

America's Cities on the World Stage

By Kyle Hutzler



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**A report on how U.S. cities are deepening
their international engagement**

**Kyle Hutzler
for Professor Dana Foarta**

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INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

by Kyle Hutzler

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Any errors are my own.

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Introduction

When President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris climate accord in 2017, he pointedly remarked, “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris.” The mayor of Pittsburgh, however, viewed his obligations as less parochial, tweeting back: “Pittsburgh stands with the world and will follow [the] Paris agreement.”¹

The reply from Pittsburgh’s mayor, who was joined by other major cities in reaffirming their commitment to reducing carbon emissions, was emblematic of a new dynamic among American mayors. Empowered by the economic weight of their cities, mayors are asserting a greater role in international affairs, their ambitions growing well beyond cultural exchanges with sister cities or promoting international trade and investment.

Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti’s creation of an office of international affairs in 2017 is a case in point. He named the person who leads the office, a former U.S. ambassador, as Deputy Mayor—a signal of the importance of international affairs to the city. In the words of a current official in the office, its goals are to “elevate LA’s global influence and status as a global city, use that to bring benefits back to Los Angeles and the people who live here,” and, perhaps most tellingly, to “export our values to the world.”²

America’s mayors are joining those from other countries who point to three trends as justification for their increased involvement in international affairs. The first trend is cities’ rising share of the global population and GDP, which is expected to reach 70 percent and 80 percent, respectively, by 2050. A second, closely related trend, is globalization, which means major cities find they often have more interests in common with each other, especially when

confronting problems like climate change that transcend national borders. Third, is their frustration with the crises of governance at the national level of many countries and frictions between countries that tend to be out of step with the closer ties shared between their cities.

For some, American cities' growing international activism is a development to be celebrated; others express concern about its implications for the federal government's ability to fulfill its constitutional responsibility for foreign affairs. Others still are nonplussed, seeing rhetoric that far outpaces cities' actual goals, activities and capabilities.

This report, informed by interviews with officials from a dozen cities or states, as well as experts closely involved in subnational diplomacy, makes clear that American cities' international engagement is good: for them, for the country and for the world. These interviews affirm former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's belief that, "city leaders seek not to displace their national counterparts but rather to be full partners in their work."³

This report offers several contributions: chiefly, it evaluates these trends from a managerial perspective, rather than an international relations one. That means it is focused on the tangible questions of strategy, organization and operations that will determine whether or not cities are successful. It offers more than a dozen recommendations to cities, states and the federal government and several novel and actionable frameworks that can be employed by city international affairs professionals.

The officials interviewed for this report generally expressed a strong desire to collaborate with and learn from their counterparts. It is for this reason that the report attempts to put them "in conversation" with each other,

attempting to showcase the range of cities' diverse situations, characteristics and approaches.

While the phenomenon of city diplomacy is global, this report is limited to an analysis of American cities. That means it loses the perspective of the foreign cities with which American cities are both engaging and competing. While American states, too, are increasingly active abroad, cities are acknowledged as the leading subnational actors and are expected to remain so. And while cities from other countries also offer important insights, and in some ways outpace America, the study's focus on the U.S. allows for a more direct comparison given cities' similar political and constitutional contexts.

After reviewing the historical context for cities' international engagement, the report then probes cities' strategies, organizations and operations. It concludes with an examination of the risks of increased international activity, an assessment of how cities' international activity may develop over the medium-term, and recommendations for cities, states and the federal government.

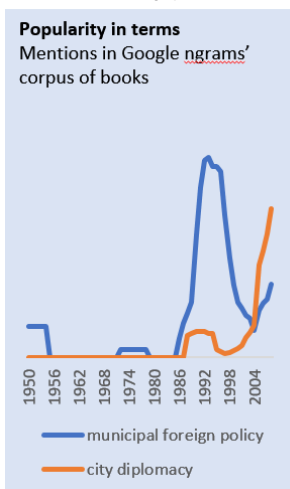
What's Old is New Again

Before there were nation-states, there were city-states. But the history of cities' international engagement needn't go back that far: a previous wave of interest about American cities' international activities occurred as recently as the 1980s (see the spike in books featuring related terms tracked by Google).⁴

That wave occurred amid the backdrop of the Cold War, prompting debate on the constitutionality of subnational diplomacy. It is useful to revisit that era of city diplomacy,

but even then, as it is now, the predominant focus for cities has always been growing their economies.

Exhibit 1



When the Soviet Union accidentally downed a South Korean airliner in 1983, President Ronald Reagan condemned the act as a “crime against humanity” and an “act of barbarism.” In response, the Reagan administration ordered the FAA to revoke Aeroflot’s ability to operate flights to and from the United States.

American states and cities found ways to express their outrage too. “More than one dozen state liquor commissions responded to the incident by banning sales of Soviet-produced vodka,” wrote Michael Schuman in *Foreign Policy* in 1986. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey denied Soviet United Nations representatives access to local airports in violation of the United Nations Charter.⁵

“More than 1,000 U.S. state and local partners are participating in foreign affairs, and their numbers are

expanding daily," according to Shuman at the time, in ways both symbolic and substantive.⁶ San Francisco was particularly active, not only expelling the Soviet consulate in response to the airliner downing, but issuing resolutions on U.S. involvement in Vietnam and El Salvador and acting as one of the leading cities in favor of divestment from apartheid South Africa. Echoing today's migration controversies, the city also instructed its police not to cooperate with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. During her term as mayor, Dianne Feinstein, now a senator, was involved in everything from trade missions to China to working with other mayors to convince the Soviet Union to allow 36 Russians to emigrate.

As mayor of Burlington, Vermont in the 1980s, Bernie Sanders, now a candidate for the Democratic Party's nomination for president, aggressively aligned himself against Reagan era foreign policies, including sponsoring a referendum against American involvement in El Salvador, according to reporting by *The New York Times*. "Are the nightmares that children in Burlington have about the possibility of nuclear war a 'local' or 'national' issue, for example," Sanders is reported to have written in response to criticism about his international engagement, which included trips to Nicaragua, the Soviet Union and Cuba.⁷

Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley defended cities' activism in a 1985 speech in which he proclaimed, "the right of cities to be heard on these crucial issues derives from two fundamental principles. First, local government is closest to the people...[Second,] many of our national policies are felt first—and in the end most profoundly—in America's cities."⁸

Following up several years later, Shuman would conclude that "no history of U.S. foreign policy in the 1980s can be complete without noting the instrumental role that these

local initiatives played in pushing the Reagan administration to begin the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty negotiations, to abandon most of its nuclear-war civil defense planning, to impose sanctions on South Africa, and to stop sending military aid to the contras."⁹

Constitutional Questions

Understandably, cities' international activism has prompted debate over its constitutionality. The federal government is understood as the sole representative of the United States abroad; "if we are to be a nation in any respect," James Madison advised, "it clearly ought to be in respect to other nations."

Critics argue that cities risk undermining America's ability to speak with "one voice." But most scholars see a constitutional opening for subnational diplomacy. The Constitution reserves for the federal government the responsibilities of raising a military and declaring war, appointing ambassadors, signing treaties and defining and punishing "Offences against the Law of Nations." States, among other things, are explicitly prohibited from entering into treaties or imposing duties on foreign trade, and they are bound by the Constitution's "supremacy clause," which affirms that the Constitution, federal laws and treaties override conflicting state law.

But the broad swath of other potential subnational interactions are presumably permitted under the Tenth Amendment, which reserves powers not delegated to the federal government to the states or the people. Cities' resolutions on foreign affairs are protected under the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of speech. Less convincingly, some municipalities argued their 1980s-era sanctuary city policies were upholding international law

protecting refugees. Court rulings have had little to say other than permitting state laws that have only an “incidental or indirect effect” on U.S. foreign relations.

In practice, Shuman writes, federal officials have “all but conceded that in trade, cultural exchange, and transboundary relations with Canada and Mexico, state and local authorities simply do a better job than the federal government. In these areas the federal government sets broad guidelines and then assists local officials and administrators in their international work.”¹⁰ That’s consistent with the views of law professors Michael Glennon and Robert Sloane, who have written a recent book on “foreign affairs federalism.” They write that “the Constitution empowers federal government to exercise *potentially plenary* authority in foreign relations, but it does not contemplate *exclusive* authority in this realm by *default*—nor, as a practical matter, could it.”¹¹

American border states and cities have entered into agreements with Canada and Mexico for more than a century. In 1956, President Eisenhower encouraged the establishment of sister cities as a people-to-people diplomacy initiative. (Toledo, Ohio and Spain are credited with the oldest documented sister-city relationship, dating back to 1931.)¹² Today, Sister Cities International reports that some 500 U.S. communities have more than 2,000 partnerships around the world.¹³ For the first time in its history, a sitting mayor, San Antonio’s Ron Nirenberg, is chairman of the organization, which is increasingly facilitating national exchanges, such as the first U.S.-Mexico Sister City Mayors’ Summit in 2018 and a forthcoming All Japan-U.S. Sister Cities summit in 2020.

It’s the Economy

But it’s the economy where cities and states’ international enthusiasm is most pronounced. Why? Attracting jobs

and investment is of course desirable in its own right, but the effort is also a political calculation intended to bridge mayors of large cities, who tend to be Democrats, and more conservative chambers of commerce, according to Luis Renta, a former State Department official now at the U.S. Conference of Mayors.¹⁴

The history of when cities first went abroad to promote trade is less clear than states. New York is credited with being the first state to open an overseas trade office in Europe in the 1950s. As late as 1970, only two other states had opened offices of their own.¹⁵ At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Commerce opened an Office of International Trade Fairs in 1955; as late as 1969 the Department had just one official responsible for foreign direct investment.¹⁶ (A generation later, the federal government's efforts had been reconstituted as Invest in America, still with a skeletal staff.¹⁷)

But by the 1980s, everything had changed. Most states had established an overseas office or tasked a domestic one with international trade and investment responsibilities. In that decade, 40 states had 66 offices in 17 countries, with southern states particularly active in creating opportunities for their states. By 2015, 40 states had 199 offices or representatives in some 30 countries.¹⁸

Recent political and economic events have played a key role in taking city diplomacy to the next level, initially indirectly. The Obama administration encouraged states to step up their exports through the National Export Initiative, signing an executive order in 2011 which created SelectUSA, replacing and augmenting the work done by Invest in America.¹⁹

But how did a national emphasis on states trickle down to cities? The Great Recession "had a galvanizing effect

on city-level efforts, because budget cuts reduced states' ability to maintain international offices. This provided an opportunity for cities beyond the perennial leaders to take up a leadership role," writes Jeanine Duncliffe, who launched the Kentucky's export initiative under Governor Steve Beshear in 2010 and now works in a similar capacity for the city of Louisville.²⁰ The next catalyst was the 2016 election, spurring many cities to speak up against the new administration on international affairs matters and, in some cases, sending international affairs professionals who had planned on working in a Clinton administration looking for opportunities elsewhere.

Active...

While cities' international activities are often described as a "foreign policy," it may oversell what it is they actually do. The term may create a false analogy with nation-states, which have a far broader set of interests and tools, both coercive and diplomatic, for achieving those interests. Cities' efforts are better described as "internationalization," which is not intended to diminish the still considerable diplomatic skills required, but may better capture their focus on the connectivity of people, goods and services, and ideas.

