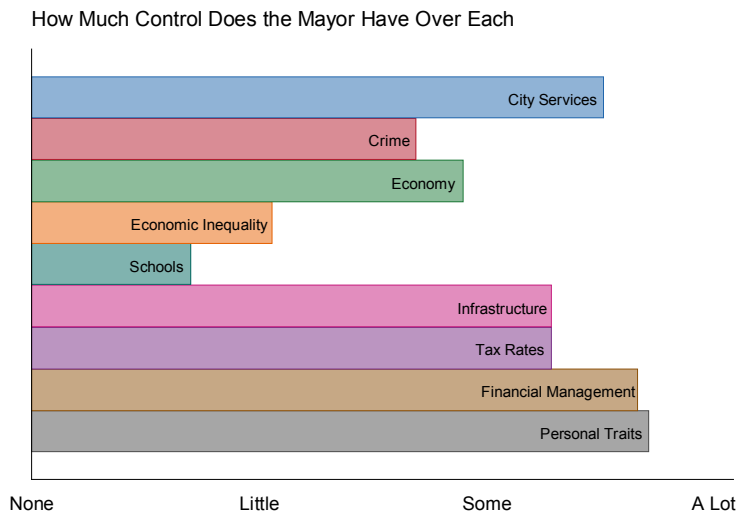
That said, there are some arenas in which there appears to be a substantial gap between what mayors believe they can control and what they believe they are held accountable for. **Figure 21** displays the difference between mayoral perceptions of accountability and control.

Figure 21: Gaps between mayors' perception of how much each drives approval and how much control the mayor has.

Difference Between Accountability and Control
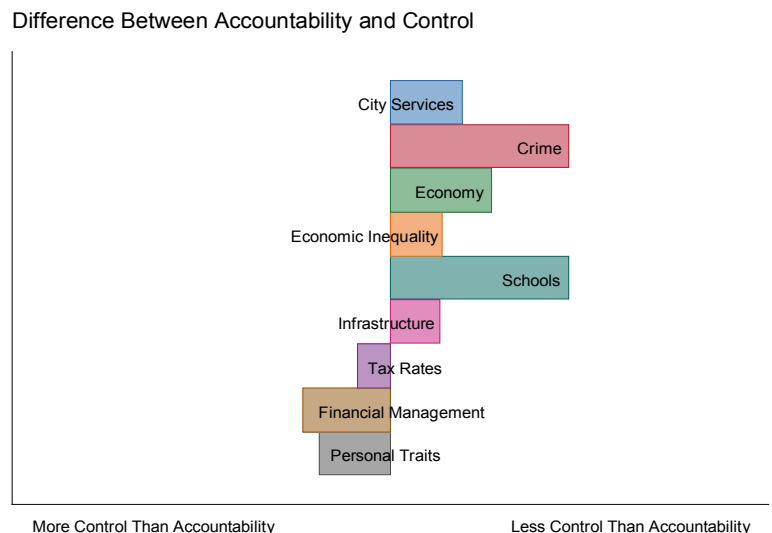
Crime and schools (and to a lesser extent the economy and city services) stand out as arenas in which mayors perceive little control relative to accountability. In many cases, these differences follow naturally from institutional arrangements. Many mayors noted that, despite the fact that their school boards (or districts) are independent entities, many citizens still hold the mayor accountable for education. By contrast, tax rates, financial management, and personal traits are all areas in which mayors believe they have more control than accountability.

Mayoral Constraints: State and Federal Financing and Regulation

To fulfill their obligations to voters, mayors choose to (or have to) work with a mix of policy partners and rely on a range of information sources. Not surprisingly, mayors have mixed views on the ways that their partners help and hinder city governance.

Mayors are dissatisfied with regulations and financial support from federal and, especially, state governments. Mayors, across party lines, expressed little confidence in state and federal government's ability to help them address pressing regional or nationwide challenges. Turning to a more detailed set of questions related to state and federal financial support and restrictions on local autonomy, mayors similarly exhibited dissatisfaction with federalism in practice. Mayors shared their views on the amount of financial support their cities receive from state and federal government, relative to an average city. **Figure 22** shows mayors' views on their state governments, while **Figure 23** does the same for the federal government.

Figure 22: Compared to an average city nationwide, how much financial support do you expect your city to receive from [your state government] in the next year?

