California city leaders rose to new heights yet again in 2021, harnessing strength, pragmatism, and resilience to serve their communities. And just as the League of California Cities has done for more than a century, we were right alongside our city officials, supporting their efforts to improve the quality of life for residents in their communities.

Cal Cities delivered for our members again in 2021 by advancing key legislative priorities and providing high-caliber educational opportunities. As we embark on a new year, I’d like to reflect on the tremendous progress we made together last year.

Working together with our local leaders and partners, we achieved historic funding for broadband, more than a billion dollars for affordable housing and infrastructure, billions of dollars to help those experiencing homelessness, and billions more to help California’s cities recover from the pandemic and rebuild.

We also expanded our educational offerings, both virtually and in person. We continued to move forward our Advancing Equity initiative and supported city leaders with resources, education, and training to help normalize equity concepts, so they become part of everyday conversations that result in actionable change.

With our advocacy and educational programs as strong as ever, so is our membership, with four cities joining as members this past year, bringing our total number of member cities to 479 out of 482, the highest number of member cities since 2009.

Throughout the year, the Cal Cities Strategic Growth Plan, which charts our organization’s course for success, guided our efforts. Together, we mobilized more city leaders in our advocacy efforts, leveraged partnerships to advance legislative priorities, revamped our educational conferences and trainings, and restructured our League Partner program to maximize the value of the program for member cities, League Partners, and Cal Cities. We also began implementing changes to our governance system to enhance membership engagement in leadership opportunities, increase our overall effectiveness in fulfilling our mission and vision as an organization, and ensure that the pathway to leadership is transparent and inclusive.

We also transformed our Cal Cities brand identity, with a new logo and colors that infuse a rejuvenated pride, energy, diversity, and vitality into the mission of strengthening California cities through advocacy and education. Along with the new brand, we launched a new dynamic and accessible website designed to make it easier to find the valuable resources and information that city leaders need.

None of these achievements could have been possible without the tireless efforts of the talented Cal Cities staff, who remain steadfast in carrying out our mission of serving our members. I would like to thank them, as well as our 2020-21 Cal Cities officers and board members for their leadership and guidance, and our League Partners for their generous and continued support of this organization. Together, with all of you, we are driving policies that support California cities and the residents who call our cities home.

With that, I proudly present the Cal Cities 2021 Annual Report, which captures our collective achievements in support of California cities over the past year. I look forward to all we will accomplish together in 2022.

Sincerely,

Carolyn M. Coleman
Executive Director and CEO
League of California Cities
Strengthen California cities through proactive advocacy on common priority issues.

For many cities, the beginning of 2021 felt just like the previous year, as they were still reeling from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19, and fiscal relief from the state and federal governments was far from certain. In the State Capitol, lawmakers were still dealing with the aftermath of a truncated, chaotic 2020 legislative session, where many key bills met a sudden, unceremonious end. These challenges did not deter Cal Cities. Powered by a strong network of city officials from throughout the state, we advanced on our member-driven advocacy agenda in 2021.

Secure state and federal funding for local COVID-19 public health response and economic recovery for all.

At the beginning of 2021, the state was basking in a financial windfall and the federal government was poised to deliver billions in aid to American families and businesses impacted by the pandemic. In contrast, pandemic-related expenses and public health orders that shut down local economies left California cities bracing for a collective $7 billion budget shortfall. The $500 million in federal CARES Act funding cities received in 2020 helped lay a foundation for recovery but paled in comparison to the magnitude of the pandemic’s impact on city budgets.

In response, Cal Cities expanded on our efforts from the previous year, urging the federal government to do more to support cities’ recovery and calling on the Governor and the Legislature to make relief for cities a priority in the state budget.

Following a nearly year-long advocacy effort through Cal Cities’ Support Local Recovery coalition, and alongside strong partners like the National League of Cities in Washington, D.C., Cal Cities helped deliver $8 billion in direct, flexible funding for every California city through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Our work didn’t stop once ARPA became law. Cal Cities recognized that cities needed more than fiscal relief to jump start recovery in their communities; they needed support in the implementation process.