When cities engage beyond economic issues, their motivations remain chiefly pragmatic. Global engagement is an imperative for a city to remain competitive; "cities can take advantage of global trends or be taken advantage of," warns Marek Gootman, who helps American cities think more strategically about international trade and investment. Cities share common challenges and look to each other for solutions: see New York's planned adoption of congestion pricing first pioneered elsewhere.

Some officials do acknowledge that other factors can influence a city's international priorities. In some cases, cities engage on particular issues to stake out a global brand or attract investment. "If Bloomberg," the former mayor of New York and a leading philanthropist, "comes to your town and gives you \$5 million for climate change, that's real," explains Luis Renta. At other times, symbolic political considerations come into play, but even then, officials emphasize they are merely attempting to influence, not displace, the federal government.

All in, city activities tend to cohere around four main categories:

- *Trade and investment promotion*, cities' primary focus, typically via trade delegations, attracting foreign countries to open foreign offices or airlines to start new direct routes, and, in select instances, opening offices of their own;
- *Goodwill*, ranging from sister cities relationships, cultural exchanges and consular engagement;
- *Knowledge sharing*, or solutions-oriented dialogues around common challenges and opportunities, most commonly around climate, resiliency, migration and crisis management and security issues; and
- *Co-governance*, which includes efforts at policy coordination (e.g., climate policies or border management). These efforts may be intended to spur or obviate the need for action at the national level; they can also prevent the risk of a race to the bottom or jurisdiction hopping as new standards emerge. New York goes even further, stationing New York

Police Department officers abroad for intelligence purposes.

Different cities place greater emphasis on certain activities than others. This study characterizes cities as belonging to one of four main types:

- *Global cities*, such as New York or Los Angeles, engage on the entire spectrum of activities and, given their attractive potential and larger capacity, do not concentrate their focus on a particular geography;
- *Middleweight cities* place their strongest emphasis on trade and investment promotion, with varying degrees of commitment to goodwill and knowledge-sharing activities. They tend to focus on just a handful of geographies and are often challenged by the lack of innate international mindsets, capacity and global recognition;
- *Border cities*, be it literal ones like El Paso or more figurative ones like Phoenix, are engaged in co-governance relationships with their foreign counterparts. Trade and investment and goodwill activities flow from their intense focus on a single partner; and last are
- *Company towns*, with a predominant international employer—such as Beaverton, Oregon (where Nike is headquartered), or Peoria, Illinois (Caterpillar)—or a global university, whose leaders see their role as an economic ambassador as core to their responsibility. University towns can also be considered a subset of this group. Their ability to attract foreign human capital adds to positive spillovers for the city via direct spending and research-intensive industries.

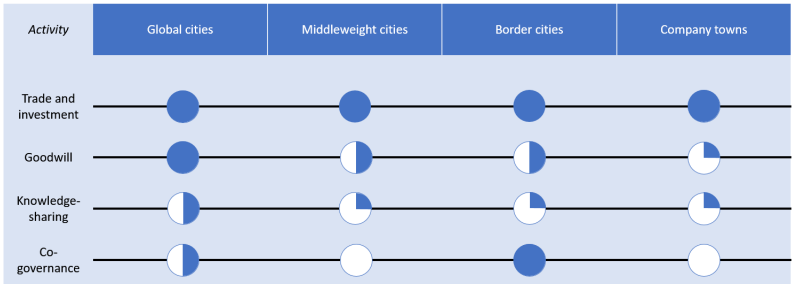


Exhibit 2

Global cities, like New York, have the world come to them. As a result, its office of international affairs, which dates to 1962, retains its historical focus on liaising with the city's large UN ambassador and consulate corps. In 1992, the office added responsibilities for international business and in 1997 absorbed the city's protocol office, which dates as far back as 1913.²¹

Middleweight cities' international efforts are focused as much internally—addressing local mindsets and capacity—as they are externally, attempting to raise their international profile. When international counterparts come to the United States, middleweight cities are often overlooked in favor of the global cities, in part because many lack a globally resonant definition.

"When the mayor of Milan comes through, he'd be better off showing up in Philadelphia than New York," says Gootman, director of the Global Cities Initiative at the Brookings Institution, a think tank. Philadelphia is closer to Milan in size and circumstances and the Italian city would likely receive more focused attention than getting lost in the sea of delegations coming through New York.²²

Cities and states on the border have had a unique responsibility in navigating issues as diverse as transportation infrastructure, electric power and water management, for more than a century, according to *Foreign Policy*. El Paso, Texas pays the federal government more than \$1.5 million annually to keep the border crossing open longer than it otherwise would because of its economic impact: one in four jobs in El Paso is directly related to cross-border activity.²³

San Diego is “more engaged than ever” with Mexico, according to Denice Garcia, the director of international affairs for the city.²⁴ In 2017, Mayor Faulconer signed a memorandum of understanding with Tijuana, with which San Diego shares the largest border crossing in the western hemisphere, intended to deepen and institutionalize cooperation on ten areas of cooperation, ranging from economic development and regional planning to environmental protection and parks and recreation.²⁵ Heads of the relevant departments meet monthly and the two cities’ mayors do so on a biannual basis, while Garcia herself is across the border often multiple times per week. The city also travels to Mexico City several times throughout the year.

San Antonio is notable for operating a city office abroad, an approach generally taken only at the state-level. Its Casa San Antonio, now consolidated in Mexico City after the closing of offices in Guadalajara and Monterrey in 2010, has been promoting bilateral trade for nearly three decades. After a reorganization this year, the office is managed by another division of the city’s economic development department. San Antonio has also had a representative in Japan since the 1980s. (Phoenix also has two offices in Mexico, in Mexico City and Sonora, dating to 2014 and 2017 respectively.²⁶)

“If a city has a strong strategy and is eyeing a specific market, it is a huge advantage to have boots on the

ground," says Sherry Dowlatshahi, who leads San Antonio's international relations office.²⁷ Dowlatshahi points to Toyota's decision to open a plant in 2003 as the payoff of a decades-long relationship with Japan, which has some 40 companies in the city. While reluctant to cite a threshold at which other cities should consider opening offices, Dowlatshahi left little doubt that the investment has been worth it for her city. Even with visits, "there's only so much you can do from afar."

Even small cities can play on the international stage. Apart from a passing reference to Nike, it was clear that Beaverton, with a population of 97,000, had international ambitions beyond that of its most famous employer. In an interview, Mayor Denny Doyle recalled an instance in which the Portland Business Alliance "had tried for months to get a meeting in Hanoi. I made one phone call to the Consul General in San Francisco. The next day, they had arranged a meeting. It floored the business alliance people." And as the people of Iowa well know, even the lowliest delegate may one day rise to great importance. In 1985, a group of Chinese agriculture officials visited the American state, among them future president Xi Jinping. Years later, on a return visit, he would remark kindly upon the hospitality he experienced: "For me, you are America."²⁸

Changing Mindsets, Building Capacity

"A lot of what we've done is convening people and groups that are already believers in international's potential and give them a more united forum to hear ideas," says Jeanine Duncliffe, who serves as the director of international economic development for the city. A shift in the attention mayors and governors personally pay to international opportunities has also helped.

Louisville is also emblematic of many cities' efforts to provide trainings targeted at businesses identified as having high export potential. Notably, the city has partnered with its local universities to address the lack of practical business courses focused on international trade. "When we sat down with small and mid-size businesses, they wanted to find new markets and distributors," but they were held back in part by a lack of employees with the relevant skills, explains Duncliffe.

The 20-hour module she co-developed with World Trade Center Kentucky gives students the opportunity to learn from a local exporting company, encountering some of the real-world strategic and practical challenges associated with international trade. The course has trained some 550 students since being introduced in 2012, likely one of the largest cohorts of MBA students with trade skills in the country. The course, now taught at two universities, is likely to be offered in Indiana and Ohio in the near future.

Ohio has also tapped into its universities to support the state's internationalization efforts. In a partnership that began with Ohio State, the state's development agency connects students as "export interns" with small- and medium-sized enterprises, leading to millions in expected sales.²⁹

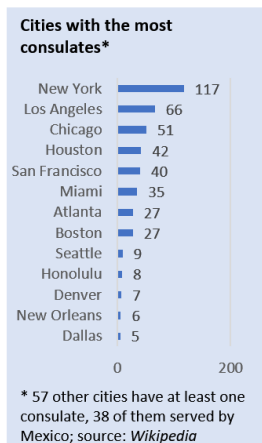


Exhibit 3

Growing Focus on Attracting Consulates, Flights

Cities are also realizing that focusing on securing direct flights and attracting and leveraging foreign consulates, trade offices and chambers of commerce can more efficiently and sustainably amplify their work than traditional trade missions alone. Consulates, each focused on its specific diaspora, may also more effectively activate these communities for the purposes of facilitating trade and investment than the city can alone.

"Our main strategy has been partnering with the Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport," explains Beth Huddleston, who serves as Dallas' chief of protocol. Its status as a hub for American Airlines is an opportunity the city is eager to leverage and build upon.

Research confirms that aviation and foreign office ties can have outsize impacts on trade. A 2005 study of major exporting nations found that bilateral exports at the national level rise by 6-10 percent for each additional consulate a country has with that trading partner.³⁰ Other research has shown cities within flying range of the most other cities grow faster than those that were more isolated; others have found that when new domestic routes were added by Southwest Airlines, collaboration between scientists in the connected cities increased 50 percent.

Atlanta considers attracting new consulates as a key success metric for its international affairs office. With the opening of the Dutch consulate in January 2019, the city now has 27 (see table), according to a tabulation on Wikipedia.³¹ Thanks to its airport's global stature as a hub for Delta, the city has considerably more direct flights than would otherwise be expected given its size: something the city is keen to exploit. A new analysis for this report finds that

several cities, including many in California, have significantly fewer direct international connections than would be expected given their size: a growth opportunity if they can navigate entrenched airline hubs.

Sister-city relationships also appear to be more relevant than ever. "You never know when you will get lucky," in spotting an opportunity, says Beaverton mayor Denny Doyle. He recalled one trip to Trossingen, Germany, a pioneer in cross-laminated timber. Given timber's importance to Oregon, "I came back a believer." Initial references have now turned into a promising growth opportunity for his city. "If I hadn't had the sister-city relationship, I would never have seen it."

...but how strategic?

Despite their increasing activity, many cities lack comprehensive and publicly articulated international strategies. Instead of a strategy, many cities often mistakenly focus on cultivating a "brand." But branding is a tool—not an end in itself. It is also a particularly difficult one to successfully deploy raising a city's profile in a way that sticks or shifting entrenched opinions where awareness does exist is not at all easy. A narrow focus on branding doesn't result in meaningful change, but it does invite symbolic gestures and empty rhetoric.

The lack of a comprehensive strategy holds cities back in several other respects. First, the lack of a public strategy means that cities are forgoing an opportunity to more clearly define themselves. A definition is more than just a brand: it's a comprehensive reflection of a city's strengths and comparative advantages, grounded in reality more than it is aspiration. Even cities as globally resonant as Chicago

have found that being a nonfinancial or political capital is as much a challenge as it is an opportunity.

Or consider Los Angeles, which exemplifies how a city with a worldwide brand can nonetheless struggle to fully capture the benefits of it. A motivating factor for Los Angeles' new office of international affairs is to change a city that "takes for granted just how globally connected we are both at the level of our communities and industries," says Dilpreet Sidhu, who directs policy and protocol matters for the office. Even though LA has all the characteristics of a global city and ranks highly in many of the most popular indicators, "LA isn't talked about in the same way that New York, Tokyo or Hong Kong are."