Financial Support From State Government Relative to an Average City

Financial Support From Federal Government Relative to an Average City
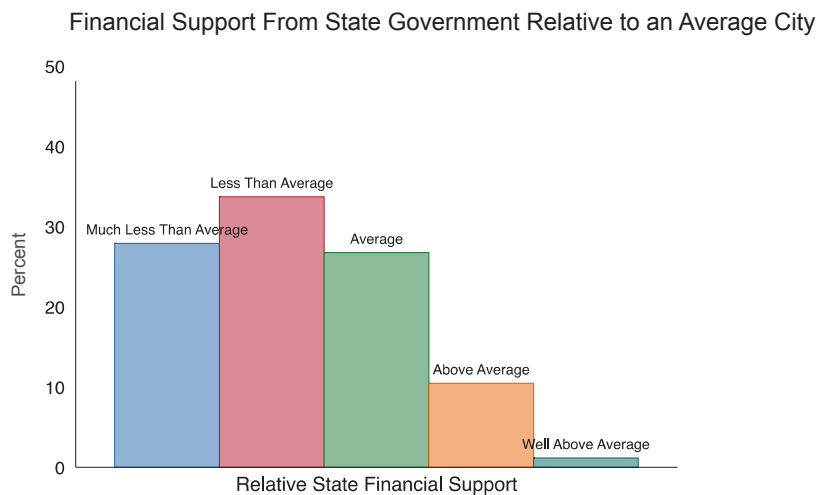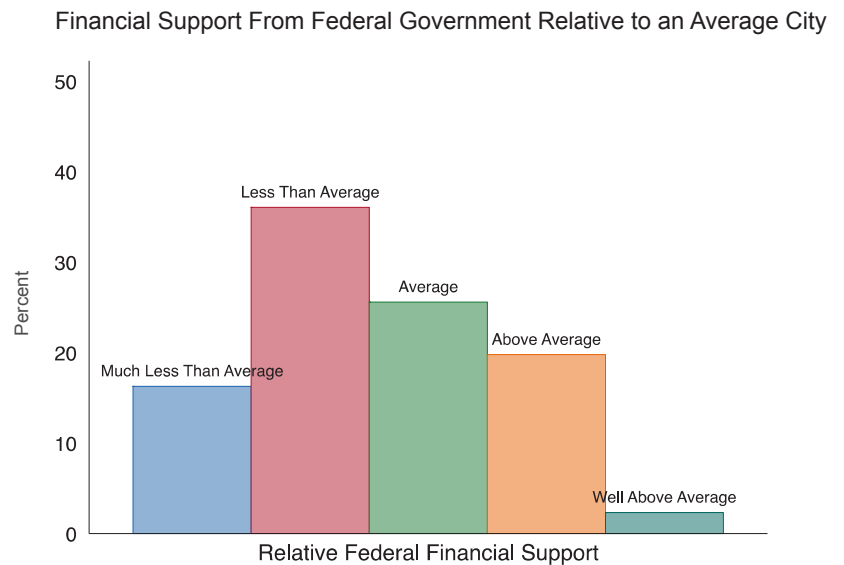
Figure 23: Compared to an average city nationwide, how much financial support do you expect your city to receive from [the federal government] in the next year?

In an inverted "Lake Wobegon" situation, the majority of mayors believe that they are receiving either "much less than average" or "less than average" funding from their state and federal governments, relative to average cities nationwide. Views of state financial support are particularly negative, with 30 percent of mayors stating that they receive "much less than average" financial support from their state governments. Interestingly, virtually no mayors believe that they are getting more than their peers, with a negligible number of mayors stating that they receive "well above average" levels of financial support from either the state or federal government.

Mayors were asked an analogous question that focused on preemption and restrictions on their policy making autonomy. Mayors revealed the extent to which state and federal laws and regulations limit their policy making autonomy and flexibility. Here, sharper differences are observed when comparing mayoral perceptions of state and federal government. **Figure 24** and **Figure 25** show mayors' views.