In 2018, the League of California Cities launched a Strategic Growth Plan to guide our growth and take the value we deliver to our members to even greater levels. The plan outlines six goals to inform Cal Cities’ actions and ensure progress. This annual report highlights Cal Cities’ achievements this year, including progress on each of these goals in 2021:

1. Strengthen California cities through proactive advocacy on common priority issues.
2. Increase the capacity of city officials and staff in California to provide the highest level of service to their communities.
3. Maintain high relevance and facilitate meaningful member engagement.
4. Raise Cal Cities’ visibility as the preeminent voice for cities in California.
5. Enhance Cal Cities’ governance to achieve even higher levels of engagement and effectiveness.
6. Expand Cal Cities’ organizational capacity to fulfill its mission and implement its strategic priorities.
To help cities maximize the benefit of this one-time funding, Cal Cities created the Guide to Local Recovery. This online portal featured up-to-date information about accessing ARPA funding, as well as new tools and guidance for city leaders to inform their investment of these resources in their communities. Cal Cities worked closely with the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the California Department of Finance to streamline the application process for ARPA fiscal recovery funds and ensure cities’ concerns were addressed as the implementation guidance was developed. Cal Cities also hosted webinars for cities with key state and federal officials to support the use of ARPA funding and resources. Because of this focus, California was one of the first states to distribute ARPA fiscal recovery funds to all its municipalities.

Secure funding to increase the supply and affordability of housing and resources to assist individuals at risk of — or already experiencing — homelessness while preserving local decision-making.

Cal Cities was also successful in securing funding for local housing and homelessness in the state budget. For years, Cal Cities has advocated for ongoing, dedicated state funding to help address California’s affordable housing crisis while preserving local decision-making and defending against attacks on local zoning authority. Last year was no different, and Cal Cities and our cities emerged with victories.

With Cal Cities’ support, the state funded a strong partnership with cities to increase housing supply and address homelessness. The 2021-22 approved state budget slated $10 billion for local affordable housing and homelessness programs. This includes funding for local governments to prevent and address homelessness while also creating new units of housing for unhoused residents. The budget also includes more than $750 million to support affordable housing development.

Similar to recent years, Cal Cities continued to sideline attacks on local zoning authority. It was over Cal Cities’ strong opposition and that of hundreds of cities that SB 9 (Atkins), a bill that overrides local land use authority, became law.

Improve state-local coordination and planning to strengthen community disaster preparedness, resiliency, and recovery.

In 2020, pandemic-driven budget shortfalls forced legislators and the Governor to rework the state budget. Much needed funding for local disaster preparedness, resiliency, and recovery efforts landed on the chopping block. With the state entering a second consecutive dry year, less than five years after the end of a devastating, multiyear drought and wildfires posing an urgent threat to communities, it was clear that resources were desperately needed for those on the front lines of climate change: cities.

In response, Cal Cities partnered with key legislators to secure $4.5 billion in the state budget to help cities prepare for, fight, and recover from wildfires, as well as update local coastal plans and fund urban climate resiliency programs. In the final days of the legislative session, lawmakers also passed two trailer bills including millions of dollars for environmental issues, including an ongoing, ten-year appropriation of $200 million to CALFIRE for healthy forest fire prevention programs, prescribed burns, and other fuel reduction projects. The trailer bills were accompanied by Cal Cities-supported SB 1 (Atkins), which establishes new planning, assessment, funding, and mitigation tools for California cities to implement a tailored approach to address sea level rise in their communities.

Protect and modernize critical infrastructure.

The pandemic shined a floodlight on the magnitude of existing local infrastructure needs,
including the growing digital divide. For years, Cal Cities has been at the forefront of a national conversation about the need for high-quality, affordable broadband in all of our communities — rural, urban, and suburban. The pandemic laid bare the reality that many Californians are struggling to stay connected while working from home, attending school online, or visiting the doctor remotely.

While legislative infighting dealt a blow to our efforts to secure an infrastructure funding package in 2020, Cal Cities continued to push hard on the issue in 2021. By the summer our efforts paid off. In July, a $6 billion broadband package — then the country’s largest public broadband infrastructure investment — became law. This package ensures local leaders have more opportunities to participate in the process of bringing more affordable and higher quality broadband services to their communities. It also prioritizes the construction of networks in unserved areas, as well as those with lower speeds not suitable for education, commerce, and video conferencing, ensuring that these services are available to those who need them the most.