An international strategy can catalyze a city's broader efforts to reposition itself but cannot exist independently of local realities. Consider Houston, which is using its international efforts to transform its historical role as a world oil capital into an international "energy capital." Christopher Olson, director of Houston's office of trade and international affairs, explains that the city's membership in the C40 climate initiative is part of this broader redefinition. At the same time, the city is also seeking to give greater prominence to the Texas Medical Center, the largest in the world.

Atlanta's Vanessa Ibarra, director of the mayor's office of international affairs, counters that eschewing a singular definition gives the city greater flexibility. "We don't get pigeonholed and it enables us to diversify our portfolio," she explains.³² By virtue of being the world's busiest airport, and within two hours of 80 percent of the population, it may be an exception: it can act as a *de facto* platform for any inbound investment targeting North America. The city has prioritized a few priority sectors—health IT, logistics management, clean tech and creative industries among them—aligned

to its core strengths. Dallas is in a similar position, which Huddleston considers a “plus and a minus.”

But industry is just one aspect of a city’s international narrative, one that Atlanta could more broadly influence. “When we go abroad and ask people what they think of Atlanta, before it was Coca-Cola, Delta, CNN, UPS. Now it’s Wakanda,” the fictional world of Disney’s *Black Panther* movie, which was filmed extensively in Atlanta, and the city’s vibrant music scene, Ibarra explains. For its part, San Antonio is emphasizing its status as home to one of the United States’ 23 UNESCO World Heritage sites and its designation by the same organization as a “Creative City of Gastronomy” in its outreach.

Second, the lack of strategy means that cities are not fully optimizing their limited resources on the geographies and issues with the greatest potential for impact. Activities “are transactional—tactical rather than strategic,” as the Chicago task force put it.³³ Philadelphia had inbound interactions with representatives from 45 countries last year, of which twelve it considers priorities, a number that is arguably still too high given its office of four. “When the world knocks on our door we want to answer and welcome them warmly,” says Lauren Swartz, who directs the city’s international affairs. Huddleston concurs, saying, “we need to extend the red carpet as much for Croatia as Canada.”

Meanwhile, the gaps between cities’ international ambitions and their capacity to execute them grow wider. Some officials with traditional economic development backgrounds are particularly skeptical of cities’ broader diplomatic push: “the challenge with city diplomacy is that it is even more complicated than commercial” efforts, Gootman says, challenging the “mythology of mayors” that has taken hold among urban affairs professionals that asserts

mayors can and should be taking the lead on issues typically left to the federal government.

Third, the lack of a strategic consensus—and the forcing mechanism of public commitment—means that cities' efforts are subject to the vicissitudes of each mayoral transition. (Chicago is the largest city without a mayoral term limit.) International relationships and reputations can take years to build and are thus contingent upon some degree of consistency. Without it, each city is starting off from worse than scratch. Sherry Dowlatshahi notes that cities with a council-manager form of government, such as San Antonio, as opposed to an executive mayor, such as New York, are less subject to this risk.

Last, the lack of strategy is an opportunity foregone to bring together all of a city's stakeholders to mutually reinforcing effect. Inadequate engagement with local stakeholders, including media and civic watch dogs, can also leave politicians vulnerable to the criticism that they are neglecting local needs for the glamor of the world stage. (This line of criticism, as discussed later in this report, appears to be diminishing somewhat as international activities becomes more common.) International engagement cannot benefit only business. Its benefits should be felt across all of society and seek to bring global solutions to the most acute of local problems.

To the extent cities have international economic strategies, it is likely thanks to a partnership of the Brookings Institution, a leading think-tank, and JP Morgan Chase, the financial services firm. In 2013, the pair launched the Global Cities initiative to help metro areas strengthen their international economic connections and competitiveness. A key component of the effort was funding the creation of

trade and investment plans for 29 cities, ranging from Los Angeles to Wichita.³⁴

Marek Gootman, who leads the Global Cities effort, reminds cities that, “just because you’re on the border, doesn’t make you international. Just because you’re on the ocean, doesn’t make you global.” The initiative, which is now helping cities craft “global identities,” has also been applauded for producing a number of data insights about metro area exports that the federal government itself doesn’t produce, aiding planning.

The Chicago Example

Chicago is the city closest to a comprehensive international strategy. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, led by Ivo Daalder, a former ambassador to NATO and evangelist of the concept of city diplomacy, began convening city leaders in 2015, including the deputy mayor, the CEO of Hyatt and former president of the Art Institute of Chicago.

The result was a report published in 2017 that made clear that, “in a globalized world, cities that fail to develop explicit strategies for global engagement risk falling behind other more ambitious and better-connected cities.” The report saw the gap between the city’s annual rank in domestic tourism—third—and international tourism—ninth—as illustrative of its narrative disconnect.

The first report—followed up in 2019 with an implementation blueprint, involving more than 60 city stakeholders—assessed the city’s assets, needs and opportunities. Most notable was its framing of Chicago’s international engagement around four pillars: commercial (the focus of most cities), civic, education, and artistic and

cultural. As the report pointed out, Chicago is more than a commercial center; its 85 consulates are the basis of a global city; it is home to two of the world's top-25 universities and has some of the best-ranked cultural institutions in the world. A global strategy needs to embrace all of those foundations.

Getting the first report out took almost two years, according to Juliana Kerr, director of the Chicago Council's Global Cities initiative. Beyond the logistical challenges of getting city leaders in the same room, were several key questions around framing, including the balance of engaging globally versus locally. The balance the group struck was that "the success of one relies on the other."

Defining a global strategy is one thing; bringing it to life is another. When traveling overseas, newly former mayor Rahm Emanuel would make "an effort to see all four pillars of his destination city and speak with officials in each one." Keeping other stakeholders aligned is tougher. The city's Office of Global Affairs "only has a few full-time staff members and currently lacks the resources to lead the implementation of a citywide comprehensive global strategy."³⁵

"If you don't have a central coordinator—an individual, an organization or a team—consistently tracking these recommendations, engaging with these stakeholders, identify opportunities making connections, everybody goes back to their day jobs with their own goals and strategies," Kerr acknowledges. "Nobody has the capacity to maintain momentum."

Kerr believes that, while the strategy may have had a somewhat bigger impact if it was published by City Hall, it was right that the effort was led by an independent, non-partisan arbiter. As the Emmanuel era ends in Chicago, the

city awaits signs from its new mayor on how strongly she will prioritize Chicago's global potential.

Choosing Where to Engage

Cities act both one-on-one and via a proliferating group of networks. Their one-on-one engagement has typically been ad-hoc, driven by sister-city status; diaspora ties; or the business community, which, absent industry-specific opportunities, generally favors the largest or most developed markets.

After a tendency to "focus on new opportunities instead of existing ones," cities and states are becoming more disciplined by sustaining relationships with a core set of international partners, according to Abigail Hunter of the National Governors Association. Officials are recognizing that "an expansion is more likely than a new deal."

Houston's Christopher Olson concurs that it is also attempting to more strategically prioritize which geographies it engages with, based on existing trade, growth potential and "where the personage of the mayor can have an impact" in opening doors.³⁶ Beaverton, Oregon concentrates much of its efforts on sustaining ties to Japan, source of roughly 20 companies that have a presence in the city. "It's hard enough to focus on one country," Mayor Doyle says, but if an opportunity elsewhere is real, "we'll chase it."³⁷

Los Angeles is prioritizing three nations.³⁸ The first is Mexico, driven by its large diaspora community. In 2019, Mayor Garcetti and the Mexican foreign minister announced the formation of a bilateral commission, called MEXLA, to further ties.³⁹ It expects to enter into a similar relationship with Vietnam, whose American diaspora are well-represented in the greater Los Angeles region. Last, the city is partnering

with Japan, in part for an uncommon reason: like Mexico City, they are seismically active regions with opportunities to share best practices on earthquake resilience. The city is also interested in working with other sprawling cities on modernizing transportation.

While no national or city-level database exists of foreign trips taken or delegations received by cities, other evidence is indicative of global orientation. Locations of state trade offices or designated representatives are one such marker. According to 2015 data from the State International Development Organizations survey, China (including Hong Kong) and Mexico lead with 29 and 24 offices, respectively.⁴⁰ (13 states had offices in Canada, which has 13 trade offices of its own in the U.S., seven in states that did not have offices in Canada, creating a complementary overlap.)⁴¹ The four states with the most overseas offices or representatives—Pennsylvania, Florida, Missouri and Georgia—accounted for 27 percent of the total in 2015 but 9 percent of U.S. exports in 2018.

California, which despite being one of the largest economies in the world, closed many of its trade offices, is now poised to make a comeback. Gavin Newsom, the governor of California, has tasked his lieutenant, Eleni Kounalakis, with re-opening them.⁴² Joe Hedges, who has been responsible for San Jose's international efforts for almost three decades, is "very supportive" of the state reopening offices, "because we certainly saw the benefits" in their previous iteration.⁴³ San Diego's Jesse Gipe encourages the state to highlight industries beyond technology and tourism, including aerospace, agriculture and biotech and life sciences. Financial support directed at helping small businesses export or for cities' initiatives would help too.⁴⁴

Smaller states have rationalized their presence in recent years. North Dakota ended its unlikely representative office in Kazakhstan, which was not among its top 25 export destinations. Alabama closed its only overseas office in Japan, its fifth largest export partner, in 2015 after 35 years. The state, which is home to some 70 Japanese manufacturing operations, now engages the country through the Southeast U.S.-Japan association, a grouping of seven states.⁴⁵

Another indicator, sister city relationships, shows that ties are concentrated in Europe and Asia, commanding 34 percent and 33 percent of all ties, respectively. Africa is notably under-represented given its share of the global population at 7 percent of all city relationships.⁴⁶ Phoenix, which will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of its first sister city relationship in 2022, is actively searching for new partners. Establishing its first relationship with a city in the southern hemisphere is a priority, says Rita Marko, who oversees the city's initiatives, and the ideal partner will share similar priorities in topics including smart cities, advanced manufacturing and the biosciences.⁴⁷

Networked for Impact

Cities are engaging not just one-on-one but through a proliferating group of organizations, where they gather to exchange ideas and lobby national governments on issues of common concern.

Three networks in particular command the participation of major American cities. These include the C40 group of cities committed to addressing climate change, of which 12 are American; the Strong Cities Network, which supports local efforts to counter violent extremism, including 10 American cities; and the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities, of which 24 are American, are the most prominently cited

city networks. (In April 2019, the Rockefeller Foundation announced it was winding down its support and transferring responsibilities to the Atlantic Council.)⁴⁸

But according to research at UCL, the groups are just three of 200 city networks in existence. A quarter of them meet at least once per year; more than 44 percent have produced non-binding joint policies.

The proliferation of networks has already been cited as a barrier by city officials, with limited time and budgets. For the networks to have sustained impact, cities will need to start prioritizing their commitments.

Brookings' Marek Gootman believes the U20 has potential. The group lobbies G20 countries to keep cities' role as economic engines in mind as they shape global economic policy. The group's first meeting, in Buenos Aires in 2018, published 20 whitepapers around five priority areas, including climate change, the future of work and women's empowerment.⁴⁹ In May 2019, the group reconvened in Tokyo, with topics expected to focus on sustainability, social integration and inclusion, and economic growth.