Restrictions on Autonomy From State Government Relative to an Average City

Figure 24: Compared to an average city nationwide, how much do you expect laws and regulations (existing and new) from [your state government] to limit your city's policy making autonomy and flexibility?
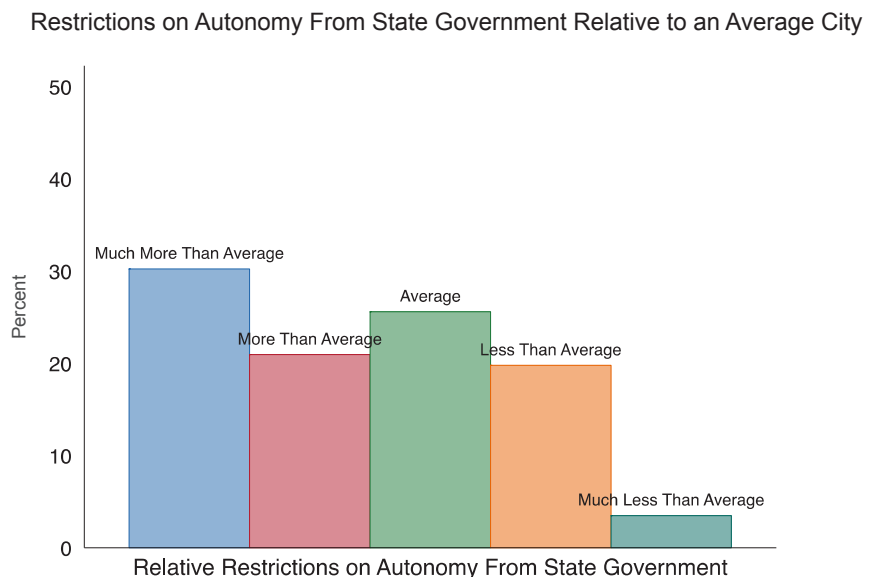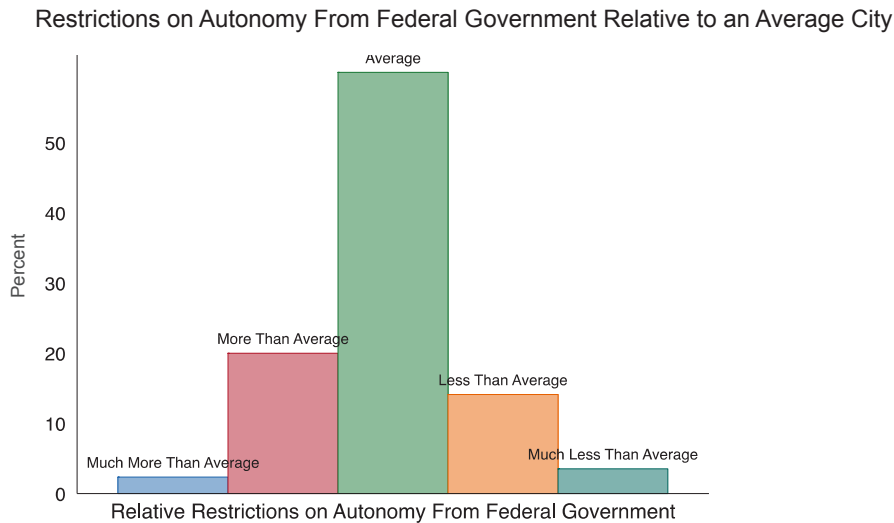
Figure 25: Compared to an average city nationwide, how much do you expect laws and regulations (existing and new) from [the federal government] to limit your city's policy making autonomy and flexibility?

Restrictions on Autonomy From Federal Government Relative to an Average City

Mayors feel their autonomy is unfairly limited by their state government, but they are treated equitably by the federal government. The majority of mayors describe their state governments as "much more" or "more" restrictive than average. As with financial support, mayors thus appear to have largely negative attitudes towards their state governments. In contrast, a strong majority of mayors describe the restrictions they receive from the federal government as "average," suggesting that, at a minimum, most mayors do not feel abnormally limited by the federal government. The differentiation in responses also reveals that the frustration with state government is meaningful. Mayors are not simply venting general dissatisfaction about restrictions. They are differentiating one potential source from another.

Many mayors suggested that, as a consequence of their state's regulatory environment, their relationship with their state government was particularly uncooperative. One Southern mayor stated that working with her state has been "*Extremely combative….because of extreme rhetoric on cities supposedly overreaching on local control.*" She noted, "*There's a political rhetoric at the expense of reasonable and rational policy making.*" A Midwestern mayor, whose party controls the state legislature, was even harsher about his state government; when asked about restrictions from his state, he observed, "*Our state is nuts.*" While many mayors were certainly unhappy with various federal regulations, none of them expressed such outright dissatisfaction with the federal government.

"[The state] believes in local control, and what they mean by local control is state control. They want the federal government to stay out of their business, but they want to control what every municipality does."

The Need for Autonomy: Specific Restrictive Policies

What are the specific areas in which mayors are frustrated by limits on their policy making autonomy? Mayors were asked to name both a state and a federal regulation that they wished to see repealed. In response to both questions, mayors listed a wide variety of policy areas, including healthcare, taxation, drug laws, gun laws, and unions/pensions, but their responses did cluster around several key policy areas.

Starting with state regulations, 19 mayors want to repeal or change laws relating to local revenue options, and another eight focus on the distribution of revenues. Other frequently cited policy areas include restrictions on pension programs (six mentions), gun control laws (five mentions), and other idiosyncratic limitations on autonomy (eight mentions).

Given the different purviews of state and federal government, the most frequently cited laws and regulations unsurprisingly differed at the federal level. **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rules dominated the list of federal laws and regulations that mayors wished to see repealed.** 14 mayors highlighted EPA rules—specifically their disproportionate impact on urban areas as "unfunded mandates." As one Midwestern mayor said, *"Are there other environmental problems out there? Yes, but having the federal government be a school mom rather than a partner, saying,* 'You fix your problem. We're going to sanction you.' *Well, how about some help? It's called the Superfund."* Notably, unlike other environmental issues, these frustrations were perfectly balanced across party lines. That is, Democrats (18.5 percent) were just as likely as Republicans (19 percent) to name something related to an EPA mandate.