Cal Cities also worked closely with Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry and Sen. Lena Gonzalez to develop two complementary bills: AB 14 (Aguiar-Curry) and SB 4 (Gonzalez). The two measures prioritize equitable broadband deployment and expand funding opportunities for local governments to further deploy broadband.

Cal Cities was also successful in getting the Governor to veto SB 556 (Dodd), a measure that would have undermined local control over local rights of way by forcing local governments to make space on public infrastructure available to telecommunications providers. In his veto message, the Governor made clear that local governments have an important role in the process of deploying broadband in local communities.

It also became clear in 2021 that cities would need additional time and resources to implement SB 1383 (Lara, Statutes of 2016), new regulations involving organic waste diversion. Working closely with Sen. John Laird, Cal Cities successfully advocated for SB 619 (Laird), which gives local governments a pathway to compliance with the new regulations.

In addition to securing state infrastructure resources for cities, Cal Cities also delivered at the federal level. Before the end of the year, the federal government responded to our calls for greater infrastructure investment with the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which comprises billions in new federal investments in the nation’s infrastructure, including more than $25 billion for California to repair roads, bridges, and highways and more than $600 million to prepare transportation systems for extreme weather, drought, and wildfires.

Other notable legislative achievements

Although most of our legislative advocacy this year focused on the priorities included in the 2021 Action Agenda, Cal Cities also secured significant wins on other important issues for cities.

Cal Cities helped secure major Brown Act relief for cities, ensuring that local officials could continue to manage and operate city services safely and uninterrupted during an emergency. These efforts included the Governor’s signing of AB 361 (Robert, Rivas), which allows cities to continue meeting remotely — including during future states of emergency — and the veto of AB 339 (Lee), which would have preempted local decision-making over how local public meetings are conducted and substantially increased costs for cities.
help cities implement SB 1383 organic waste diversion regulations, and more than $100 million for organic waste infrastructure. This is the largest amount of money ever set aside for cities in a single fiscal year for SB 1383 implementation.

Recognitions

In 2021, Cal Cities recognized state lawmakers who were champions for local issues in the halls of the Capitol. Cal Cities honored Assembly Member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (Winters), Sen. Lena Gonzalez (Long Beach), and Sen. John Laird (Santa Cruz) with the Distinguished Legislative Leadership Award for their unwavering support and dedication to local communities throughout the year.

The efforts of these three legislators — all of whom have served as city leaders — demonstrated their recognition of the value of local governments and their commitment to ensuring cities have the tools they need to help their communities recover and rebuild.

Cal Cities also recognized the Honorable Willie L. Brown, Jr. with the 2021 Past Presidents’ Lifetime Achievement Award. Widely regarded as one of the most influential African American politicians of the late century, Mayor Brown has been at the center of California politics, government, and civic life for four decades.

Legal advocacy

In addition to representing the interests of California cities in legislative and regulatory matters, Cal Cities also protects the interests of cities in matters before the courts. In 2021, through our Legal Advocacy Program, Cal Cities approved the filing of 29 amicus or “friend-of-the-court” briefs and letters in the state and federal appellate courts.

Appellate courts issued favorable decisions for cities in several cases which Cal Cities filed an amicus brief. A few highlights include:

- In Wyatt v. City of Sacramento, a California Court of Appeal agreed with Cal Cities’ argument that cities are not prohibited from collecting general taxes on the use of water, sewer, garbage, and other property-related services if those taxes are approved by a majority vote.

- The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a favorable ruling in Bezis v. City of Livermore, affirming that the city council meeting at issue in the case was a limited public forum. Therefore, city council members were empowered to interrupt a speaker to remind him to limit remarks to the agenda topic at hand without violating the First Amendment.

- In Busker v. Wabtech, the California Supreme Court held that “public works” are limited to construction or installation of structures fixed to real property and that work does not become a “public work” just because it is integral to another activity that itself is a public work. The court’s ruling narrows the kinds of work for which prevailing wages must be paid and provides local government more certainty when budgeting and planning for publicly funded projects.