Most ambitious is the Global Parliament of Mayors, which was first convened in 2016, "an action-oriented body committed to amplifying, scaling and coordinating city priorities." Its creation was inspired by the late Benjamin Barber, author of *If Mayors Ruled the World*. Eight U.S. cities, Los Angeles and Atlanta most prominent among them, have been involved. A similar effort, Metropolis, has more than one hundred members but Atlanta is the only city from the United States.

The Global Parliament of Mayors, which plans to next meet in November 2019 in Durban, South Africa, remains

"fledgling," according to Luis Renta, citing "the same problem every other network has, lack of resources." Atlanta's Vanessa Ibarra says that they are "waiting to see" if Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms will continue to participate given competing priorities for the already limited time the mayor can allocate to international matters. In an interview, Los Angeles' office confirmed they will not be attending this year's conference for budgetary reasons.

Organizations like C40 and Resilient Cities have succeeded because they are well-funded. The former recognizes 28 donors, ranging from Bloomberg Philanthropies, private corporations, including Citigroup and Johnson & Johnson, and the Danish, United Kingdom and German governments.⁵⁰ While transparent about their financial backing, those and other groups will invite questions about whether mayors are being leveraged to advance special interests, according to Renta.⁵¹

Organized for Success

Cities take diverse approaches to organizing their international affairs responsibilities, but they share a common view of themselves as "connectors" between the city and the world, and a sense of being under-resourced against growing responsibilities.

The key point of divergence is whether the office reports directly to the mayor or the city's economic development agency. Five of the nation's ten largest cities have their international affairs office report to the mayor, and four to a broader economic development office.

There is a difference of opinion on whether the distinction matters, but a direct relationship to the mayor's office generally signals ambitions beyond trade and investment.

Brookings' Marek Gootman believes it is appropriate that international affairs roles remain within the economic development office given that trade and investment are and will likely continue to be the primary focus of any such office.

Others, including Luis Renta, believe a city's international affairs office should report directly to the mayor. According to Renta, "subnational diplomacy is an inherently political activity and it needs access to the mayor and his trusted staff. In some cities, this can happen no matter where the subnational diplomacy point person resides, but more often than not, without access to the mayor's trusted team, or being part of that trusted team, the level of engagement falls."

A risk of having international affairs report directly to the mayor is their vulnerability to mayoral transitions. These staff are typically political appointees, whereas those working under economic development agencies are typically career staff. Los Angeles is particularly keen to see its new office survive after the current mayor. "When we do our work, we ask 'how will it last beyond this administration?' We're trying to embed our efforts and get the buy-in of other partners so it becomes a part of the way the city works," explains Dilpreet Sidhu.⁵²

San Diego's international affairs efforts is most conspicuously divided among major cities. The city's Office of International Affairs and Protocol is an office of one predominantly focused on the city's relationship with Tijuana; the city's Economic Development Department is responsible for a small federal Foreign Trade Zone program; the World Trade Center San Diego, part of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation, has been licensed by the city, airport and port to take the lead on international trade and investment; and a separate San

Diego International Sister Cities Association handles those matters. The city, development corporation, and sister cities organization maintain separate advisory boards⁵³—further underscoring the missed opportunity for cross-sector collaboration.

Jesse Gipe, who leads the city's World Trade Center, acknowledges the fragmentation, but notes that it is a consequence of the city's economic development, not a sign of contention or disagreement within the community. The city's role as a key Navy base meant that it historically placed less emphasis on trade for a city of its size. As that has begun to change, particularly because of the city's status as a global leader in biotech and life sciences, Gipe believes that how the city organizes its international efforts will likely change in the long run.⁵⁴

Dallas is relatively unique in that its protocol office is managed under a public private partnership with the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth. Beth Huddleston, an executive vice president at the Council and the city's chief of protocol, says the arrangement, which allows for fundraising from private sources, deflects skepticism about the use of taxpayer money for international purposes. Luis Renta says such arrangements used to be more common, while Huddleston says that she has spoken to other cities considering the model. Dallas is entering the final year of its current partnership and will soon elect a new mayor. "It's always nerve-racking that another mayor may not share the same vision," Huddleston says.⁵⁵

The offices of American city international affairs offices are leanly staffed, typically with 4-7 individuals. They are generally structured around functional responsibilities, that is with separate roles for protocol, trade and investment, policy or other engagement.

Other city agencies may also have international dimensions to their work, often in close coordination with the core international affairs office. International tourism efforts are housed in the core tourism promotion agency, which makes sense given the concentration of expertise and resources. Some cities have established offices responsible for immigration matters that also tend to report elsewhere.

Using San Antonio as an example of other roles, the Office of Innovation travels abroad to learn best practices from other countries; the Office of Historic Preservation, World Heritage Office, and the Parks and Recreation Department frequently interact with UNESCO, international delegations, or sister cities; and the official responsible for federal government relations includes the new North American free trade agreement in their mandate.⁵⁶

Management of sister city relationships also varies. Some cities, such as Houston, have a designated liaison on staff while other cities' relationships are managed independently of government. Blending the two approaches, the deputy director of Phoenix's international relations office (housed within the city's Community and Economic Development Department) simultaneously serves as CEO of the independent Sister Cities organization, which also serves as the city's office of protocol.⁵⁷ The purpose of Phoenix's arrangement is to facilitate fundraising and insulate the city from legal risk, according to Rita Marko, who serves in the double-hat role.⁵⁸ San Antonio's Sherry Dowlatshahi says the city manages sister city relationships out of its international relations office to ensure their strategic oversight and because foreign counterparts generally are government staff as opposed to non-profit personnel, as is common among U.S. cities.⁵⁹

As cities' international engagement evolves, their organizational structures will too, says Jian (Jay) Wang, director of the USC Center on Public Diplomacy. Wang believes that international affairs offices need to become more policy-oriented, as opposed to functional.

For example, the New York international affairs office's "Global Vision | Urban Action" program seeks to use the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals "as a lens to share best practices with partners in NYC and around the world."⁶⁰ Philadelphia, instead of aligning roles functionally, divides its work geographically, with its director taking responsibility for Latin America and the office's overall strategy, while two deputies divide Asia and Europe.⁶¹

Los Angeles, which created its Office of International Affairs in 2017, stands out for designating the leader of its office, former U.S. ambassador Nina Hachigian, a deputy mayor. The difference in title matters, according to Dilpreet Sidhu. "In some cultures, the title and stature is important," adding that within a City Hall focused on other issues, such as homelessness, it can be "hard to make the case that international affairs is important at the city level. The title of deputy mayor puts the mayor's seal on what we do."

Regardless of reporting structure and title, international affairs offices interviewed for this study consistently referred to themselves as "connectors," principally to the city's broader economic development organization and the city's chamber of commerce. Some cities also have advisory councils of leading corporations and other institutions, which can serve as the basis for coordinated efforts.

Somewhat striking is the fact that eight of the cities researched for this report have international affairs efforts that are led by women, mirroring a trend at the national level

in which the most prominent women in recent presidential administrations have had diplomatic roles. Writing on the phenomenon at the national level, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who is a professor of foreign policy at Princeton, has argued that “many women take more readily to the ‘smart power’ approach to foreign policy,” effective at deploying soft power (the only power cities have) and building networked relationships.⁶²

Challenged for Resources and Talent

Limited budgets—both for staff and travel—are a key constraint on American cities’ international affairs offices. It is a reminder that justifying the worth of international engagement remains politically tricky amid plenty of underfunded problems closer to home. “Until our own citizens and bureaucracies embrace the importance of diplomacy, it will be hard to get to the level of international cities,” Los Angeles’ Sidhu, who formerly worked in the State Department, says. “We’re not able to absorb or respond to the volume of requests we get.”

As a point of comparison, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is understood to have as many as 40 personnel involved in its city diplomacy efforts. At that ratio of staffing to its metro population and GDP, a city like Los Angeles would be expected to have 25-40 international affairs personnel. Instead, its office of seven does not have an official travel budget for the current year. “I want to say the sky is the limit,” Philadelphia’s Lauren Swartz responds when asked what the ideal size of the city’s office should be, settling on 15-20 persons as the amount at which “we could really make some significant progress.” Instead, the city currently has an office of four, including a near-full time student intern.

Cities also had mixed perspectives on whether there was a sufficient pipeline of talent skilled in both urban and international affairs. A 2018 review of cities' international activities co-sponsored by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs concluded that it is unclear if "cities have a long-term plan of...building more expertise and capacity," finding that most cities' international affairs staff did not receive dedicated training and when they did, it was rarely substantive.⁶³ Like Los Angeles, many of the larger cities have hired former U.S. State Department officials, such as Houston's Christopher Olson, who served 13 years as a foreign service officer.

While acknowledging smaller cities may have greater trouble attracting talent, Philadelphia's Swartz says the bigger problem is a lack of resources to hire, not a lack of talent. "I have people asking every single day when I'm leaving," she quips, noting that the city's many universities, strong immigrant engagement, and presence along the Northeast corridor increases its access to talent.⁶⁴

Abby Turano, who is a deputy commissioner for the State of Georgia's Department of Economic Development, concurs. "Our office is on the Georgia Tech campus. I have recent grads and graduate students coming to me who want to bring their experience and knowledge to work," adding, "I want these kids to stay in Atlanta."⁶⁵

Cities and states' international efforts are also being supported by groups like the U.S. Conference of Mayors and National Governors Association, which have committees dedicated to international affairs and sponsor other exchanges. Working collectively allows cities and states to share best practices and more efficiently achieve their international goals. The National Governors Association has sponsored a U.S.-China Governors Collaboration summit each of the past five years. The Protocol Officers Association

and State International Development Organizations are key groups for staff.

Relationships and Risks

In going abroad, cities are working through some important operational considerations. Internationalization is testing and reshaping relationships with their home states and the federal government and, in some cases, is one factor spurring metro areas to coordinate more closely together. Cities are also navigating the risks that come with a greater global presence.

Navigating the Federal Relationship

On trade matters, cities reported consistently positive relationships with the federal government, but divergent experiences with their home states. Surprisingly, cities report sometimes having better access than the U.S. embassy when they travel abroad, sometimes to the latter's consternation. In one instance when Houston made an overseas trip, the host country's energy minister was far more accessible than to the Embassy. "We get a lot better access in part because it is not about policy, but economic growth," Christopher Olson explains.

At the same time, Olson praises the various federal trade attaches and agencies that support the city, citing the U.S. Commercial Service and Small Business Administration as "incredibly" and "amazingly" strong partners. Beaverton's mayor still marvels at the fact that his is the only city in Oregon that has bothered with a relationship with the Export-Import Bank given its impact for his city. "We had some small businesses that were too frightened" to export; now "all of a sudden, they've tripled their sales." Doyle makes

a point of the fact that he personally went to the agency's headquarters in Washington, DC to cement the relationship.