Other frequently cited policy areas include gun laws (seven mentions), immigration laws (seven mentions), and marijuana legislation (six mentions). Interestingly, 10 mayors were unable to come up with a single federal law that they wanted to see repealed or changed, in contrast with just two at the state level, suggesting greater dissatisfaction with state regulations.

Municipal Policy Partners

Mayors work with a variety of different government, private, and nonprofit sector partners, with state government leading the way. Across a variety of policy areas, mayors were asked about their most common partners. Possible answers included their state government, federal government, local business community, nonprofits/philanthropic organizations, and surrounding local governments. Interestingly, despite their negative views towards their state governments, mayors still overwhelmingly list them as governing partners. **Figure 29** displays the percent of mayors who named each partner in each area.

State governments receive the most total mentions (363). Moreover, they feature as frequent governing partners across the widest array of policy areas. There are no areas in which state government is an infrequent partner. The federal government and other local governments also receive a large number of mentions—305 and 331, respectively.

Public/private and public/nonprofit partnerships, although less frequently cited, are common discretionary partners. Nonprofits (225 mentions) and the business community (252 mentions) were named less frequently than states, but these data are perhaps more revealing. In many cases, other government entities are essentially mandatory partners, and many mayors indicated as much. This may be because of funding sources, regulatory laws, or a function of overlapping jurisdictions, as with a water district. Partnerships with the business community and nonprofits are voluntary and are a reflection of mayors' discretionary choices. They also closely tie to the enthusiasm that some mayors have for public-private partnerships in local policy.

Figure 26 displays the variation in partnership patterns between mayors and the many types of organizations with which they work. Nonprofits were the most cited partners in education and second only to the federal governments as a partner on affordable housing efforts. (**Figure 29**)

Figure 26: For voluntary partnerships - Which of the following entities are you most likely to partner with in each of the following areas? Check all that apply.

Policy Partnership Mentions by Partner and Area
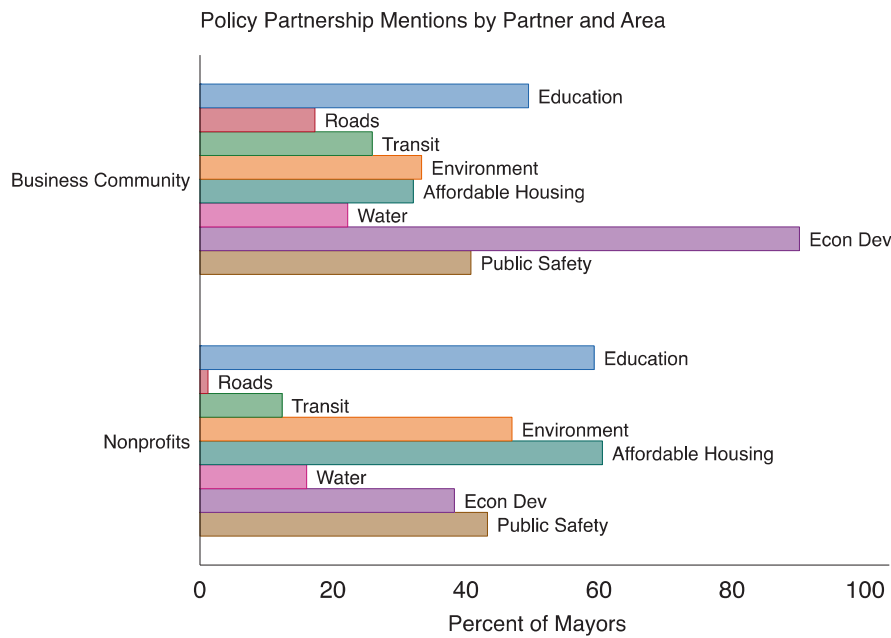
The business community was the most mentioned partner, by far, in economic development, and was cited as a partner in unexpected areas including public safety and education. Among all the possible policy/partner combinations, partnering with the business community to address economic development was the most common. This is not a surprising marriage. What was more surprising was the frequency with which the business community was cited in public safety and education. Few members of the general public might imagine that mayors would turn to their business leaders for support in these areas, although business leaders would likely say that both are directly linked to their productivity and ability to attract and retain talent.

Finally, as **Figure 29** makes clear, there are also areas in which public-private partnerships are much less common to mayors. In roads, transit, and water infrastructure, for example, the business community and nonprofits are less frequent partners, while state and federal governments are the most commonly cited allies. While less frequently cited, the businesses and nonprofits may be partners of choice while government actors are partners of necessity.

Sources of Policy Inspiration

Mayors obtain policy ideas from a wide variety of cities. As in 2014, mayors were asked about the cities from which they have gleaned three recent policy ideas. **Figure 27** shows the percent of mayors naming each city. It depicts every city mentioned more than once and *thus excludes a wide array of cities that exactly one mayor mentioned.*

"I'm a big believer in stealing other people's good ideas. I diligently look for those opportunities in my reading."