- The California Supreme Court issued a favorable ruling in Daly v. San Bernardino on a trial court order that required the removal and replacement of a county supervisor. The court issued a holding consistent with the amicus brief filed by Cal Cities. The brief argued that an automatic stay should be issued pending
the appeal in order to maintain the status quo and allow the regular functioning and efficiency of government during litigation.

2. **Increase the capacity of city officials**

As cities continued to respond to the pandemic and began to jump start local recovery, many expanded on new and innovative ways to deliver city services. Cal Cities did the same in 2021. Last year, Cal Cities increased the number of webinars and virtual education offerings for members and experienced greater participation by city officials for whom travel costs may have been a barrier previously. After a successful virtual annual conference in 2020, and with the latest health and safety protocols in place, Cal Cities’ 2021 Annual Conference and Expo was held in-person with nearly 1,700 city officials gathering to learn, collaborate, celebrate, and share solutions to better serve their communities. After 18 months of virtual learning and connecting, city officials were eager to come together for timely presentations addressing pressing topics for local leaders, including housing, broadband, equity, resiliency, and pandemic recovery.

Building off the success of the previous year’s online programming, in 2021 Cal Cities developed a new program, the Cal Cities Speaker Series, which featured expert insights on big picture issues and trends that matter most to cities. California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot; former Chief Economic and Business Advisor to Gavin Newsom, Lenny Mendonca; now Cal Cities Immediate Past President and El Centro Council Member Cheryl Viegas Walker; and infectious disease experts Alex Demarsh and Dr. Andrea Thomas from BlueDot, shared their knowledge and insights with us last year.

In 2021, Cal Cities also built on the previous year’s actions to support local efforts to advance equity. In 2020, in response to calls for racial equity in communities across the country, Cal Cities’ board launched an Advancing Equity initiative that supported the creation and delivery of resources and educational opportunities to city officials to help strengthen their knowledge and capacity to work locally to eliminate racial disparities, heal racial divisions, and build more equitable communities.

In 2021, our work to support cities’ efforts to advance equity continued. Cal Cities established an Advancing Equity Advisory Committee of city leaders to inform the development of a strategic roadmap to guide the initiative. The committee’s efforts culminated in the development of an Equity Roadmap that lays out the organization’s activities and strategies to support city leaders over the next 18 months.

As called for in the roadmap, Cal Cities developed new programming in 2021, including webinars, conference sessions, and peer-to-peer roundtables to help leaders enhance their capacity to build more equitable communities.

3. **Maintain high relevance and facilitate meaningful member engagement**

Cal Cities also achieved progress towards its goal of maintaining high relevance and facilitating meaningful engagement with city leaders.

In response to the success of 2020’s department-specific roundtables, virtual networking opportunities organized for department members, Cal Cities expanded the program in 2021 to include issue-based roundtables that covered topics ranging from ARPA and CARES Act funding implementation to supporting unhoused residents, economic development, and wildfire preparedness and response. These member-driven roundtables continue to be an innovative way for local leaders throughout the state to collaborate...
virtually to share best practices and new ideas for serving their residents. Member participation in these offerings was tremendous, with more than 8,085 city officials participating.

Although stay-at-home orders prevented in-person gatherings for much of the year, member engagement remained strong, including at virtual division events. Over the year, supported by 16 regional public affairs managers, Cal Cities regional divisions hosted 384 events attended by more than 8,070 city officials participating and featuring opportunities to hear from and advocate for city priorities with state and federal legislators. As local leaders continued to navigate the pandemic while delivering local services and jumpstarting their local economies, peer-to-peer division convenings provided a much-needed opportunity for city officials to share best practices and learn from each other.

4. Raise Cal Cities’ visibility

For many city leaders and cities, 2021 was not only a year of new challenges and opportunities, it was a year of evolution. Cal Cities — an organization that has been the voice of our towns and cities for more than 120 years — was with you every step of the way and evolving too.

As cities worked to build an even brighter future for their communities, Cal Cities successfully raised the visibility of the organization as the preeminent voice for cities in California.