The State Department was particularly supportive of subnational diplomacy during Hillary Clinton's leadership as secretary, establishing an Office of Global Intergovernmental Affairs that has since been effectively discontinued. Speaking in 2012, Reta Jo Lewis, special representative for that office, affirmed, "our foreign policy relationships will always be nation-to-nation. But the scope of what defines nation-to-nation conversations are shifting...deeming city-to-city, and state-to-state dialogues just as critical to the larger context of executing, implementing, and achieving a nation's overarching diplomatic goals."⁶⁶

Lewis cited partnerships between the National League of Cities and the South African Local Government Association, the State of Pennsylvania and the Niger Delta, and Fulton County, Georgia and Brazilian leaders as examples. Other federal agencies also draw upon local leaders: the Department of Homeland Security has facilitated exchanges on counterterrorism between the Boston and Mumbai police; and the Treasury Department's foreign assistance efforts often draw on state-level public finance experts, according to Alyssa Ayres, a fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.⁶⁷

Ayres is one of several experts calling for the creation of a State Department office focused on supporting the international efforts of American cities and states. "Just as the State Department facilitates exchange and supports U.S. companies abroad," through the Office of Private Sector Exchange (which also supports academic and cultural organizations), "it should institutionalize coordination with U.S. states and cities on their international agendas," she writes.⁶⁸

One of the State Department's most ambitious current efforts to leverage subnational diplomacy is funding the U.S.-India State and Urban Initiative, managed by CSIS, a think-tank.⁶⁹ Nominally focused on promoting cooperation on energy, it models an approach for deepening relationships with an important partner at a breadth and depth that the State Department cannot do alone. The State Department would be well-advised to extend future efforts to cities as well.

Statehouses and City Halls

While many governors are making international engagement a priority, mayors are generally more active. "Mayors are able to travel more," says the National Governors Association's Abigail Hunter. Governors are more reluctant to do so, especially when legislatures are in session.

Political dynamics can also affect city-state relationships, with mayors more likely to be Democrats and governors Republican. "Dallas is such a powerhouse that we don't wait around for Austin," says Beth Huddleston, who says that the city's international collaboration with the state is limited apart from projects such as participating in the Texas pavilion for the federal government's SelectUSA foreign investment trade shows. If anything, the state is more likely to complicate the city's efforts to attract business, for example, with recent legislation that would have required transgender persons to use restrooms in accordance with their birth gender.

Atlanta's Vanessa Ibarra, while acknowledging differences with the state's governor on migration issues, speaks highly of the city's working relationship with the state's economic development agency. Abby Turano, who works for the state, concurs, noting that she meets with the city almost weekly. Turano credits former governor Nathan Deal and former

mayor Kasim Reed for bringing the city and state closer together. "They famously got along," Turano says.

Philadelphia's Lauren Swartz echoes that of her city and Pennsylvania, saying that while "broadly the city-state relationship can be challenging," collaboration on international investment happens "seamlessly." "Spending time to build personal relationships...is something I've worked really hard to do." The state of Pennsylvania, which has the largest network of overseas trade promotion officers, accounts for a "significant amount" of Philadelphia's leads. At the same time, the state "works hard to balance out where they send leads, and I admire and respect them for doing that."

Taking a Regional Approach

Internationalization is also driving neighboring cities within a metropolitan area to deepen their collaboration. Business Oregon, the state's economic development agency, regularly organizes joint trips for its mayors. Mike Williams, Beaverton's economic development manager, says the cities are sufficiently differentiated that there is little sense of competition. The mayor, who meets with his Greater Portland counterparts regularly, acknowledges that the intensity of collaboration, extending well beyond economic development, is "not how most cities in the United States function."

San Jose administers a foreign trade zone, which incentivizes trade by eliminating duties and some paperwork. The zone covers most of the South Bay, promoting partnership with the area's patchwork of smaller municipalities. Even further north, Joe Hedges does not see San Francisco or Oakland as competition, but as "other cities in the same ecosystem."⁷⁰

Dallas' position is more openly nuanced within the context of its broader metroplex. "We all benefit, but we don't benefit equally," when foreign investment comes anywhere in the region, says Beth Huddleston, pointing to Toyota's 2017 opening of its new North American headquarters in Plano, instead of Dallas, as a decision that still rankles. She notes that while there are both formal and informal mechanisms in place for regional collaboration, international engagement is "very tricky" because politicians want the wins for their area, leading to friendly competition. While crediting outgoing mayor Mike Rawlings for good faith efforts at taking a regional perspective, "my contract is specifically with the city of Dallas, so I'm very cognizant that is who I represent."

In Kentucky, Jeanine Duncliffe was tasked with bringing the cities of Louisville and Lexington into closer cooperation when both cities elected new mayors. For several years the cities worked to promote exports and FDI, developing "expertise, solutions, and habits of collaboration."⁷¹ As Louisville has moved forward with Brookings' new "global identity" initiative, it has redirected its attention away from Lexington and towards the southern Indiana counties that border the city. "In a lot of ways this has turned out to be a lot more intuitive discussion," than had Louisville continued to partner with Lexington on the next phase of Brookings' Global Cities initiative, "because the job base is the same and industry composition is similar, and the proximity between the two areas makes it all seem a little more relevant to everybody."⁷²

Syracuse and Tampa are other examples of cities that have worked to take a more regionally integrated approach to boost their competitiveness, according to Brookings' Marek Gootman. As internationalization brings metro regions, often across state lines, closer together, it is the laws and

norms governing these interactions that seem most likely to change than those concerning the federal government.

Opportunities Not Without Risks

While more international engagement is almost always framed in terms of its opportunities, officials and experts do acknowledge that there are risks. Among these are the risk that international travel will be perceived as wasteful by voters, the recognition that not all investment is good, a lack of sophistication in navigating national security considerations, and backlash with the "rest of state."

Junkets

The most commonly cited risk, that voters see their mayors' international travel as "junkets," is politically salient, but arguably the least consequential strategically. Indeed, some see this risk as diminishing as international engagement becomes more common. "In the big cities, it is less of an issue because voters see mayors as ambassadors," according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors' Luis Renta.⁷³

Jim Kenney, the mayor of Philadelphia, was once a critic of his predecessor's international travel, but acknowledged to the Philadelphia *Inquirer* that "I happened to be wrong. There is a need for the mayor to be present. For some companies, it's a matter of respect."⁷⁴

Even in smaller cities like Beaverton, Oregon, Mayor Doyle believes that the city's diverse population "gets it." "When we get a win [abroad], we let people know," adding that in any event, "we're pretty judicious about what we do and we don't do it all that often."⁷⁵

Renta adds that when there is still sensitivity about travel, some invitations for international appearances may be routed via the State Department to give mayors' travel a patriotic imprimatur. Interestingly, the State Department often asks municipalities to allow foreign observers to monitor U.S. elections so that the U.S. government can do so in kind.

Not All Investment is Inherently Good

A lack of selectivity with respect to attracting investment can create more headaches than benefits for a city. As a result, Chris Olson, the director of Houston's office of international affairs, weighs whether potential investments are coming for the right reasons. That means something not just meaningful in the short-term but in the city's best interest "fifty years from now. Is it just a lot of apartments and real estate or is it going into manufacturing?"

National Security Considerations

Writing amid the last wave of international engagement, University of Virginia law professor John Moore warned, "Governors do not have national security councils. They do not have intelligence agencies. They do not have state departments with desk officers handling every single country in the world. The information flow to them is inadequate." The challenges remain just as acute for cities and the industries they are seeking to support.

Cities are not just engaging outbound, they're also the subject of increased inbound attention. In light of uncertainty over the future of the NAFTA trade agreement, Canada and Mexico have made concerted outreach efforts to governors and mayors to maintain cooperation and exercise a lever of influence on national politics.⁷⁶ "Canada is doing a beautiful job of opening up trade offices, engaging our

elected officials, hosting events in cities," says Philadelphia's Lauren Swartz, who attributes much of the marked increase in inbound attention to attempts by countries to strike politically beneficial relationships outside of Washington.

Many of these efforts, while politically pointed, are benign in large part because of the longstanding, trust-based relationships of the countries involved and necessary because partnerships with countries like Canada, Mexico and South Korea are, as Lauren Swartz puts it, "too big to fail." But cities should remain wary of attempts by other nations to attempt to cultivate improper influence, particularly among officials poised for the national stage.

While concerns about sub-national leaders unwittingly undermining national security are not new, many of the efforts to better prepare them are. Abigail Hunter, an advisor for the National Governors Association's international work, says that the organization is trying to support due diligence in regards to China so that states have a holistic understanding of intellectual property, IT, and critical infrastructure concerns. National security officials are increasingly engaging with the association and directly with states and cities.⁷⁷

A related, emergent risk is foreign money entering state and local politics. While banned, there is less scrutiny of local campaign spending and significant loopholes. "Access to elected leaders is an attractive validator for some foreign actors and compromising future leaders is always on the agenda for foreign intelligence agencies," says Luis Renta.⁷⁸ In 2013, a Chinese developer with an American green card and business interests in Virginia donated \$120,000 to governor Terry McAuliffe's gubernatorial campaign and inauguration.⁷⁹ While technically permitted given his green card status, there were concerns about broader potential for influence given his ties to the Chinese government.

Federal investigators are currently reportedly examining the role Chinese developers may have played in a Los Angeles corruption scandal, including "possible bribery, extortion, money laundering and other crimes," according to the *Los Angeles Times*.⁸⁰ The city was also subject to a Federal Elections Commission investigation about foreign funding in a local ballot initiative. The FEC declined to rule whether prohibitions on foreign funding extended to ballot initiatives, finding that even if it did, because the Chinese developer involved relied on the funds of a U.S. company with which it was doing business, the manager responsible for the ballot initiative was a U.S. citizen, and the funds would be repaid from funds in the U.S., the activity likely would have been permitted.⁸¹ Even though the particular ballot initiative involved a legitimate local business interest, the ruling illustrates the potential for foreign subsidiaries to exploit loopholes, potentially for the purposes of injecting improper foreign influence in elections.

These issues are complex: the "line between right and wrong, ethical and unethical, is often murky," says Renta, who laments that the "disappearance of local press means that we really don't have anyone watching local politicians/officials, and so only the most egregious cases ever get attention from law enforcement."

Companies too are looking for guidance, particularly involving technology with "dual-use" implications for civil and military markets. But the challenges extend beyond technology. In San Diego, which is well versed on the complexities of foreign military sales, life sciences and biotech is an emergent challenge. "We're getting questions from that community about whether we should be doing business in certain markets," because of concerns about protecting valuable intellectual property and privacy, says

Jesse Gipe. "There certainly could be better education for non-obviously national security industries."⁸²

Rural-Urban Divides

Once the foundations of cities' success, their home nations are increasingly their biggest risk. The cultural disconnects and inequalities are growing between prosperous cities and rural regions while power, particularly in the United States, remains firmly rooted in place. A majority of the U.S. Senate represents a fifth of the population; counties voting for President Trump represented 36 percent of GDP.⁸³

This structural imbalance of power between rural areas and cities is not inherently bad, particularly if it were to guarantee greater economic mobility subsidized by cities that might otherwise be neglected were political and economic power mutually concentrated.

Unfortunately, a broader politics of resentment means cities are more likely to be targeted by proposals punishing their success than furthering it. That means American mayors, just as they feel sufficiently empowered and frustrated by domestic politics to set their sights abroad, should arguably be redoubling their time not just in state and national capitals, but perhaps even further afield to make the case that the fates of rural and urban America are aligned.

Georgia's Abby Turano cited the example of former Atlanta mayor Kasim Reed, a Democrat, who supported the Republican governor Nathan Deal's effort to upgrade the Savannah port, even though the benefit to Atlanta would be indirect. In an effort to bring the benefits of internationalization to the whole state, Georgia's international affairs team invites members of the Atlanta consular corps on annual multi-day tours to other parts of the state.

How Will Cities' International Engagement Evolve?

The demographic forces propelling cities to the center of international engagement are expected to grow stronger. By 2050, urban areas will account for 80 percent of global GDP and urban population is projected to grow from half to 70 percent.