Figure 27: Which three cities (either domestic or foreign) have you recently looked to for policy ideas.

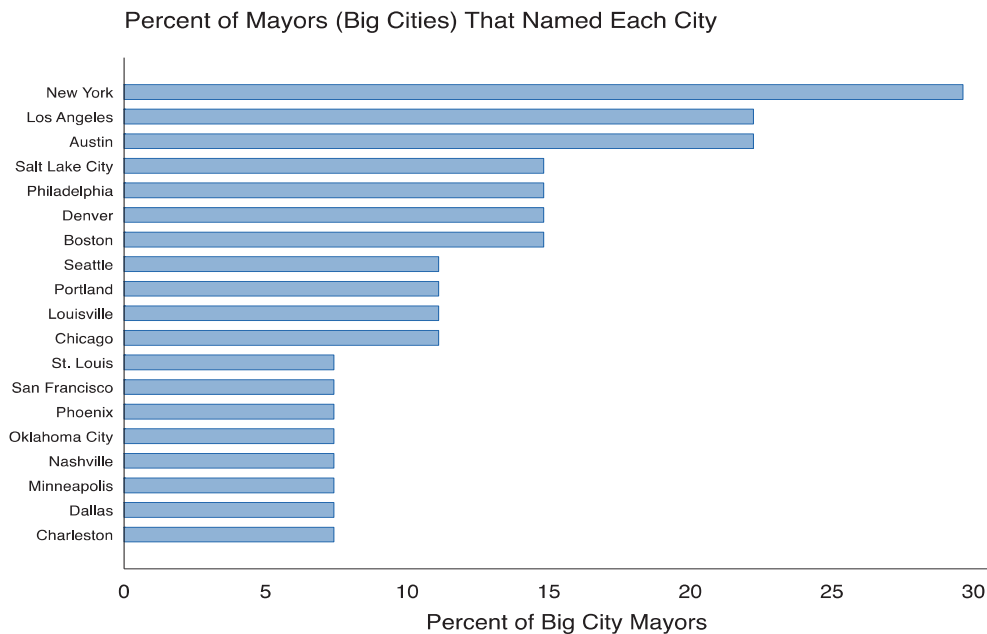Percent of Mayors That Named Each City
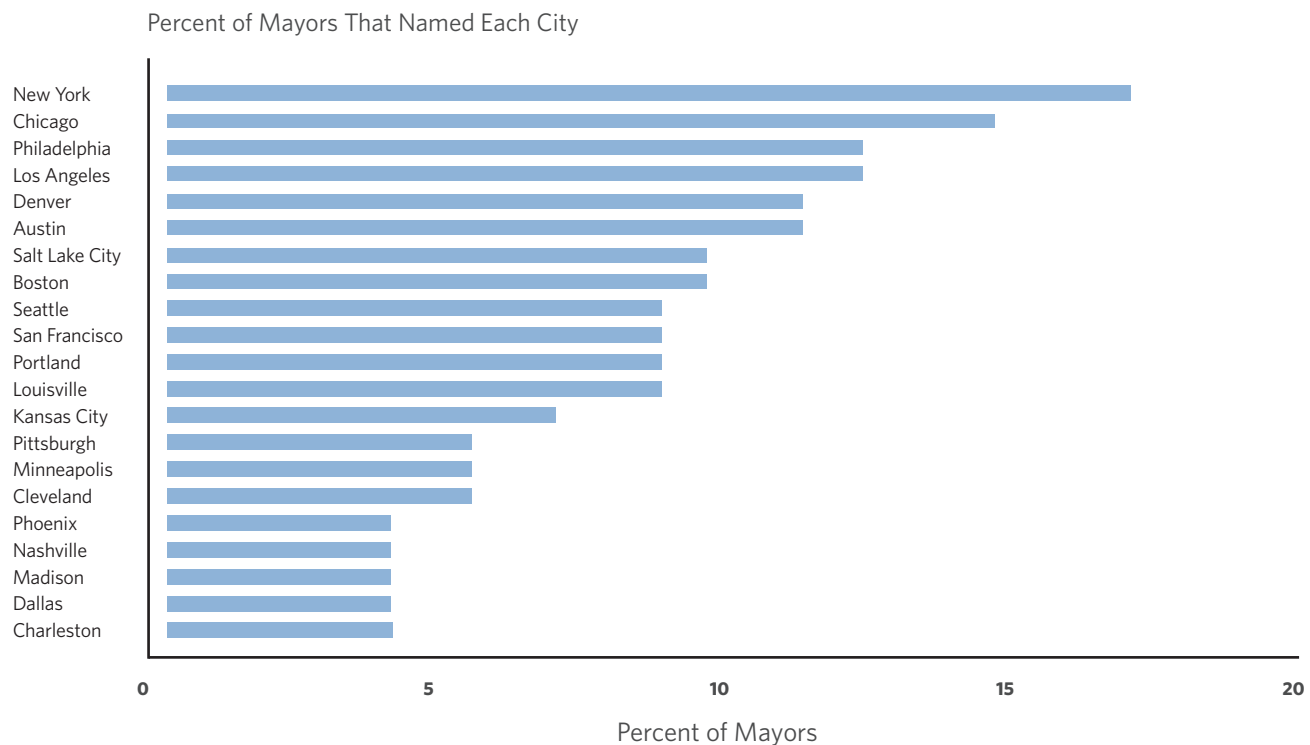
Cities receiving more than one mention but less than 5 percent of total mentions: Washington, DC, St. Louis, Somerville, Oklahoma City, Mesa, Houston, Ft. Lauderdale, Fargo, Detroit, Cincinnati, Chattanooga, Boulder, Baltimore, Anaheim.