We reimagined our brand identity to demonstrate a strong, vibrant, and consistent face to all audiences. This started with a new moniker, Cal Cities, that differentiated the organization from other “Leagues.” In the summer, Cal Cities launched a new website. Its modern, dynamic, and accessible design makes it easier to find valuable resources and information that Cal Cities generates and curates for city leaders.

Cal Cities also underwent a brand identity transformation in 2021. The new brand logo and colors infuse a rejuvenated pride, energy, diversity, and vitality into the mission of strengthening California cities through advocacy and education. The look may be new, but Cal Cities’ commitment to every California city and town goes all the way back to 1898.

Besides a new brand identity, Cal Cities also strategically deployed resources to increase the quantity and quality of its digital content in 2021, facilitating higher engagement with members and external stakeholders. Cal Cities’ weekly newsletter and monthly magazine increased readership in 2021, 34% and 18% respectively.

Throughout the year, the voice of Cal Cities was well represented with presentations by the organization’s leadership at national and regional events before key stakeholders and audiences, including the Public Policy Institute of California, California Foundation on the Environment and Energy, The Volcker Alliance, and California Women Lead, to name a few.

Cal Cities strengthened existing relationships with media and leveraged new ones to ensure the city perspective was included in state and national stories about top issues like pandemic recovery, housing production, and the importance of local decision-making. As a result of these efforts, Cal Cities secured op-eds in top publications like CalMatters and the Southern California News Group, which includes many major papers in Southern California, such as the Orange County Register. We also secured op-eds in the Spanish-language news outlet La Opinión and Sacramento Business Journal. Cal Cities’ positioning on local control and legislative priorities was also covered in many national and statewide outlets throughout the year, including the Associated Press, New York Times, Politico, Sacramento Bee, San Diego-Union Tribune, and San Francisco Chronicle.
## 5. Enhance Cal Cities’ governance

The Cal Cities Strategic Growth Plan calls for strengthening the organization’s governance by enhancing membership engagement in leadership opportunities, increasing its overall effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and vision, and ensuring that the pathway to leadership is transparent and inclusive.

In furtherance of this goal, in early 2021, Cal Cities engaged an association governance consultant to evaluate the Cal Cities governance system and make recommendations for enhancing Cal Cities’ governance. After a process that involved gathering and considering input from board members and more than 350 Cal Cities members through advisory groups, roundtable discussions, interviews, and surveys, the board received 49 recommendations to deepen the engagement of Cal Cities’ member cities and ensure Cal Cities’ governance is operating at peak performance.

The board also reviewed findings indicating that Cal Cities is a strong organization with a high level of member engagement, but also highlighted opportunities for Cal Cities to enhance our governance. The opportunities for enhancement included: improving the clarity, ease, and consistency in how the governance system works; clarifying the guidelines for position qualifications and performance expectations; identifying ways to deepen member engagement and enhance the quality of the experience of involvement; and ensuring Cal Cities has an intentional, consistent organizational culture at all levels of the governance system.

The Cal Cities board began implementing recommendations to enhance our governance system during the Cal Cities 2021 Annual Conference and Expo, where the General Assembly approved bylaws amendments to adjust the composition of the board to achieve a higher impact and be more representative by adding director seats for each of the five diversity caucuses. The General Assembly also adopted bylaws amendments to recognize the diversity caucuses in the bylaws to reflect the full contribution the caucuses make to Cal Cities’ mission and vision. Implementation of these recommendations will continue in 2022.

## 6. Expand Cal Cities’ organizational capacity

Cal Cities continued to expand its organizational effectiveness in 2021. Despite the challenges over the past two years, California cities continue to recognize the value of coming together through Cal Cities and speaking with one voice to advocate for the common interests of local governments. In 2021, Cal Cities membership was as strong as it has been in over a decade with 479 out of 482 California cities as members.

The Cal Cities League Partner Program was also stronger than ever in 2021. Following a program restructure developed in collaboration with League Partners, engagement and revenues remained strong. Partners hosted well-attended events — both virtual and in person — and provided valuable educational programming through the League Partner webinar series and the Partner track of sessions at this year’s Cal Cities Annual Conference and Expo.