What's less clear is the extent to which city diplomacy relies on the maintenance of a liberal international order, or whether cities can play a role in sustaining it.⁸⁴

Only recently have populist shocks shattered the notion that supranational governance, which would open greater and more direct opportunities for cities to influence policy, was inevitable. Western nations are not poised to cede control over trade and migration, the two drivers of cities' success.

At the same time, China will also disrupt cities' path to greater global prominence. Beijing's diplomacy prefers state-to-state interactions. As it challenges established international norms and institutions, or creates alternative ones, the window in which cities found room to operate may close. Alternatively, given its highly centralized structure, if Beijing chooses to send out its cities on diplomatic missions *en masse*, their level of coordination will be hard for others to challenge.

Domestically, the extent to which cities have emphasized cooperation as opposed to competition with each other abroad is surprising and invites questions about whether it will continue. This is particularly striking given the self-defeating competition many American states and cities are engaged in to lure domestic businesses from one place to another. But, on closer review, it makes sense. Few cities are engaged in head-to-head competition abroad because

their comparative advantages are in some respects more pronounced than when competing for domestic business.

It also remains to be seen how increased international engagement will affect political dynamics within metro areas. American municipalities are notoriously fragmented, often frustrating cooperation on issues like infrastructure and transportation. If regions that are more politically integrated or have more established track records of close partnership prove more successful abroad, it may spur governments in metro areas with more difficult histories into working more collaboratively.

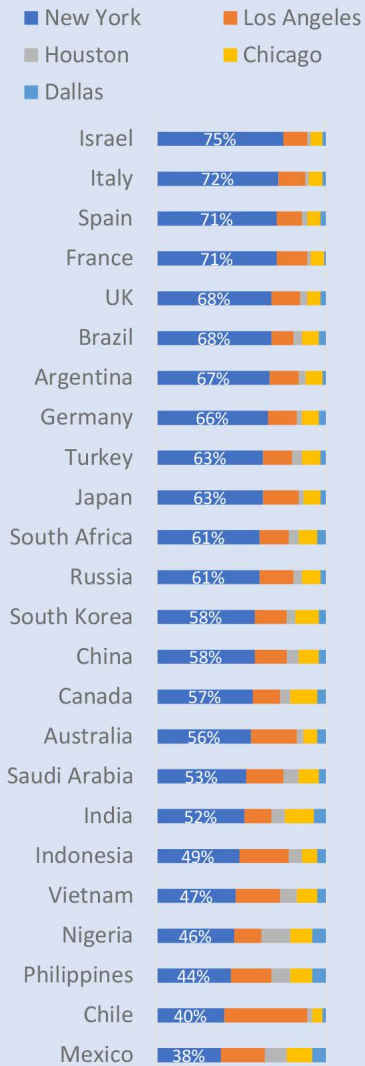
More Institutionalized Approaches

As this report has demonstrated, American cities' international engagement remains fairly improvisational. That will need to change in favor of clearer strategic visions, better developed talent pipelines and closer partnerships in and outside of city government.

(See Exhibit 4 on following page.)

It's a New York world

Share of searches for select cities by country



Source: *Google Trends*

Establishing some consensus around measuring successful international engagement would further this effort. Current international rankings generally recognize scale; regardless of their nominal components, they almost always set New York, London and Tokyo as their "north star."

While many cities' international affairs or economic development offices produce a measure that accounts for job creation or investment to attribute to their efforts, there are doubts about how useful these statistics are. There is no consensus for how these figures should be calculated, making them potentially subject to manipulation. Many organizations credit themselves for any investment decision they were even marginally involved in and don't account for the role of other stakeholders in a decision. "There are places that do it well and places that don't, taking credit for things in ways that are disingenuous," says Jesse Gipe, of San Diego's World Trade Center.⁸⁵

Some critics go further, arguing that even if credit for job or investment creation could be objectively measured, it may not be the thing that matters most. These measures handcuff cities "to the limited set of strategies that appear to contribute to the existing standard," inhibiting a focus on longer-term competitiveness, write Ryan Donahue and Brad McDearman, two non-resident fellows at the Brookings Institution.⁸⁶

Similarly, no objective measure of a city's international profile exists. "It's a hard thing to track," says Georgia's Abby Turano. The goal is to make the state "more well known around the world as an investment destination and source of quality goods and services." It may be possible to construct one from Google searches or low-cost internet polling (see chart).

Given the difficulties in measuring outcomes, most cities focus on measures of activity, such as the number of visitors, trade missions or new partnerships established. Even then, discernible progress can be “hard to track year to year or administration to administration,” according to Philadelphia’s Lauren Swartz. In Dallas, the “big kudos are if we can attract a consulate or a trade office,” or be helpful in attracting a direct air route, says Beth Huddleston.

Given that so many cities’ efforts are still maturing, a more useful approach might be to take a step back from measuring activity or even outcomes and instead benchmark cities’ international capacity. This would compare strategies, operations and organizations against the most sophisticated actors. (The appendix offers a potential evaluation framework.)

Amid the excitement about cities’ international potential, city leaders must maintain their humility: while they can still do more abroad, they are not being asked to replace national governments, nor are they capable of doing so. As USC’s Jay Wang reminds them, “trade and investment will continue to be the pillar of any city’s development.”

With trade and investment remaining as their primary international responsibilities, cities would do well to prepare for the next wave of global growth, building expertise and connections in India and Africa.

Issues of the Future

Several issues beyond climate change and resiliency will soon dominate cities’ knowledge sharing efforts. Technology and the future of work, public health, and managing aging populations are all emergent issues, according to Abigail

Hunter, the National Governors Association's international strategy adviser.

Which cities are poised to lead the global conversation on these issues? With respect to technology and the future of work, cities are already taking greater control from national regulators with respect to the gig and sharing economy. (Also to watch: how European cities manage "overtourism" fueled by house-sharing services.)

Most important will be how cities educate and retrain their populations. The city-state of Singapore, which has a highly sophisticated human capital strategy and leads in international student assessments of collaborative problem-solving, is one example.⁸⁷ Also emerging is Helsinki, Finland, which is at the center of an ambitious national effort to retrain 1 percent of its population in the foundations of artificial intelligence.⁸⁸

For public health, American cities are well-positioned, including Atlanta, home of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control; and Boston, home to several leading public health programs. For aging, Japan's cities are already offering up lessons to a graying world.

The Dallas-Fort Worth area seems poised to be a leading source of knowledge-sharing on several other issues of transnational relevance. An unfortunate consequence of its position along the Latin American trade route is that its expertise on human trafficking is among the best in the world. The city's chief of protocol points to cybersecurity and religious tolerance as other common themes of recent inbound delegations, the latter due to the city's well-regarded interfaith council.⁸⁹ (Based on one ranking of innovative cybersecurity companies, New York and the

D.C. metro area are the strongest U.S. ecosystems; Israel is second to the U.S.⁹⁰⁾

Recommendations

American cities deserve the opportunity to succeed on the global stage because it is to the benefit of the entire country. Their success in promoting trade and investment sustains American competitiveness and, when they bridge educational and cultural institutions across borders, it makes the world a more vibrant place. On policy issues, cities' lobbying on critical issues—both directed at Washington and elsewhere—adds a consistently pragmatic voice to important debates. And contrary to concerns of corrupting the United States' ability to “speak with one voice abroad,” cities are more likely to amplify and broaden the reach of American influence.

To succeed in their global missions, cities, their home states and the federal government all have work to do. For cities, already convinced of the need to act, the challenge is to now act with purpose. States and the federal government still must make important shifts in mindsets, not necessarily laws.

Cities

Cities that do not have an international advisory council, made up of leaders from the city council, local economic development agency, chamber of commerce, airport authority, global affairs council, universities, cultural institutions and other major institutions, should stand one up.

In partnership with the advisory council, the city's international affairs office should define an international strategy, articulating the city's vision, what it can offer the world and what it seeks from engagement. (The appendix of this paper offers some key questions to consider.) It should also develop a standing process for reevaluating the issues, geographies and international organizations with which the city will engage at appropriate intervals.

Cities should review the structure of their international affairs organization, ensuring that it concentrates essential responsibilities, blends career and appointed staff and aligns the city's stakeholders and international vision. (The appendix of this paper offers a suggested structure.)

Cities' electoral commissions should proactively strengthen safeguards against improper foreign political contributions.

When cities secure unique access to officials abroad, they should appropriately include state and embassy leaders to ensure that the benefits of engagement advance the national interest.

States

States should offer incentive funding (e.g., refund of the first full year of operating costs) to nations that establish additional consulates or trade offices in cities with few existing such offices, recognizing the disproportionate impact consulates can have on stimulating trade.

States should collaborate with cities in rationalizing the locations of their trade offices and broaden their footprint

as “state embassies” that promote tourism, education and cultural exchange.

States should focus their efforts on supporting the internationalization efforts of under-resourced regions, including those spanning state borders in collaboration with neighboring states.

Federal Government

The State Department should create an Office of Subnational Diplomacy and articulate a “City Diplomacy Strategy” that defines and funds opportunities for cities to act abroad in support of national objectives (e.g., promoting outreach to priority countries as it is currently piloting between U.S. and Indian states).

The new Office of Subnational Diplomacy should establish a secondment program for U.S. diplomats to serve as international affairs advisers to cities or clusters of cities.

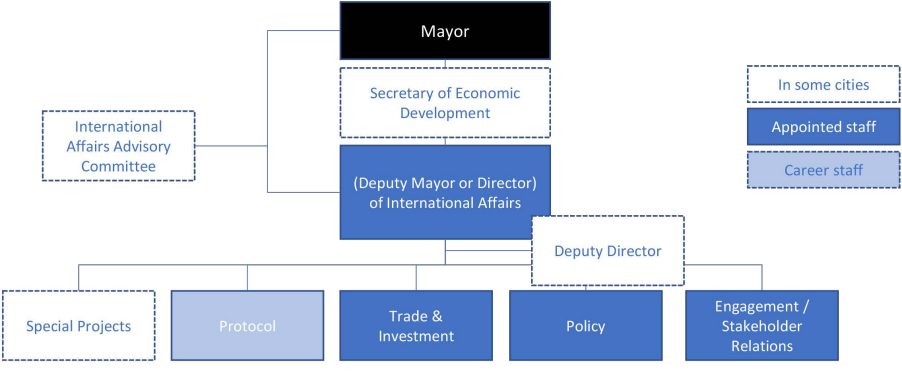
The Commerce Department and related agencies, in consultation with metropolitan stakeholders, should conduct an audit of key gaps in subnational data (e.g., trade data at the metropolitan level) and develop a plan to ultimately produce such data.

The intelligence community should standardize a program of ongoing briefings to city and state international affairs officials on national security or diplomatic issues.

The State Department should create a central database that cities and states are required to report in- and out-bound international travel to increase transparency about subnational diplomacy.

The FAA should waive the two-year limit on cities’ ability to encourage international routes, recognizing their disproportionate impact on trade and investment.