New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Denver, Austin, Salt Lake City, and Boston were cited by more than 10 percent of mayors. Just as important, however, is the *breadth* of cities named by surveyed mayors. In addition to those cities that garnered repeat mentions, 49 other cities, including a number of foreign ones, were mentioned by one mayor. So, while some cities appear on these lists more than others, mayors look to a wide range of places, and no one city (and no set of cities) is overwhelmingly influential as a source of policy information. Indeed, the most commonly cited cities were listed by fewer than 20 percent of the mayors even though each mayor got to name three.

City size does impact where mayors look for ideas. **Figure 28** displays both graphs. Big city mayors named New York, Los Angeles, Austin, Salt Lake City, Philadelphia, Denver, Boston, Seattle, Portland, Louisville, and Chicago more than 10 percent of the time. By contrast, only Chicago and Philadelphia were named by more than 10 percent of small/medium-sized city mayors. Instead, the mayors of smaller cities cite a wider range of communities as sources of policy ideas.

Figure 28: <u>By city size</u> - Cities that mayors look to for policy ideas.

Percent of Mayors (Big Cities) That Named Each City

Percent of Mayors (Small/Medium Cities) That Named Each City
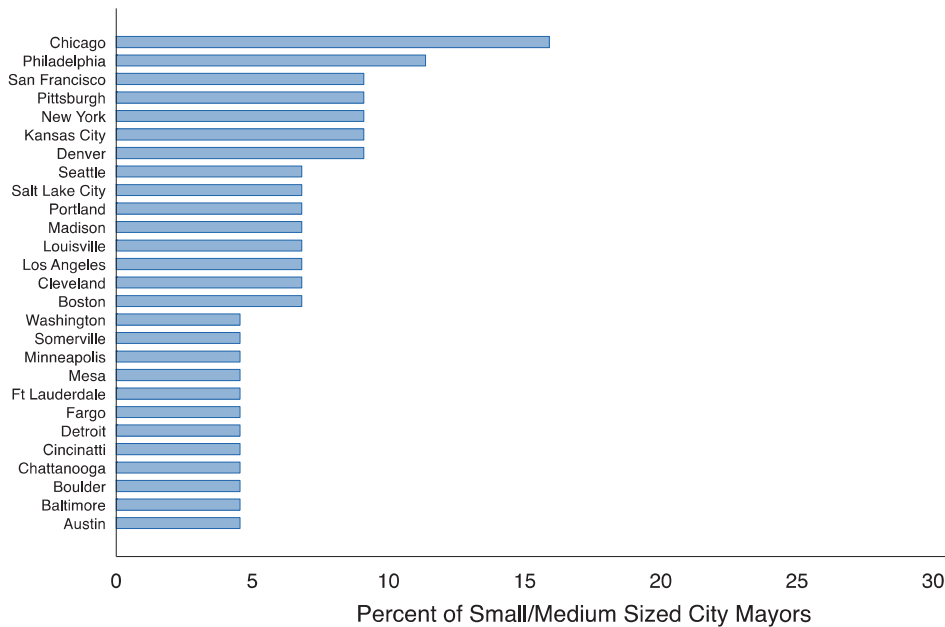
Mayors are generally drawn by best practices and success stories in specific policy areas. Mayors elaborated on *why* they look to specific cities, and their motivations were coded into several different categories: (1) specific policy area; (2) personal connection to the mayor; (3) city similarity; (4) general effectiveness/innovation; (5) professional networks; (6) close proximity; and (7) visit to city. The most commonly cited motivation—highlighted by a whopping 68 percent of mayors—was "policy specific." These mayors believed that their chosen city approached a specific policy area in a way that they perceived to be especially effective or innovative. For example, the mayor of a medium-sized city mentioned looking for ideas related to poverty: *"We're researching the programs that they have, and that have made significant improvements."* In a very different policy arena, another mayor cited, *"Cleveland because…[their] bus rapid transit is a good model for what we want to do here."*

Still, relationships matter and help in the dissemination of good policy ideas. 27 percent of mayors noted personal connections to another city's mayor as a factor in selecting it as a policy source **(Table 2)**. As one mayor said, *"I think there's some pretty tremendous mayors out there that have done some pretty good things. I'd like to include myself in that group."* 23 percent of mayors noted their desire to learn from similar cities. For example, one emphasized, *"…similar values, but in some ways there may also be a lot of similar demographics, and also similar problems."* Other commonly cited reasons included general, rather than policy specific expertise or success (21 percent of mayors), professional networks (18 percent), and geographic proximity (17 percent).