The organization’s technology infrastructure also underwent modernization with investments in a new automated payroll system that saves time and helps control administrative costs; a software update to Microsoft Office 365 that enhances collaboration and communication throughout the organization and across work teams; and migration from on-site servers to a state-of-the-art Microsoft cloud hosting facility. With these enhancements, Cal Cities is increasing its ability to deliver services to members more efficiently while advancing business continuity.
Looking ahead to 2022

In 2021, city leaders once again showed remarkable leadership and resilience, protecting their residents from a global pandemic, leading local economic recovery, responding to calls for equity and justice, and combating another devastating wildfire season. Cal Cities was proud to be your partner.

To focus the organization’s advocacy and resources on cities’ highest priorities in 2022, city leaders representing Cal Cities board, divisions, departments, policy committees, and caucuses met virtually at the annual League Leaders workshop to help develop our 2022 Action Agenda. Based on the input and feedback of these leaders, the Cal Cities Board of Directors adopted the following strategic advocacy priorities for our 2022 Action Agenda:

1. Secure funding to increase the supply and affordability of housing and reform state housing laws to retain local authority. Secure adequate and sustainable funding for cities to increase construction of housing at all income levels, particularly affordable housing and workforce housing. Reform state housing laws to ensure cities retain local decision-making to meet the needs of their communities.

2. Attain investments to strengthen and sustain critical infrastructure. Advocate for policies that strengthen the conditions of local streets, highways, bridges, public transit, and broadband to improve workforce and economic development. Secure support for the modernization and expansion of the statewide water grid, including infrastructure, storage, and conveyance. Work with stakeholders to provide cities with access to the tools needed to ensure projects are delivered efficiently and cost-effectively to meet current and future needs.

3. Secure increased funding and resources to prevent homelessness and assist individuals experiencing homelessness. Secure additional ongoing, flexible resources to provide navigation assistance, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing. Enhance city and county coordination and strengthen partnerships with stakeholders to ensure adequate wraparound services are available for adults and youth at risk of, or already experiencing, homelessness in our communities, and effectively address mental health and substance use disorders.

4. Strengthen disaster preparedness, resiliency, and recovery from climate change impacts through improved collaboration and resources. Secure additional resources and support to mitigate the effects of climate change, including catastrophic wildfires, drought, and sea level rise. Promote collaboration with other city, state, and federal governments, to strengthen disaster preparedness, resiliency, and recovery.

Given the significance of the legislative and ballot measure activities emerging for 2022 and their potential impact on cities, it will be more important than ever that cities stay united in their efforts to affirm local decision-making and advance our common priorities. No matter the issue, we know California cities are the foundation of a strong California for all.

Since 1898, Cal Cities has delivered every year for its members and continues to be the go-to advocacy organization for California cities with a strong track record of fighting for local decision-making and resources that cities need to improve the quality of life for their residents. Next year will be no different. In 2022, Cal Cities will continue to fight on behalf of cities to ensure that their voices are heard in the Capitol and remain laser-focused on advancing the priorities that matter most to city leaders.

We truly are stronger together.
**WHO WE ARE**

- **479** Member Cities
- **55** Board Members
- **16** Regional Divisions
- **10** Municipal Departments
- **5** Diversity Caucuses

**WHAT WE DO**

- **2021**
- **By the Numbers**

- **440** Cal Cities members serving on Policy Committees
- **29** Friend-of-the-court briefs filed
- **98** Reporter inquiries
- **1,997** news stories
- **1,914** bills monitored, tracked, and engaged on
- **2,760** total bills introduced
- **70%**

**HOW WE ENGAGE AND INFORM**

- **4,579** Conference attendees
- **158,612** Western City webpage views
- **471,178** Twitter views
- **74,624** Facebook post views
- **48** issues of **Cal Cities Advocate** with **11,671** subscribers
- **118** Webinars, roundtables, and speaker series, with **17,213** attendees
- **669,292** Cal Cities webpage views
- **11,017** Twitter followers
- **5,373** Facebook followers

**CAL CITIES DELIVERS**

- **$8 billion** in federal funding for pandemic response and recovery.
- **$2 billion** from the state to fund local efforts to end homelessness.
- **$4.5 billion** state investment toward wildfire, drought, and climate resiliency.
- **$6 billion** from the state to help close the digital divide.