Typical current organization of a city’s office of international affairs



Potential future organization of a city’s office of international affairs

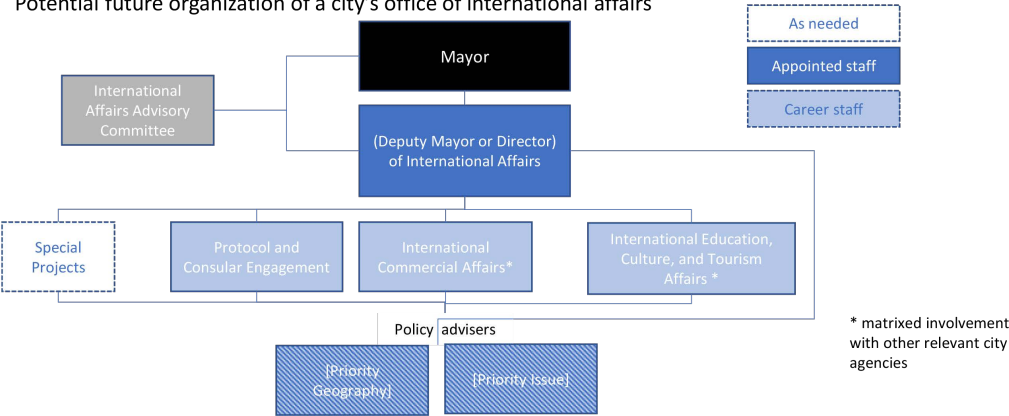


Exhibit 5

Appendix I

Re-envisioning the International Affairs Office

The typical city international affairs office is organized around functional responsibilities. Downsides of this approach is that it can lead to missed opportunities for partnership with other city officials with international responsibilities and stakeholders outside of government who do not line up neatly against an existing function.

Jay Wang, director of USC's Center on Public Diplomacy, has argued that international affairs offices should move to make policy priorities a more prominent organizing principle. This would ensure that the city's international activities cohere to a common vision.

One potential risk of an organizing framework that was solely policy-based is exacerbating the turnover that accompanies mayoral transitions, particularly if the new mayor has differing priorities. Such turnover would be contrary to the consistency that successful international engagement requires.

The ideal organization should incorporate a third dimension, that of stakeholders. As Chicago's strategy demonstrates, city governments are far from the sole, or even most prominent, international actors. International organizations that are aligned against functional or even policy priorities may thus miss opportunities to collaborate with and champion external stakeholders.

The accompanying proposal suggests one possibility for how cities' international affairs offices will evolve, blending functional, policy and stakeholder approaches. A deputy mayor or director of international affairs would oversee the city's overall international vision, ensure all of the city's government works towards those ends, and serve as the mayor's principal international adviser and spokesperson.

Supporting them would be three principal deputies, responsible for protocol and consular engagement; international commercial affairs; and international education, culture and tourism affairs. These individuals would liaise with their stakeholders in and outside of city government, convene an international advisory committee that meets regularly with each other and, on occasion, serves as a sounding board for the mayor.

Junior-level advisers, specializing in the geographies and policies the city has identified as priorities, would support each principal officer as needed.

Advantages of this approach is that at a minimum of five officials, it would not require new headcount above what most cities currently dedicate to international affairs. At the same time, it ensures that there is a clear point person responsible for maintaining relationships outside and

within city government, supported by appropriate policy and geographic expertise. The recommended structure is agnostic as to the title of the senior official responsible for international affairs (i.e., a “deputy mayor” or “director”), so long as they are sufficiently empowered and would have access to the mayor.

Scaling

For cities unable to allocate the six roles identified as a minimum for a leading city, the accompanying table offers guidance on how an office should evolve.

One constant is an international advisory committee, which should be the foundation of any city, creating the groundwork for future collaboration. Philadelphia’s Global Business Alliance, which includes representatives from other city agencies, the state and federal government, university international offices and trade organizations, meets monthly. Lauren Swartz, who directs the city’s international efforts, says the arrangement “creates a very high level of camaraderie so that I can send a text like ‘we have a company from Germany, can you join for coffee tomorrow?’,” and get the right people from across the city in front of a prospective investor.

A smaller, emerging city might choose to assign a deputy chief of staff to the mayor with part-time responsibilities for protocol and oversight of the city’s economic development office. Education, culture and tourism responsibilities could be designated as responsibilities of other departments or the international advisory committee.

A mid-size or maturing city would begin the transition to establishing a stand-alone office with 2-3 full-time

staff. Non-protocol and commercial responsibilities would continue to be formally designated elsewhere.

A leading city of any size would have full-time staff for all principal international responsibilities, adding regional and policy advisers as appropriate. The proposed structure is intended to allow for additional assistant roles within these areas of responsibilities when warranted.

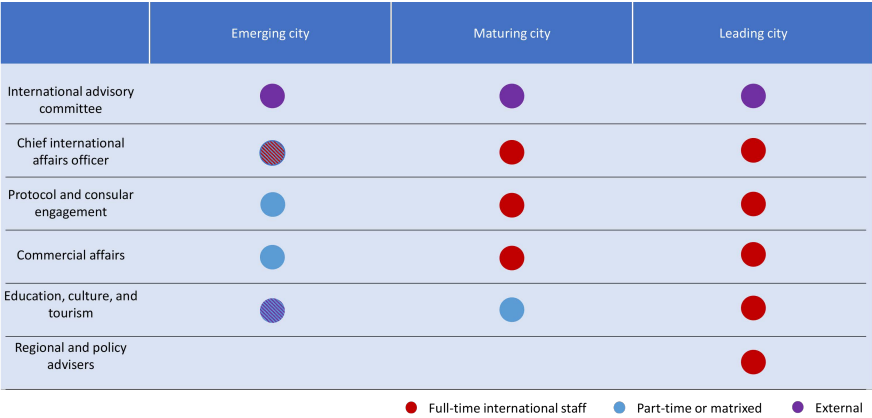


Exhibit 6

Appendix II

Framework for evaluating cities' international affairs effectiveness

	Emerging city	Maturing city	Leading city
Strategy	Ad-hoc engagement or internationalization strategy that is not comprehensive, does not prioritize geographies or issue areas, and/or is not aligned with external stakeholders	Internationalization strategy is publicly articulated but lacks important elements characteristic of a leading city	Internationalization strategy is publicly articulated, comprehensive, targeted and aligned with external stakeholders
Organization	International expertise is limited, diffused throughout city government	Office of International Affairs (OIA) exists, but not fully resourced or aligned against stakeholder, geographic and issue priorities	Office of International Affairs (OIA) is fully resourced and well-aligned against its mission
	Mayor has inconsistent access to international expertise	OIA engages with the mayor but has an inconsistent stature and influence as a partner more broadly within city government and external stakeholders	OIA is a close strategic partner to the mayor and has the appropriate stature and influence with city government and external stakeholders to be effective
	City is unable to attract, develop appropriate mix of qualified appointed and career staff	OIA has mixed results attracting, developing appropriate mix of appointed and career staff	OIA is a preferred opportunity for international affairs professionals

Operations	City has limited ability to conduct effective outbound delegations; not a priority destination for inbound delegations	City has moderate ability to conduct effective outbound delegations; an important destination for inbound delegations on at least one subject	City has sophisticated ability to conduct effective outbound delegations; leading destination for inbound delegations on multiple subjects
	City has no process for internalizing policy learnings from other cities	City has inconsistent process for internalizing policy learnings from other cities	City has well-established process for internalizing policy learnings from other cities
	City is able to host limited international gatherings (e.g., delegations)	City is able to successfully host important international gatherings (e.g., major conferences, G20)	City is able to successfully host the world's most complex international gatherings (e.g., Olympics)
Stakeholders	Citizens and leading stakeholders recognize the value of internationalization, but lack important capabilities or are not fully aligned with or coordinated under a cohesive vision	Citizens and leading stakeholders support internationalization, have appropriate capabilities and regularly convene	Citizens and leading stakeholders champion internationalization, have sophisticated capabilities and coordinate closely
	City is unable to attract and/or effectively engage consulates, trade offices, and sister cities as a partner	City has moderate success in attracting and/or engaging consulates, trade offices and sister cities but does not fully leverage their potential	City fully leverages its or nearby consulates, trade offices and sister cities to enrich the city's fabric and advance the city's international reach

Outcomes	External perceptions of the city (recognition, and desirability to live, work and invest) are limited to non-existent	External perceptions of the city (recognition and desirability as place to visit, live and invest) are moderate	External perceptions of the city (recognition and desirability as place to visit, live and invest) are high
	City has not achieved global recognition for policy leadership	City has achieved global recognition for leadership on a specific policy area	City has achieved global recognition for leadership on multiple policy areas
	City does not attract fair share* of exports, investment, tourism, international air connectivity and foreign students retained/gained	City is able to attract fair share of at least one of: exports, investment, tourism, international air connectivity and foreign students retained/gained	City attracts fair share of multiple elements of: exports, investment, tourism, international air connectivity and foreign students retained/gained
Other	<p><i>Border cities</i> City's relationship with foreign counterpart is focused on day-to-day matters instead of longer-term strategic priorities; does not fully leverage state and federal government; border a material impediment</p> <p><i>Company towns</i> City is perceived as an inconsistent partner of its principal exporter</p>	<p>U.S. and foreign counterpart share a common strategic vision and platforms for regular exchange and collaboration, including with state and federal government; some addressable border frictions remain</p> <p>City and principal exporter work effectively, but city lacks capacity to pursue a full-range of international initiatives independent of company considerations</p>	<p>U.S. and foreign counterpart exercise broad array of jointly coordinated policies, "leading" the relationship with state and federal government to create a border that is as seamlessly integrated as possible</p> <p>City has a strategy and burgeoning international profile beyond the needs of its principal exporter that allows it to attract new and diverse international activity</p>
* "Fair share" is defined as the median proportion per capita of the relevant metric among similarly sized cities.			

Appendix III

Components of an ideal international strategy document

An ideal international strategy document will:

- Define the city's vision for its role in the world, both in terms of what it seeks from engagement and what it can offer
- Articulate how internationalization advances local interests and how local interests advance its international positioning
- Clarify how the city government, in partnership with stakeholders, can raise the city's overall capacity to engage internationally, increase awareness of the city and facilitate greater international interactions
- Advance detailed goals, objectives, strategies and tactics for achieving the city's international vision

What follows is a potential structure for such a strategy and the key questions it would answer. When determining its "fair share" of tourists, FDI and other quantitative measures, this paper recommends a definition based on the median proportion per capita of the relevant metric among similarly sized cities.

Vision	What does the city want to be known globally for?
Positioning	How is the city currently perceived internationally?
Priority issues	What policy issues have the highest degree of global and local resonance? To which issues can the city contribute knowledge and for which issues is the city seeking new solutions?
Priority geographies	To which geographies does the city have existing or the potential for strong connections, due to business or diaspora ties or similar profile/conditions?
Priority organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which are the international organizations or associations of societies that the city will prioritize? • Does the city have the capacity or potential to play a leadership role in these organizations and would doing so advance the city's global reputation and/or local priorities?
Exports & Investments	<p>What are the city's areas of commercial excellence (goods, services, and competencies)?</p> <p><i>Exports</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current industries which lead the city's exports; which firms export; and to which destinations? • Do these exporters have the potential to export more to existing or new destinations and would benefit from city support? • Are there other competitive industry clusters that have under-realized export potential? How can the city support these industries' mindset, capacity and visibility to export? <p><i>Investments</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the current industry targets and sources of international investment? • Is there potential for increased investment in these industries or from those sources? • Where do city businesses invest abroad and why? • Are there other attractive industry clusters or talent bases for which international investment is more likely than domestic?
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the city host or have the potential to host major international events or organizations aligned with its vision? • How can the city's airport deepen its global connectivity?
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the city attract (and retain) its fair share of international students? • How is the city preparing (and leveraging) its students and workforce to be globally competitive?