TABLE 2: RATIONALE FOR SELECTING CITIES OF INSPIRATION

|	Percent of Mayors Giving Reason (Mayors provided an average of two reasons)	Percent of All Reasons Given
Specific Policy Area	68%	36%
Personal Connection To Mayor	27%	14%
City Similarity	23%	12%
General Effectiveness / Innovativeness (not tied to a specific policy area)	21%	11%
Professional Networks (e.g., conferences)	18%	10%
Close Proximity	17%	9%
Learned on a Visit to City	7%	4%

CONCLUSION

After having completed two years of the Menino Survey of Mayors, several striking themes emerge from our many conversations with America's mayors. Perhaps most importantly, mayors are tackling a wide breadth of complex policy challenges, including infrastructure, poverty, and policing, that are at the forefront of the day-to-day lives of American citizens. Moreover, they are receiving relatively little support from their federal and, especially, state governments. In other words, mayors today feel that they are tasked with some of the most thorny policy issues facing America without the accompanying aid from higher levels of government that their predecessors might have expected.

We hope in future analyses and conversations with America's mayors to further explore this complicated—and potentially deteriorating—relationship between local, state, and federal governments to better understand how to bring together different units of government in tackling the most salient economic, social, and environmental issues.

APPENDIX

Policy Partners by Policy Area

Figure 29: Which of the following entities are you most likely to partner with in each of the following areas? Check all that apply.

