

## **Examples of Charter-Related Efforts of the National Civic League**

### **City Charter Revisions**

The National Civic League created the first Model City Charter in 1900 and over the following two decades added signature elements like the council-manager form of government, nonpartisan local elections and professional city administration. In the 120+ years since the League began this work, most cities and towns have adopted provisions recommended by the Model City Charter and the National Civic League has become the principal source of guidance for city charters.

Periodically, the League conducts a revision of the Model City Charter, with the most recent revision being in 2021, which led to the release of the ninth edition. The League has also published a Guide to Charter Commissions, which presents a framework for charter revision, and this has been used in many locations over the years.

Following adoption of the ninth edition of the Model City Charter in 2021, the National Civic League made presentations about the model to numerous state and national audiences and provided technical assistance to several cities that initiated charter revision processes. These include Dallas, TX, St. Louis, MO, Miami/Dade County, and Portland, OR.

The League's most recent assistance project is in Brookings, South Dakota, where we are currently involved in an eight-month effort to aid the city's charter commission conduct community outreach to develop revisions to the charter for placement before the voters. Previously, the League worked in Castle Pines, CO, several years ago to help them work with residents to win a vote for establishing home rule.

The National Civic League has worked with dozens of other communities on community outreach, strategic planning and reform of local governance practices. We are currently assisting seven cities and school boards with efforts that range from civility to economic development.

### **Personnel to be Involved in the Mt. Vernon Charter Revision Assistance Project**

#### **Doug Linkhart, President, National Civic League**

Doug Linkhart is a public policy expert who has worked on every side of civic engagement—neighborhood leader, city councilman, state legislator, head of a city department, federal employee, nonprofit manager and business leader. He began his position as president of the League in December 2015.

Doug brings over 40 years of experience in the public policy arena, including 18 years as an elected official, including eight years as a Denver City Councilman and ten years as a Colorado State Representative and Senator. Doug started his career by managing local campaigns, then worked in the federal government as a Presidential Management Intern. He later ran his own consulting business, spending his free time as a newspaper columnist and neighborhood and political activist. He founded a nonprofit organization to serve neighborhood associations and

their residents, which he directed for ten years. After running for Mayor of Denver in 2011, he was appointed by the winning candidate as the Executive Director of Denver's Department of Environmental Health, a 300-person agency which he managed for four years.

**Matt Leighninger, Director, Center for Democracy Innovation at the National Civic League**

Matt Leighninger has been one of the central figures in democracy innovation over the last twenty years. As a network-builder, convener, author, commentator, researcher, and practitioner, he has helped catalyze and connect the key developments in the recent evolution of democracy..

Matt played a leading role in the wave of democratic innovation of the 1990s and 2000s, which produced many new face-to-face processes for dialogue and deliberation. Working with Everyday Democracy, and then the local officials and staff of the National League of Cities, he provided on-the-ground assistance to over 100 communities in 40 states. Matt described the lessons learned from these efforts to support active citizenship in his first book, *The Next Form of Democracy* (2006) and later published a book with Tina Nabatchi, *Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy* (Wiley, 2015)

Matt brings unique skills, knowledge, and experiences to the main challenges in democracy innovation: helping people institute new participatory strategies and reforms, helping them measure their progress, and communicating those stories and impacts in order to demonstrate the tremendous problem-solving potential of democracy and active citizenship.

**Derek Okubo, Senior Fellow, National Civic League; Principal at Derek Okubo LLC.**

Derek Okubo is a Colorado native and was raised in Littleton, Colorado, graduating from Arapahoe High School and the University of Northern Colorado. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology with double minors in communication and sociology.

Derek has worked for Big Brothers of Metropolitan Denver as the services coordinator for Denver County; the State of Colorado as a community liaison for Governor Roy Romer; and the National Civic League as the Senior Vice President. During his time with the National Civic League, Derek helped design and facilitate over 70+ planning efforts across the United States. He also published numerous articles on topics such as race and governance, sustainability, community engagement, and Civic Infrastructure (a term coined by NCL in the late 1980's).

In July 2011, Derek was appointed Executive Director of the Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships (HRCP) by Mayor Michael B. Hancock. HRCP was founded within Denver city government in 1947 to address race and equity conditions of that time. In his role as Executive Director, Derek oversaw eight city offices and 10 advisory commissions. Due to term limits and as an appointee of Mayor Hancock, Derek completed his service with the City and County of Denver in July 2023 and is currently working on contracts through his LLC.

As a Senior Fellow of the League, Derek provides on-site assistance to communities and is currently working with Sioux Falls, SD, on a strategic planning process and Brookings, SD, on a charter revision process.