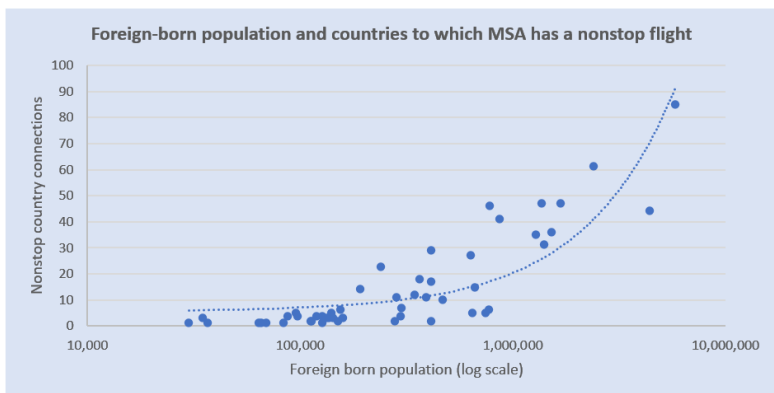
Culture & tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the city attract its fair share of international tourism? • How can the city's cultural institutions "bring the world" into its mission; how can they share their work with global audiences?
Consular engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the city engaging its consulate corps to enrich the international fabric of the city and promote productive relationships with their countries? • Are there opportunities to attract new consulates to this city?
Stakeholder leadership and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are stakeholders' current international activities, capabilities and goals? • Where is international expertise (functional and geographic) currently clustered around the city? • What is the appropriate mechanism for convening stakeholders and establishing processes for coordination? • How can the city and stakeholders mutually reinforce their goals? • How can the city foster the international capacity of its stakeholders?
Office structure and funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is international expertise (functional and geographic) currently clustered within city government? • What is the city government's current funding of international operations and activities? • What are the existing processes for coordination on the most common forms of international engagement? • How can the city's international operations be improved by improved processes or organizational realignment? • Is the city government's funding for international operations and activities consistent with the city's international goals and responsibilities?
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each category of international engagement, what are the city's overall goals, objectives, strategies and tactics? • For which goals are the city government expected to lead, facilitate/support or monitor?

Appendix IV

How well connected are U.S. cities' airports to the rest of the world?

When a direct flight is established between two cities, commerce and the exchange of people and ideas between them increase significantly. A new analysis for this report suggests several major U.S. cities are under-connected internationally, potentially curtailing their growth potential. As cities work to promote trade and investment, one of the most important actions they should consider is attracting new air routes.

As one would expect, there is a strong statistical relationship between the number of countries to which a metropolitan area is directly connected and its total population. Intriguingly, this relationship becomes even stronger when factoring in the proportion of that metro area's population which is foreign-born and the proportion of foreign-born residents from a single country, Mexico. As a rule of thumb, a metro area should be connected to one more country for every 2 percentage points its foreign-born residents comprise of the total population (see table). Export volume was also correlated with greater foreign connections, but less strongly.



Which cities do better than expected?

Unsurprisingly, cities that are hubs for major airlines have significantly higher international connections relative to what would be expected given their population. Atlanta, Delta's hub, was connected to 46 countries, or 21 more than would have been expected. (Compared to Chicago, which has a large number of flag carriers, Atlanta's international flights are dominated by Delta.⁹¹) The Washington, D.C. metro area also has connections to more countries than expected based on its population alone, but this is understandable given its strategic importance as the national capital.

But even hubs like Miami can have gaps. For years, the airport has been actively pursuing a direct commercial flight to Asia.⁹² It is the busiest U.S. market for leisure and business travel from Asia without nonstop service according to one analysis, and the Florida airport already supports \$5 billion in cargo trade with the region.

Which cities are under-connected?

Several metro areas are connected to fewer cities than would be expected, especially when tourism flows are considered. Consider Phoenix, which serves six countries, including the UK and Germany. Not included is France, which sent 103,000 visitors to the state overall in 2017, and is nearly equal in volume to the two European countries the Phoenix airport serves.⁹³ China, which sent 81,000 tourists in 2017, also lacks a direct connection. If the 130,000 annual visitors from Australia, Japan and South Korea were pooled in Tokyo, the case for an Asian connection would only grow.

An airport's relationship with its most important airline plays a key role in whether its connection potential is fully realized. "Being a major hub for American Airlines is

good news and bad news,” Deborah Ostreicher, assistant director for Phoenix Aviation, explains in an email. While it considers itself a strong candidate for Tokyo, “the bad news is that Phoenix passengers would fly right over LAX,” which American Airlines already serves to Tokyo. Similarly, Paris and Amsterdam are hubs for Delta’s SkyTeam alliance, but Phoenix is not, so Salt Lake City “makes more sense for them on this end until our demand grows a bit more,” Ostreicher explains.

International connections of selected metro areas			
Metro areas	Countries connected	Expected	Difference
Higher than expected connections			
Atlanta	46	25	+21
Miami	61	42	+19
Boston	41	27	+14
Charlotte	23	9	+14
Orlando	29	15	+14
Washington	47	34	+13
Chicago	47	39	+8
Lower than expected connections			
Columbus	2	9	-7
San Diego	6	15	-9
Phoenix	5	14	-9
Sacramento	2	12	-10
San Jose	5	21	-16
Los Angeles	44	61	-17

The entire state of Ohio is also a case in point. The state, the seventh largest by population, directly connects to only five countries across its three airports. Philadelphia and Detroit, hubs for American and Delta, respectively, in states that are comparable in population, reach 27 and 17 countries, respectively. Columbus, nearly equidistant from

Cincinnati and Cleveland at two hours in driving time, is likely right at the cusp of competitiveness against taking the one hour connecting flight via Chicago. Nonetheless, a state that is home to 25 Fortune 500 firms has the potential to be a bigger presence on the international map.

In a recent interview, Joe Nardone, CEO of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority, flagged Tokyo, London, and Paris as target destinations.⁹⁴ Some 47 passengers start their trips to Tokyo via Columbus each day, according to the airport's data. A spokesperson for the airport noted in an email that a 2013 MIT study that evaluated the entirety of an airport's connections, not just nonstop ones, found Columbus to be tenth for medium-sized airports (Cincinnati was ninth).⁹⁵ Using the MIT measure of connection quality, Columbus was 23 percent as well-connected in 2012 as Chicago's O'Hare.

The California challenge

California has a surprising concentration of metro areas that appear under-connected. Some are served by hubs in nearby metro areas, as is the case with San Jose and San Francisco. But how to explain Los Angeles, which has 17 fewer direct connections to other countries than would otherwise be expected?

Geography may play an important limiting role: California is far—a continent and ocean away from Europe and the world's largest ocean away from Asia. Due principally to regulatory requirements around maximum flight time and crew accommodation, economists have observed that there tend to be more flights just below 6,000 miles than above.⁹⁶ The importance of that threshold is slowly diminishing, which means California's cities may be poised to add new routes.

Dilpreet Sidhu, an official in the Los Angeles Mayor's Office of International Affairs, says that they work closely with the airport, incorporating its market priorities as part of the city's trade delegations. A current priority is a nonstop flight to Vietnam, where the city went and pitched the country's prime minister.⁹⁷

Sacramento and San Diego, an inconvenient two hour drive from SFO and LAX, respectively, have the potential for more direct connections of their own. Given the origins of its population, routes to the Philippines could be viable for both cities, particularly given that San Francisco's existing direct flight already exceeds the 6,000 mile threshold.⁹⁸

To date, California's capital airport is connected to only Canada and Mexico. Ukraine could also be in reach given Sacramento's Ukrainian population—and potentially Vietnam and Laos too. San Diego currently connects to six countries. A key missing connection is a direct flight to China, given the city's sizable foreign-born population from that country, and the fact that China was the city's fourth largest source of overnight tourism in 2017.⁹⁹ Jesse Gipe, who leads the San Diego's World Trade Center, which is responsible for international trade and investment promotion, notes that the airport's single-runway is a key constraint.¹⁰⁰

The economic opportunity of direct flights

As new generations of aircraft able to travel farther and more efficiently take to the skies, new direct routes grow in feasibility, including between mid-size cities traditionally reliant on a hub. Even on a less-than-daily basis, direct flights can generate disproportionate impact for the cities connected.

The same economists who highlighted the importance of the 6,000 mile threshold have found important economic effects for cities connected to each other. Cities within greater reach of others grew meaningfully faster than more geographically distant cities. They are also more likely to be engaged in cross-border investment activity: there are three times as many ownership links between Shanghai and Milan (5,650 miles apart) than Shanghai and Madrid (6,350 miles apart). Domestically, other research has found that collaboration between scientists increased 50% when they were connected by new Southwest Airlines routes.¹⁰¹

While airlines have the final call on new routes, cities can play a role in their decision process, advancing the case for a new route and offering incentives, such as waived landing fees or marketing support for new routes. Phoenix's mayor has traveled to an Asian airline's headquarters to make the case for a route and the city has authorized up to \$2 million in incentives to airlines that increase international passengers.¹⁰² Philadelphia's airport will similarly waive up to \$2 million in landing fees for new routes.¹⁰³

Unfortunately, forty percent of flights launched under incentive programs end when the incentives, capped at two years by FAA rules, do, according to an analysis by Megan Ryerson, a researcher at the University of Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁴ Between 2012 and the first quarter of 2015, thirty airports spent \$171.5 million on incentives. Those who spent most effectively prioritized routes aligned with existing unserved demand or demand that was likely.

As cities seek to grow their presence on the international stage, these findings underscore that promoting direct air connections can be a powerful accelerant to their aims if appropriately targeted.

Variable Coefficient (SE)	Model				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(Intercept)	4.08 x 10 ⁰ (2.58 x 10 ⁰)	5.64 x 10 ⁰ (1.79 x 10 ⁰) **	9.75 x 10 ⁰ (2.48 x 10 ⁰) ***	-9.48 x 10 ⁻¹ (1.87 x 10 ⁰)	-1.38 x 10 ⁰ (2.76 x 10 ⁰)
MSA export volume	5.97 x 10 ⁻¹⁰ (9.17 x 10 ⁻¹¹) ***				
Total population				4.67 x 10 ⁻⁶ (3.83 x 10 ⁻⁷) ***	4.05 x 10 ⁻⁶ (3.94 x 10 ⁻⁷) ***
Total foreign born population		(1.48 x 10 ⁻⁵) (1.39 x 10 ⁻⁶) ***	1.47 x 10 ⁻⁰⁵ (1.34 x 10 ⁻⁶) ***		
Foreign-born share of MSA population					4.81 x 10 ¹ (1.64 x 10 ¹) **
Share of foreign- born population from Mexico			-1.82 x 10 ¹ (8.19 x 10 ⁰) *		-1.91 x 10 ¹ (6.71 x 10 ⁰) **
R ²	.47	.69	.73	.75	.82
*, **, *** Results significant at 5%, 1%, .1% level respectively					

A version of this analysis was originally published on LinkedIn (15 April 2019). Data for this analysis relied on scheduled airline routes as aggregated by FlightsFrom.com, export data from the Department of Commerce, and foreign-born population from the US Census Bureau as compiled by the Migration Policy Institute.¹⁰⁵

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Kyle Hutzler (kyleahutzler@gmail.com) produced this report as an MBA candidate at the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Passionate about advancing America's economic competitiveness, Kyle has worked at the U.S. International Trade Commission and at McKinsey, where he served the company's public sector practice in Washington, D.C. Kyle holds an MA in Global Affairs from Tsinghua University in Beijing, as well as a BA in Economics from Yale. He speaks Chinese and Spanish.

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