

# Giving to Revitalize

## Examining philanthropic influence in revitalizing small legacy cities

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### Background

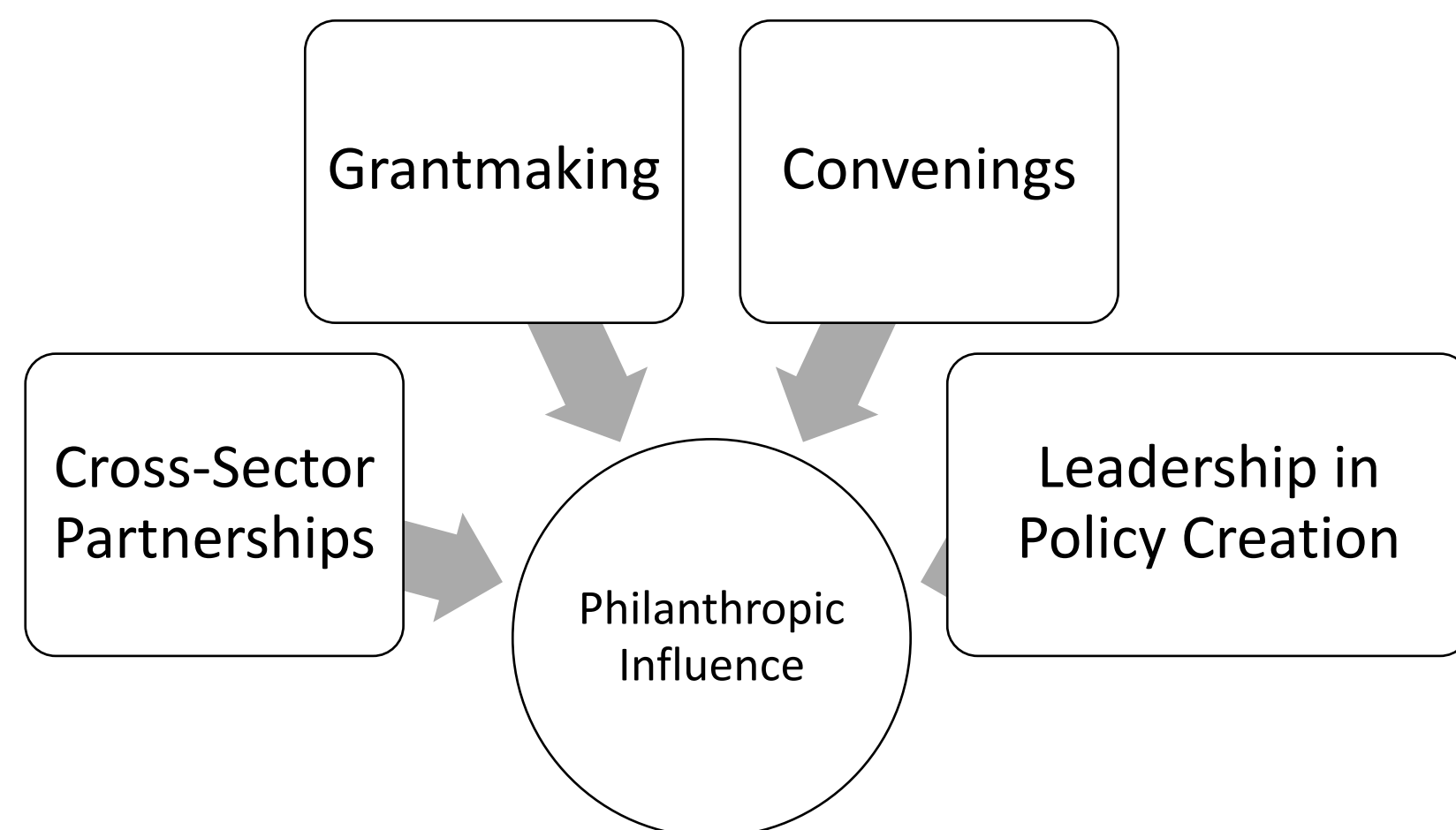
As U.S. cities facing depopulation and low economic growth, legacy cities have faced challenges to growth for the last six decades. As time passed, foundations began to fund urban revitalization causes in these cities (Rocco, 2016). Scholars see them as potential agents of policy influence and economic growth in the city (Berglund, 2020; Thomson, 2020). However, studies of potential philanthropic influence have not been investigated in smaller legacy cities. This missing knowledge may exclude smaller cities from the growing attention larger legacy cities are getting.

**Research Question:** How have place-based philanthropies influenced urban revitalization in small legacy cities?

### Methods

The study followed a two-phase case study; we began with a quantitative data exploration of the 25 largest legacy cities by population to determine case selection (N=25) of four small legacy cities. Data was extracted from the 2014 and 2019 American Community Surveys, 1950 U.S. Census Data, and Foundation Center Directory data from 2014-2019.

We then performed a content analysis, coding texts related to revitalization projects influenced by foundations. To guide our coding of the data sources (including articles, speeches, and reports), we defined it in four ways:



### Findings

There was virtually no evidence for philanthropy-influenced revitalization in Warren, Michigan.

City	Grantmaking	Cross-Sector Partnerships	Convenings	Leadership in Policy Creation
Dayton	Brethren Tower for the Callahan Clock	University of Dayton Fitz Center building	N/A	N/A
New Haven	Revitalization of Starr Street	New Haven City Transformation Plan	Community Foundation Annual Meetings	New Haven City Transformation Plan
Syracuse	Salt City Market	Connective Corridor	ReLeaf Syracuse	Blueprint 15

### Other Findings

Across all three cities...

- Foundations partnered with anchor institution universities
- Foundations established initiatives embracing local history
- Philanthropically-influenced revitalization was defined by family and community foundations

### Implications

Foundations	Local Governments	Urban Theory
Family and community foundations should leverage community networks (especially those with residents) to spark revitalization work.	Small legacy cities can consider integrating local foundations (i.e. family and community foundations) into urban revitalization strategies.	Frequency of partnerships with other elites bolsters the urban growth coalition theory (Moloch, 1976), extending it to small legacy cities, and clarifying the role philanthropies have in the coalition.