Policy Partners by Policy Area

NOTES
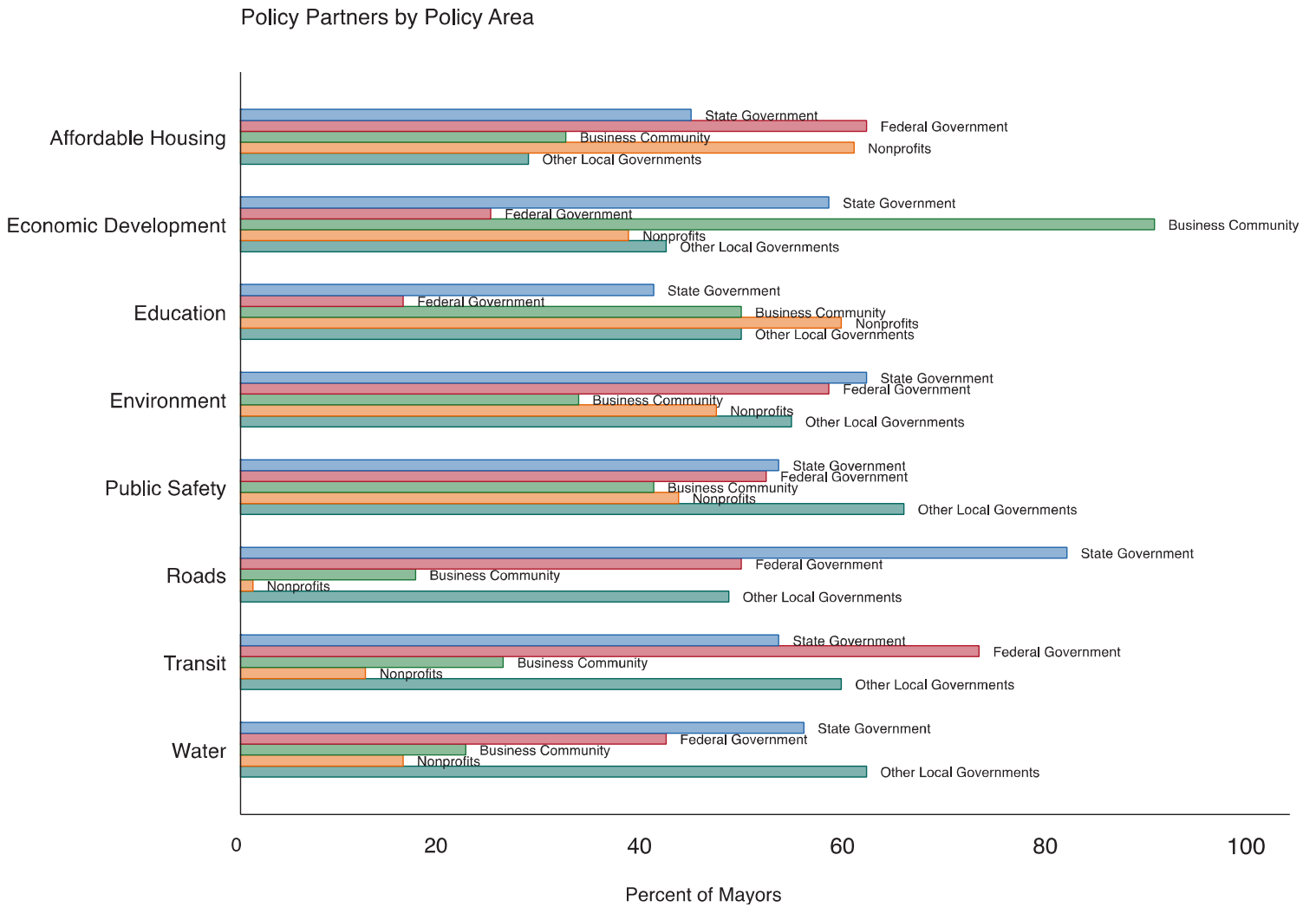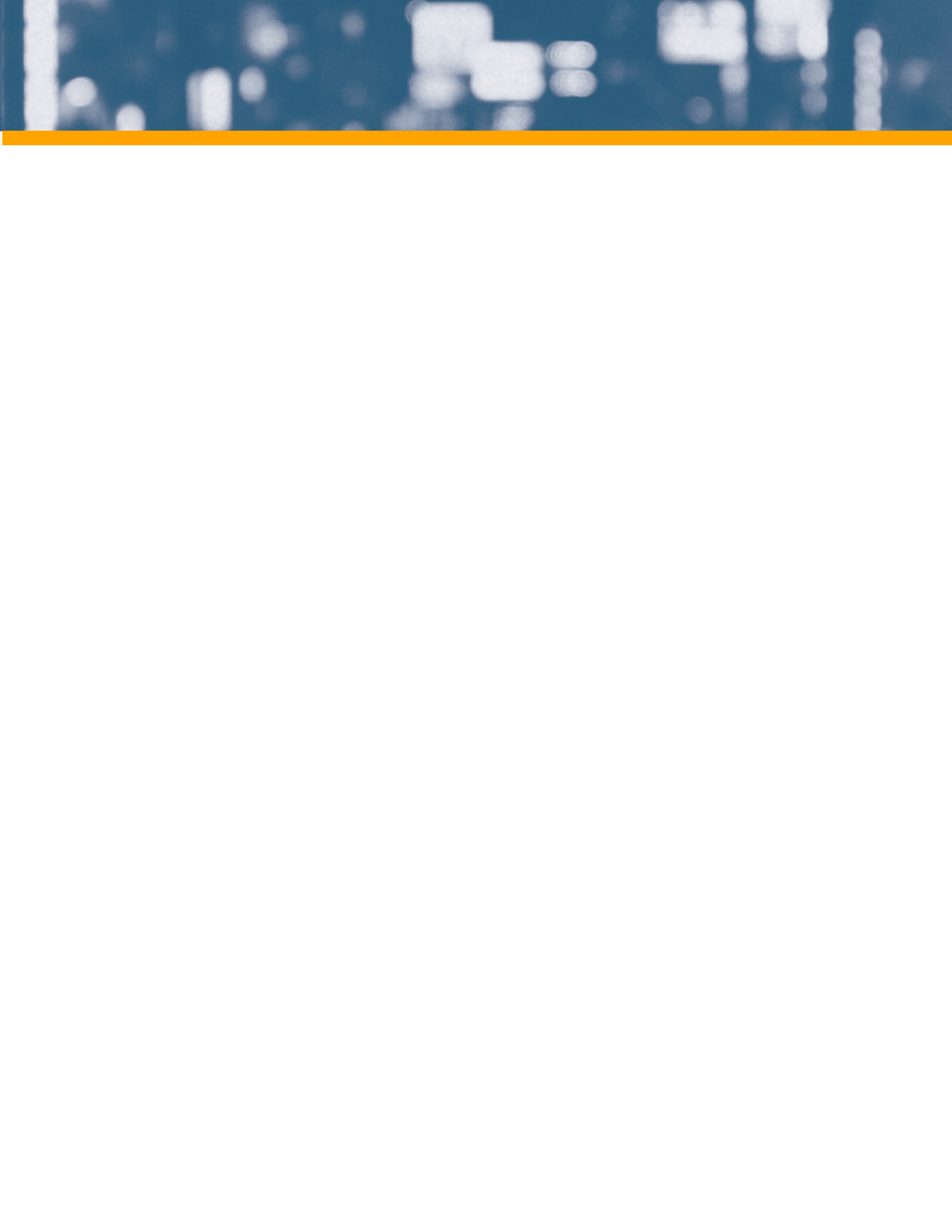
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